

LP² STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR FALL 2022

DISNEY ANIMATED FILMS: MAGIC, MESSAGES, MORALITY AND MORE

Coordinator: Dan Kaslow

Walt Disney Animation Studios has produced, over 85 years, some of the most memorable and iconic children's movies. They are celebrated for providing delightful entertainment, wonderful storytelling and uplifting messages. As we view movies across multiple eras over 85 years, many of which you may not have seen, we will delve into how these films portray and deal with such issues as race and gender stereotypes, cultural appropriation, diversity, good v. evil, societal norms, personal values. Since Disney films have, from the start, faced criticism from some segment of our society, we will ask lots of questions. Do the positive values outweigh some troubling issues? Do the movies provide valuable "teaching moments"? What childhood impressions do we recall? Did these movies impact our child development? Do our children and grandchildren view these movies differently? Join us as we explore what these movies reflect about ourselves and our society.

Dan is the father of an "old school" animator and comic book artist who made him watch more Disney animated films than he'd care to admit.

Type of Study Group: Presentation followed by discussion

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Subscription to Disney+ streaming service required (\$7.99/mo.);

Readings (pdf or online and video links) will be made available by coordinator, but always optional.

***** SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS *****

NOTE: Assigned movies are subject to change

WEEK 1

MOVIE/TOPIC: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*: Families, violence, personal identity

READING/VIEWING:

Selected pdf articles (optional, to be sent out before class)

QUESTIONS:

Snow White is considered an iconic film in American cinema. Do you agree? What do you view as its long-lasting appeal? From its first release, parents have complained about its level of violence. Is this highly problematic or of minimal concern? Are scary movies bad for children? Would you characterize the movie as a coming-of-age story or something else? What themes do you think are presented? The movie is far less "grim" than the source Brothers Grimm fairytale. What are your views on this adaptation and movie adaptations in general?

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WEEK 2

MOVIE/TOPIC: *Bambi*: Friends, boy-girl romance, death and loss

READING:

Selected pdf articles (optional)

QUESTIONS:

This movie is considered Disney's saddest film. Do you agree, and is that bad? How does the film deal with violence? There was intense criticism from a very large segment of society over one aspect (not violence) of the film. Whom do you think those complaints came from? Many now consider a major theme of this movie is protection of the environment. Do you agree? Would this have been a radical viewpoint at the time?

WEEK 3

MOVIE/TOPIC: *Cinderella*: Princesses, sexism, gender roles, physical appearance

READING:

Selected pdf articles (optional)

QUESTIONS:

Everyday young girls dress up as princess for parties, celebrations and playdates. Is there anything wrong with that? Are Disney films responsible for this? Was this likely an issue in 1937? Parents always play an important role in Disney films, sometime by their presence, others by their absence. What are the similarities and differences between Snow White's and Cinderella's mothers? Sidekick characters and animals play varied roles in Disney movies. How are they used here? Do these characters display any negative characteristics?

WEEK 4 - *Aristocats*: Morality, good v. evil, religion

WEEK 5 - *Black Cauldron*: Racism, stereotypes, LGBTQ+

WEEK 6 - *Little Mermaid*: Villains, revenge/retribution

WEEK 7 - *Pocahontas*: Cultural diversity, appropriation

WEEK 8 - *Treasure Planet*: Hero, role model, princes

WEEK 9 - *Princess and the Frog*: Ageism, grandparents, work

WEEK 10 - *Frozen*: Societal norms, the new woman, personal values and attributes

WEEK 11 - *Wreck-It Ralph*: personal values and attributes

WEEK 12 - *Encanto*: Magic, fantasy, source material