

The Use of Film in Geography and History Classes: A Theoretical Approach [†]

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Abstract: The use of film within the context of the classroom may generate great interest from teachers and students. From the point of view of Geography and History classes, it can provide indications to analyse and understand spaces, times and societies reflected in the images. It can be used as an object to be explored in teaching-learning context, in several teaching levels. In this text it is intended to reflect, from a theoretical point of view, on the relation between movie and history, considering the film as an analysis object and investigation instrument, as well as builder of historic environments and landscapes.

Keywords: Geography; history; cinema; teaching

1. Introduction

Considering the discussion around the relation between the teaching of Geography and History, in a transdisciplinary perspective, it is believed that the use of film within the context of the classroom may generate great interest from teachers and students.

On one hand, in a scientific-teaching conception (preparation of classes), it can provide clues on the dynamics of certain spaces, times and societies reflected in the images, which are patent in several dimensions, i.e., in set design terms, also in wardrobe, going through how the plot evolves and the characters play their role, among other aspects. On the other hand, as an analytical object to be explored in teaching-learning context, that can occur in several teaching levels (Figure 1).

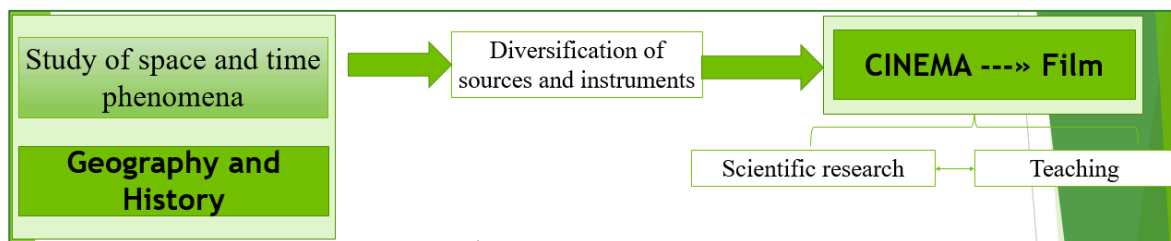


Figure 1. Film regarding Geography and History. (Self-made, 2018).

It is intended to reflect, from a theoretical point of view, on the relation between movie and history, considering the film as an analysis object and investigation instrument, as well as builder of historic environments and landscapes.

2. Discussion

Geographer Milton Santos (2006: 28) [1] refers to this intimate connection, by defending that there is no space without time, for he considers that “(...) space is, in itself, mandatorily a content in time”. Thus, Azevedo (2006: 440) [2], considering Holquist’s perspective, considers the association between both dimensions, using the concept of “chronotope”, referring to the inseparability of space-time.

The representation of this chain, materialised in historic and geographic phenomena, can be analysed from cinema. Lez (2003: 71) [3] invokes Sargent, when mentioning that the filmic works tend to come close to the space and time of the reality focused in plots. This option is related with an utilitarian component, because it is a form of attracting the audience’s attention. The usefulness is also manifested not only in the representation of the phenomena, but also in the own production of specific content. On this idea, Fernandes (2004: 5) [4] defends that cinema enables to build diverse spaces, as it is the case of the “set-city” where it is travelled through time and space in a logic parallel to reality, which is built based on historic-geographic fragments. Still in the relation between History and Geography, Deshpand (2004: 4458) [5] emphasizes the importance of cinema to the current analysis and interpretation of late 19th, early 20th century urban spaces, from film excerpts which evidenced, both in buildings and in communication ways, industrial spaces and others, as well as the communities of users and their social and territorial day-to-day. Focusing the discussion in the specificity of History, we highlight the works of Marc Ferro (1998: 14) [6], being that this historian understands cinema as an historic agent, given its use has enabled presenting moments from the past adapted to the purposes of current political regimes.

So, film materializes a chronotopic dimension different from what is deemed as “real”, because it is based on the construction of differentiated scenarios (landscapes) and environments (eras) which, according to Velez de Castro and Almeida (2016: 168) [7], can be of intentional character (reinterpretation) or originated by the absence of scientific consultancy (errors). Thus, Sarmento, Azevedo and Pimenta (2006: 8) [8] invoke Latour by mentioning that “the environments and landscapes are coproduction of nature-culture” and therefore refer to a determined time and space.

3. Proposal

Considering the validity of the film as an instrument in Geography and History, it is proposed a diagram of “film viewing and analysis”, which can be reproduced in a context of teaching-learning of both disciplines, adapting the script and the images to the school and age level of the students in question (Figure 2).

Knowledge production based on film analysis must obey to a prior planning that considers, not only the observation-record-discussion sequence, but also that creates room for the students’ analytical creativity and to how individual experiences can promote different interpretations and positions, even unexpected, from the class. It is key that the teacher has the opportunity to see the film before the class, considering the program content(s) to be approached. It is a good strategy if the view is repeated several times, given the probability and perception of lines, scenarios, objects and dynamics is greater. After the concept script and issues are formulated, the students must see the film/documentary. It is convenient to frame the activity prior, as well as inform as to the synopsis of the film, emphasizing that it is a task of film analysis and not a mere leisure observation. They may read the questions prior to viewing to be more attentive to details that are part of the discussion. Lastly, it is suggested that the teacher makes a balance of the activity, to be aware of the strengths, as well as of the points to improve.

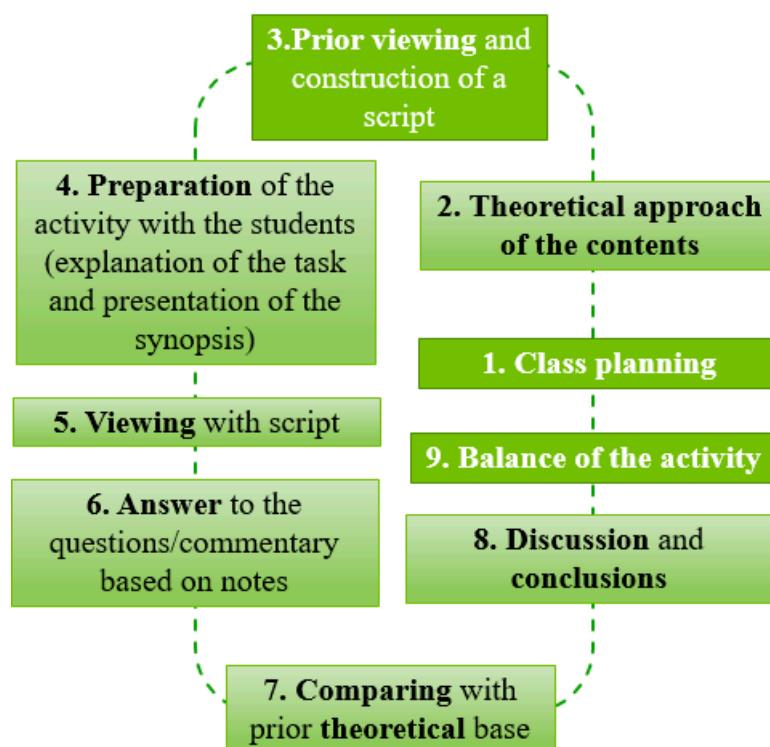


Figure 2. Proposal of class planning sequence: film analysis (Self-made, 2018).

4. Conclusions

Cinema is a reporter of times and places, but also a producer of territories. It is important that the teacher and students have this idea into account in order to be able to dismantle narratives, courses and visions contained in movies and documentaries, in summary, so that it can really contribute to a full geographic and historic education.

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