Tropical Tropes in Movies

Assignment Overview

Your assignment is to watch **three** films set in tropical rain forests, document the stereotypical ways in which the rain forest setting is presented, and then summarize this would shape the image of rain forests and rain forest people for viewers that are unfamiliar with these ecosystems. Complete details on how to complete these steps are below.

The assignment's value is **100 points** and it is due **October 5th by 5 pm**.

Films to Review

1. ***The African Queen*** (1951): In WWI East Africa, a gin-swilling Canadian riverboat captain is persuaded by a strait-laced English missionary to undertake a trip up a treacherous river and use his boat to attack a German gunship. *(Starring Humphrey Bogart & Katharine Hepburn; Directed by John Huston)*. See the [movie list] for where to access this film.

2. ***The Emerald Forest*** (1985): After the son of engineer Bill Markham is abducted by an aboriginal tribe on the edge of the rain forest, the engineer spends the next 10 years searching for him. *(Starring Powers Boothe, Meg Fosterm, Charley Boorman; Directed by John Boorman)*. See the [movie list] for where to access this film.

3. **One movie of your choice from this list.** To help you decide you can watch the trailers on the Course's Tropical Movie Trailers YouTube List or by searching for the movie on IMDB or YouTube.

   *Please submit the name of your movie selction on Canvas by **17 September**.*

How & Where to Watch

Most of the films are available via the UF Library access to Kanopy, other free streaming platforms (e.g., Tubi, Pluto), or as DVDs that can be checked out from the UF Library's Course Reserves. A few of them are only available on subscription-based streaming platforms such as Netflix or Amazon, but **many of the movies can be streamed for free at one of the online channels in the table below. Do *not* spend any personal funds on this assignment.**

Tubi	Kanopy	Plex	Digitalia
YouTube	Crackle	Pluto TV	
YuppTV	IMDB	Film Detective	

Important Content Warning: The some of the assigned films contain strong language, nudity, sexual situations, and violence, including sexual assault. There may be dialogue about or depictions of race, class, gender, sexuality, or other topics that are uncomfortable, disturbing, or offensive. Analyzing these depictions and their broader cultural implications is an important part of this assignment, so I encourage you to prepare yourself for this possibility. However, if you are concerned that you will find the content of the films you have been assigned to be difficult

or even traumatic, let me know and we will arrange an alternative for you to review. You do *not* have to tell me why you want to switch, only that you would prefer to be assigned another film.

Language: Some of the films may be partially or entirely in languages other than English and require subtitles.

Extra Credit

Option 1: Remember what I said about value judgments? Well..let's just put that aside for a moment to say there are some movies that are so ridiculously bad that I will award 10 points of extra credit simply for selecting one of them for your 3rd review.

Option 2: Did you miss an earlier in-class assignment? Plan on missing one down later in the semester? You can review a 4th movie for an additional 20 points of extra credit.

Assignment Details

For each of the three films you must do the following:

1. **Document** the presence of some common tropes about rain forests in each film. To do so, use this *Trope Datasheet*, which lists some common tropes by category (e.g., Plot, Characters, Dialogue, Flora and Fauna). Print a copy of the data sheet for each movie, review the tropes in each category, and then as you watch the movie record which ones you see and record the approximate time of the movie at which they appear for the first time, known as the 'time stamp' (hour & minute, e.g, " 1 H 22 m").

2. **Consider** the elements with which filmmakers shape your emotions and perceptions:

   - **Plot**: the narrative, setting, key events, action sequences, resolution, plausibility, themes, cultural context, etc.

   - **Characters**: professions, personality, motivation, interactions, response to rain forest setting, etc.

   - **Visuals**: scenery, flora & fauna, props, wardrobe, shots, perspective, lighting, editing, effects, etc.

   - **Sound**: use and timing of background sounds (or silence), score, animal sounds, songs, etc.

2. **Reflect** on how the tropes and elements used by the filmaker *reinforce* one or more of the historical themes about rain forests and the people that live in them that we discussed in class, i.e., The Tropics Are:

   - **Paradise**: vibrant, lush, nurturing

   - **Hell on Earth**: dangerous, violent, deadly

   - **Mystical**: spiritual, peaceful, harmonious, a place for self-discovery

   - **Exploitable**: the resources and the people

- **Conquerable**:an environment that can be tamed, those that emerge alive can survive any future challenge.

3. **Summarize** these reflections in a paragraph (200-300 words, single space) in which you **(a)** identify the rain forest theme or themes with which the movie aligns, **(b)** provide examples of the tropes and film elements as evidence to support your choice, and **(c)** speculate as to what someone watching this movie with little knowledge of rain forests would conclude about this ecosystem, its biodiversity, and the people living there.

Note: You should *not* write a summary of the film and its plot (i.e., a *descriptive review*) or whether the film is "good" or "bad" (i.e., an *evaluative review*). Your summary is a review of how the movie use rain forests as a character to advance the plot, and if / how this loops back to reinforce stereotypes about rain forests.

Assignment Submission

To submit the assignment you must do the following:

1. Enter the data from each Trope Data Sheet into this Google Form.

2. Upload a single .pdf file of the three paragraphs (one per movie) into Canvas.

Required Content & Grading Rubric: The review & checklists will be evaluated using the point values and minimum standards in the rubric below. *Note that the rubric on Canvas lists additional 'outcomes' to be evaluated. These additional criteria will* **not** *be used to grade your assignment. These are some things the Quest Program is asking us to evaluate internally. Your assignment will be graded* **solely** *with the rubric in the table below.*

Rubric

Section	Max. Points	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Essay	70	Essays are of the required length. One or more historical narratives about rain forests are identified; well-reasoned arguments for how the film promotes or subverts these narratives are backed up by specific examples. An engaging conclusion summarizes the evidence and connects it back to the central thesis. The writing is clear, with few grammatical mistakes or spelling errors. Overall, the paper is well written. **(70-63 pts)**	Essays are somewhat shorter than the required length; a historical narrative is identified but the supporting argument is unclear or backed up by weak or limited supporting evidence. The paper is generally well written but there are some grammatical or spelling errors. **(62-49 pts)**	The essays are much shorter than the required length; no historical narrative is identified or if one is, the arguments in support are poorly articulated or the supporting examples are limited or poorly chosen. Multiple grammatical or spelling errors. **(<48 pts)**
Checklist	30	The film's checklist records 10 or more tropes with a time stamp and description of the event for each one. **(9-10 pts)**	The checklist for a film includes 5-9 tropes and is mostly complete; some time stamps or other details missing. **(7-8 pts)**	The checklist for a film is incomplete (<5 examples for each), or few / no time stamps or additional information. **(<6 pts)**