

History 3923H – Social Bandits – Tu/Th 2:00-3:20 –MAIN 423
J Gordon office: 202C Old Main, 575-4755, joelg@uark.edu
Office Hours: Tu/Th 1:30-2:00, Wed by appt.

'As through this world I've traveled I've seen lots of funny men. Some will rob you with a six-gun, some with a fountain pen. But as through your life you travel and as through your life you roam, you will never see an outlaw drive a family from their home.'
(*Pretty Boy Floyd*, by Woody Guthrie)

In this course we dissect the myths and historical realities of social bandits (aka Robin Hoods). Whether or not a 'real' Robin led Merry Men from the depths of Sherwood Forest to rob from the rich and give to the poor, and if so, when, are not historical certainties. In fact, he (sometimes she) has existed in popular consciousness across historical time and geographic space. This course will analyze myth and reality, verifiable fact and folklore, as legitimate – and equally contestable – discourses. We will examine the social origin of popular legend, the nature of the outlaw as 'primitive rebel,' and trace common themes of honor/dishonor, justice/injustice, and the alternative, ultimately autonomous social-political structures constructed by those living outside the 'law.' Our journey will take us from the thorn-filled steppes of Anatolia to the caves of the Ozarks, from Cairo's City of the Dead to London's East End, from Uttar Pradesh to the Gold Coast and, if we are lucky, beyond.

Required Texts:

Erich Hobsbawm, *Bandits*
Billy Jaynes Chandler, *The Bandit King: Limpiao of Brazil*
Phoolan Devi, *The Bandit Queen of India*
Ron Hansen, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*
Yashar Kemal, *Memed my Hawk*
Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*
Nagib Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*
Alan Moore/David Lloyd, *V for Vendetta*

All texts are available at the Campus Bookstore and should be readily available from other sources. You are expected to have all books in hand and read by the time we cover them in class. ** Subsidiary required texts are posted on WebCT/Blackboard.

Rules/Conditions for Gang Membership

Bandits may be unruly, but they adhere strictly to the rules and rituals established by their chief. To join this gang, you must accept the following conditions:

Attendance, barring emergency, is mandatory for each session. So is punctuality. Come ready to ride – with readings and any assignments completed. There is no make-up work in banditry. Silence is not golden – active participation (discussion/questions) is vital to success. Bandits are often taken to be invincible – thus we fight through bad weather (unless our lair is officially closed) and address any academic accommodation that may

be necessary within the first two weeks of class. Plagiarism (if you don't know what this is, find out) may not mandate hanging or walking the plank, but will be taken seriously and may in some cases result in expulsion from the gang. Real bandits are not slovenly – quite the opposite – they may drink, but do not eat during gang meetings.

** You will be required to attend two films shown outside of class in conjunction with 'Nadi Cinema' – the Middle East film club – on the following Wednesday nights from approx 7-9 pm: 1) the film adaptation of *The Thief and the Dogs*, Oct 21, and 2) *The Terrorist*, a fictional account of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, on Nov 18.

Your position in the gang will be assessed in several ways. Your participation in class will be scrutinized. 4 short – 3-4 page essays discussing some of the works we cover will be assigned. Your primary requirement (see appendix to this syllabus) will be to research and report on a particular bandit, to bring him/her in alive (treachery allowed) having ascertained not only a life story/career, but also the legends and other manifestations of popular culture that surround this individual.

Outline of Meetings

Tu Aug 25: Ballads

Th Aug 27: Typologies – reading: Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, intros-ch 3

Tu Sep 1: Typologies (2) – reading: Hobsbawm, ch 4-end

Th Sep 3: Theory/Criticism

reading: Anton Blok, 'The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered'
Pat O'Malley, 'Social Bandits, Modern Capitalism, and the Traditional Peasantry'
Ralph Austin, 'Social Bandits and Other Heroic Criminals'

Tu Sep 8: Pirates

reading: Robert C Ritchie, 'Pirates: Myths and Realities'
Markus Rediker, 'The Seaman as Pirate'

Th Sep 10: Eskiya – reading: Kemal, *Memed my Hawk*

Tu Sep 15: Cangaceiro – reading: Chandler, *Bandit King*

Th Sep 17: Cangaceiros

reading: Linda Lewin, 'The Oligarchical Limitations of Social Banditry in Brazil'

Tu Sep 22/Th Sep 24: 'One Woman Dared to Fight Back' – movie: *Bandit Queen* (1995)

** due: short essay – Limpiao and Memed, fact and fiction, parallels and 'loyalty' to Hobsbawm's thesis – 3 pp.

Tu Sep 29/Th Oct 1: Dacoits – reading: Devi, Bandit Queen of India
Mary Anne Weaver, ‘India’s Bandit Queen,’ Atlantic Monthly

