



Still from *A Matter of Life and Death*, dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1946).

HIU11011 **Imagining History**

Co-ordinator **Philippa Byrne**

Credits **5 ECTS**

Semester **Michaelmas Term**

Assessment A 1,000-1,500-word book or film review (40%), and an end-of-term essay (60%).

Description Most people, most of the time, never encounter the past through academic history books. Instead, the past confronts them in images and interpretations that appear everywhere from museums to advertisements, movies to monuments. The imagining of history is such a prominent trend in popular culture that students need to be equipped to deconstruct representations of the past and to interrogate their own working assumptions about history imbibed from film and literature. This module explores three examples of how historical events and themes have been imagined in the world outside of professional historical scholarship. Students will examine how these subjects have been ‘brought to life’ in film and literature. Students will also have the opportunity to consider wider questions and problems which link together the three subjects addressed in the module. This is not a module designed to test the accuracy, in a narrow sense, of ‘historical fiction’ in literature and film. The aim is rather to enable students to examine the ways in which the past has been presented, interpreted and re-interpreted in various genres; to uncover the assumptions or agendas that shaped creative decisions and the responses of audiences to genuinely popular representations of the past; and to reflect critically upon the qualities that make for a great work of historical imagination or reconstruction, qualities which cannot easily be replicated by the conventional methods of historical inquiry.