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**Fall semester, 2017**

### **Culture and Crisis: First War on Film**

This Fall 2017, the Arts in Mind project funded the cost of student tickets to the Dryden Theater so that participants in Culture and Crisis, an elective History course in the Humanities Department of the Eastman School of Music that focuses on the history of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, could attend screenings of the historic films in the Dryden series First War on Film. The project allowed us all to see how film makers from different countries, time periods, and political perspectives portrayed the First World War in a positive or a negative light depending on their historical circumstances, what they themselves believed about war, and what they thought their audience wanted to hear.

To pick just one among many examples, our comparison and contrast between John Gilbert's portrayal of soldier victim James Apperson in King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925) and Gary Cooper's portrayal of soldier hero Alvin York in Howard Hawks's *Sergeant York* (1941) enabled us to consider the many ways in which *Big Parade* highlighted the cost of war as part of the American movement towards anti-war isolationism in the 1920s and *Sergeant York* highlighted the glory of war as part of the American movement towards pro-war interventionism in the 1940s, especially as its popularity soared after the attack on Pearl Harbor. This project was so popular that the majority of the students who attended the Dryden series started bringing friends from outside the class, made time in their busy schedules to see more than one film, and incorporated what they had learned from their analyses of the Dryden's films into their eventual History papers on the causes, conduct, and consequences of World War I. These results stand as a true tribute to the impact of funding from the AIM Project.

### **Art and Politics: Avant-Garde Films from the Russian Revolution**

This Fall 2017, the Arts in Mind Project funded the cost of student tickets to the Dryden Theater so that participants in Art and Politics, one of the sections of the required Freshman Writing Seminar at the Eastman School of Music, could attend screenings of Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925) and Aleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth* (1930) as part of our unit on Soviet filmmakers and their responses to the Russian Revolution. The presentation of *Strike* was especially appealing to Eastman students because it included a live performance of the score by the Alloy Orchestra. The students who attended these screenings not only wrote short papers about how the two films portrayed Russian politics, how they worked as art, and how they worked as propaganda, but also engaged in a lively class discussion about the difference between watching a film on the small screen of some mobile device and seeing it live on the big screen in a theatre full of other

people. Without the Arts in Mind Project, this insight would have been impossible, and so I am especially grateful for the funding that enabled them to attend these screenings at the Dryden.