Tu Oct 6/Th Oct 8: ‘Bonded by Blood’ – film: The Krays (Britain 1990)

Tu Oct 13: Gangsters

reading: (wikipedia.org/wiki/Kray_twins) (thekrays.co.uk)
(news.bbc.co.uk/onthisda/hi/dates/stories/January/7/newsid_3325000/3325399.stm)
(ibras.dk/montypython/episode14.htm)

** due: short essay – Phoolan Devi and the Krays – urban/rural, gender, working class heroes?

Th Oct 15: Liss – reading: Mahfouz, Thief and the Dogs

Tu Oct 20/Th Oct 22: Out of Time/Place – movie: Eskiya/Bandit (Turkey 1996)

Wed Oct 21 – Movie 7 pm: al-Liss wal-Kilab/Thief and Dogs (Egypt 1962)

Tu Oct 27: Out of Time/Place (2) – discuss Thief and Dogs/Eskiya

Th Oct 29: Americana

reading: Kent Steckmesser, ‘Robin Hood and the American Outlaw’
Richard White, ‘Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border: American Social Bandits’

** due: short essay – Thief and Dogs and Eskiya – rural pride meets upward urban mobility, social class and broken promises

Tu Nov 3: Outlaw – reading: Hansen, Assassination of Jesse James

Th Nov 5: The Western

reading: Wil Wright, Six Guns and Society, ch 1 + 3

Tu Nov 10: Terrorist – reading: Moore/Lloyd, V for Vendetta

Th Nov 12: Bandit Convention

Tu Nov 17: Bandit Convention (2)

Wed Nov 18: Film 7 pm – The Terrorist (India 1999)

Th Nov 19: Bandit Convention (3)

Tu Nov 24 – No Class

Th Nov 26: Thanksgiving

Tu Dec 1/Th Dec 3: Mujahid – reading: Lawrence, Messages to the World

** due: short essay on Vendetta and Messages – discuss the motivations of righteous terror – how is one terrorist a hero, the other a villain – how might one imagine a modern day Guy Fawkes?

Tu Dec 8: Closing the Circle – Justice Served?

TBA – Final papers due

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WANTED: Your independent research assignment is to explore the career and mythology surrounding the life and escapades of a particular bandit. Each of these is a real historical figure; many have been depicted in fictional accounts. The fiction/mythology is of paramount importance to who each is historically. But begin by establishing, as best you can, some empirical ‘facts.’

We are obviously interested in the family/social background of this individual, and conditions that may have led to a decision to become an outlaw. Follow your bandit’s career, looking for parallels to Hobsbawm’s typologies. Try to establish to what extent the folkloric bandit is rooted in some reality. Or, more to the point, what were the conditions or actions that produced the myths surrounding this figure. At the same time, see to what extent you can uncover a ‘literary’ and/or folkloric tradition surrounding your bandit. This may include any or all of the sources we cover in class – folksongs, fiction, television-radio-film dramas, and of course, parody. Pay close attention to how the depiction of your bandit may have shifted over time.

Your specific assignment consists of 3 parts: 1) An essay of approximately 8-10 pages analyzing your bandit in terms of material covered in class.

2) A bibliography of any sources you utilized. Divide your bibliography into the following categories as they apply: a) general texts about banditry and/or your bandit’s particular historical and geographic setting; b) biographies or related studies of your individual; c) newspaper accounts; d) literary fiction; e) movies-tv-radio productions, including parodies; f) songs – with lyrics if available; g) a representative photo/drawing.

3) A brief introductory statement of 3-5 pages, which you will read to the class during our scheduled Bandit Convention. This should be written in the first person. Introduce yourself as your character might to a gathering of colleagues/rivals. Appropriate slang is encouraged. Accents may be incorporated (but don’t push your talents!). This introduction should take 5-8 minutes, after which you may face interrogation. Since bandits have always had a flair for making fashion statements, a distinguishing (non-lethal) prop or article of clothing may be incorporated.

DEAD OR ALIVE (choose to be one of the following or suggest a reasonable alternate):

Khairuddin Barbarossa
Kate (Ma) Barker
Bonnie Barrow
William (Billy the Kid) Bonny
John Dillinger
Horst Fantazzini
Charles Arthur (Pretty Boy) Floyd
John Wesley Hardin
William (Captain) Kidd
George (Machine Gun) Kelly
Ned Kelly
Leila Khaled
Ulrike Meinhof
Sir Henry Morgan
Stepin (Stenka) Raza
Rob Roy
Adham al-Sharqawi
Edward (Blackbeard) Teach
Dick Turpin
Pancho Villa