

## How do movies avoid historical reality?

- By portraying drama rather than the boredom of the everyday, by showing things as prettier than they really were
- By addressing universal themes (love, morality, destiny, fear) rather than the unique and different
- By stressing continuity and eternity rather than change and disjuncture
- By showing the best of people (or the worst) and never the grey areas
- By hoping to comment on *current* events or conflicts by projecting contemporary themes into the past
- By being more interested in creating special effects than in plot or character
- By being more interested in authentic, historical material culture—furniture, guns, costumes—than larger historical causes or influences
- By compressing time (something that happened in 3 months happens in 3 days)
- By simplifying characters and events
- By telling the story from the point of view of the filmmakers and not of the characters (eg. not understanding the world of, say, abolitionists or slave owners)
- By never transgressing what is established as common knowledge (often simple stereotypes) about a people, place, or time
- By not explaining things so viewers have no understanding of cause and effect
- By eliminating strangeness in the alien characters of the past in order to promote empathy (movies work on empathy, not true strangeness); historical people truly think and act different than “we” do