

## [Call for Essays: Neo-Peplum Films and Television 1990 to Present](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

April 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016

Subject Fields:

Film and Film History

### **Introduction**

After the success of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* in 2000, the sword-and-sandal genre of films was officially resurrected and has not seen such a prolific output since its heyday in Italy in the late 1950s and 1960s. This second wave of peplum films - or more specifically "neo-peplum" to reflect this distinctive contemporary cycle - has achieved unprecedented critical and commercial success, with big screen films such as *300* to ambitiously realized small screen fare such as *Spartacus* and *Rome*. Marginal, critically panned and box office bombs such as *Gods of Egypt* still make an impact, contributing to the canon of films. With an upcoming remake of *Ben-Hur* on the horizon, films set in ancient Greek and Roman times, based on their mythologies or featuring gladiatorial combat or large centurion armies, are certainly in demand to theater-goers and Netflix binge watchers.

With such sword-and-sandal films enjoying such popularity, it invites an academic gaze to unearth their cinematic importance beyond simple movie watching consumption. These films and television shows are definitely important: are they a reflection of our times? With our high tech lives, what is the fascination with depictions of the ancient world? With body and gender dialogue more open, what does this say about films that have a strong emphasis on the herculean male or Amazonian female?

This anthology is looking for essays that aim to explore this neo-peplum cycle of films that shares commonality to the original Italian films and Hollywood historic epics. The original peplum cycle of films began with *Hercules* in 1958, so it is appropriate to say the neo-peplum cycle begins anew with the Hercules character in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* of the 1990s. This anthology seeks to solidify the neo-peplum genre as a distinct term and re-appropriate it to specifically refer to sword-and-sandal films and television shows made after 1990 and evaluate these entries in a variety of interdisciplinary lenses and frameworks.

### **Potential Essay Topics**

A list of possible (but not comprehensive) topics and themes that contributors could submit on:

- Anti-Peplum - exploring change in tone from adventure and action to more dramatic and gritty

stories

- Portrayal of women from vamps and damsels in the original peplum cycle to Xena-inspired characters in the present cycle (*Xena, The Arena*)
- General Masculinity/Femininity portrayal
- Compare/contrast original Italian cycle with present cycle
- Compare/contrast original stories/characters with remakes (*Hercules* remakes, *Clash of Titans* remake)
- Close reading at source material and how neo-peplum films interpret them
- Neo-peplums as allegory for present day politics
- Peplums for young adults (*Gods of Egypt*)
- Neo-peplums combining with other genres - such as sci-fi (*John Carter*) or disaster film (*Pompeii*)
- Ancient worlds portrayed in “hyper-realistic” fashion
- Mono-myth and neo-peplum characters
- Pastiche, parody, subversion (*Hail, Caesar!*, *Meet the Spartans*)
- Representations of race, white-washing
- Shakespeare, tragedy (*Titus*)

Authors are encouraged to submit more than one abstract. If you have multiple great ideas for potential essay chapters, feel free to submit each one. I will assemble the most cohesive arrangement of essays that will provide the most well-rounded discussion of neo-peplum films.

### **Films and Television Series**

Below is a list of potential films and television series post 1990 that could potentially fit into the neo-peplum formula. This list is by no means complete, but it is presented to give examples of the types of films/TV shows that fit within this genre and to inspire creative ideas for the films to write about. Not all neo-peplum films deal directly with ancient Greece or Rome, as some of the aesthetics and styles are being used for Egyptian, Viking and barbarian themed films as well. This list is only a guide; other films and TV shows that are neo-peplum-like will certainly be entertained for this book.

#### **Films**

*300* (2007), *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014), *Agora* (2009), *Alexander* (2004), *The Arena* (2001), *Centurion* (2010), *Clash of the Titans* (2010), *The Eagle* (2011), *Gladiator* (2000), *Gods of Egypt* (2016), *Hail, Caesar!* (2016), *Hercules* (1997), *Hercules* (2014), *Immortals* (2011), *John Carter* (2012), *The Last Legion* (2007), *Meet the Spartans* (2008), *Pompeii* (2014), *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (2010), *The Scorpion King* (2002) and its sequels, *Titus* (1999), *Troy* (2004), *Wrath of the Titans* (2012)

#### **Television Series**

*Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995-1999), *Rome* (2005-2007), *Spartacus* (2010-2013), *Vikings* (2013-present), *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), *Young Hercules* (1998-1999)

**Publication Timetable**

Below follows a generous timetable at essay composition, editing and submitting:

- June 30, 2016 - Deadline for abstract submissions
- July 10, 2016 - Notification of acceptance, distribution of style guide
- December 4, 2016 - Chapter drafts are due
- April 29, 2017 - Chapter revisions due
- May 31, 2017 - Submission of manuscript to the publisher

Drafts and revisions are strongly encouraged to be submitted before the deadlines. The essays will follow Chicago style citations. The style guide when disseminated will round out the essay specifications.

**Abstract Submission Instructions**

Please submit your abstract(s) of roughly 500 words along with your academic CV/resume and preliminary bibliography to the email address below before June 30th. Please use an appropriate subject line when submitting - have it contain the phrase "neo-peplum submission." I will confirm each submission via email within 48 hours.

Essayists will receive a contributor's copy of the book when it is published.

Nicholas Diak, editor

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Nicholas Diak is an independent pop culture scholar residing in southern California. He has a strong interest in neofolk and post-industrial music, exploitation cinema, Italian genre films and H.P. Lovecraft. He has contributed to the book *James Bond and Popular Culture: Essays on the Influence of the Fictional Superspy* (McFarland, 2014) and has an essay appearing in an upcoming anthology on space-horror films. He is a frequent presenter at the Southwest Popular/American Culture Conference, a contributor to the website *Heathen Harvest* and a member of the H.P. Lovecast Podcast. He is also an academic member of the Horror Writers Association and National Coalition of Independent Scholars.

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