 syllabus

course description

A study of the historical and artistic contributions of African American, Chicana/o-Latina/o, Native American and Asian Americans to the American cinema. Representations of gender, class structure and sexuality will be discussed and analyzed. By viewing a range of film clips and full-length films with an emphasis on multicultural, transnational theoretical and critical writings, this course will examine the cultural and socio-political climate in which these films were crafted. Theatre 175, Multicultural Perspectives in American Film fulfills the following GE Areas: Area C4: Further Studies in the Arts and Humanities and Race and Ethnicity in American Society.

course objectives

A. To create a positive attitude towards multiculturalism and to identify the contributions of American filmmakers within the landscape of modern, contemporary and postmodern North America.
B. To view and examine a sampling of films clips and full-length films in order to enable the student to understand the importance of culture and its significance in the shaping of multicultural American cinema.

C. To engage the student in an on-going discourse reflecting the socio-political, economic and aesthetic components of American multicultural cinema.

D. To explore the historical and aesthetic roots of racism as found in early twentieth century American cinema in relationship to contemporary cinematic productivity.

E. To develop a positive multicultural perspective in the writing of critical and analytical research projects.

F. To gain a basic understanding of the role of multicultural aesthetics in the shaping of American cinema.

**REQUIRED TEXT**


**IN CLASS FILMS**

*Bamboozled*, 2000, Spike Lee, Director
*Lone Star*, 1996, John Sayles, Director
*Smoke Signals*, 1988, Chris Eyre, Director
*Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 1989, Wayne Wang, Director
*La Mission*, 2009, Peter Bratt, Director
*1961*, 2000, Jane Anderson, Director
*The Ballad of Little Jo*, 1993, Maggie Greenwald, Director
*House of Sand and Fog*, 2003, Vadim Perelman, Director

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Three in-class tests** based on your required reading assignments and class discussions. See semester schedule for specific dates. *40% of the final grade.*
2. **Term Paper.** Four to five pages in length, double-spaced. **Due Date:** Thursday, May 16th at 10:30 AM. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

These essays must be subjective in essence, therefore, I am only interested in your own personal views, thoughts, ideas and experiences as they relate to the contents of this course. In short, you are not required to provide a research paper, however, should you choose to utilize external sources, these must be documented in a bibliography. ANY type of plagiarized material will result in an automatic course failure. All papers will be graded for content, proper grammar, syntax and punctuation. The specific topic will be announced during the semester. **30% of the final grade.**

3. **Final Examination.** 30% of the final grade.

4. **Attendance**—carries a separate grade. To be specific, after **TWO** unexcused absences, your final grade will be dropped by a **FULL** grade per absence. A **TARDY ARRIVAL** will equal **1/2** absence.
SEMESTER SCHEDULE

JANUARY

Tuesday, 29
Introductory Comments; Review of Syllabus
Discussion: The Concept of the Hollywood Blockbuster; The Classic Hollywood Realist Formula—Why do we Stereotype?
Film Clip: Tarzan, 1929

Thursday, 31
Discussion: Tarzan: The Imperial Savage; Orientalism
Film Clips: The Son of the Sheik, 1926; documentary excerpt: Vaudeville, 1997, written and conceived by Greg Palmer. WNET, KCTS/9 Television
Reading Due: pp 3-43

FEBRUARY

Tuesday, 5
Discussion: The Paradoxical Racial Space in Early American Cinema
Film Clips: Hallelujah, 1929 (King Vidor, Director); Cabin in the Sky, 1943 (Vincente Minnelli, Director); Birth of a Nation, 1915 (D.W. Griffith, Director); The Jazz Singer, 1927 (Louis Silvers, Director)
Reading Due: pp 47-76

Thursday 7
Documentary: BaadAsssss Cinema: A Bold Look at 70’s Blaxploitation Films, 2002 (Isaac Julien, Director)
Film Clips: Shaft, 1971 (Gordon Parks, Director); Super Fly, 1972 (Gordon Parks, Jr., Director)
Reading Due: pp 78-100

Tuesday 12
Bamboozled, 2000 (Spike Lee, Director) Part I

Thursday 14
Bamboozled—Part II
Class Discussion

Tuesday 19
Class Exam and Discussion
Thursday 21
Discussion: *From Bandido, to Greaser to Gang Homie*
Film Clips: *Viva Zapata*, 1952 (Elia Kazan, Director); *The Magnificent Seven*, 1960 (John Sturges, Director); *West Side Story*, 1961 (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, Directors)
Reading Due: 143-162

Tuesday 26
*Lone Star*, 1996 (John Sayles, Director) Part I

Thursday 28
*Lone Star*—Part II
Class Discussion: Chicana/o Representation

MARCH

Tuesday 5
Discussion: *Postmodern Angst in Latino Representation—Falling into the Hollywood Trap*
Film Clips: *Shaft*, 2000 (John Singleton, Director); *El Cantante*, 2007 (Leon Ichaso, Director)

Thursday 7
Discussion: *The Hollywood Indian: The Colonizing Imagination*
Film Clips: *Apache*, 1954 (Robert Aldrich, Director); *The Searchers*, 1956 (John Ford, Director); *Little Big Man*, 1970 (Arthur Penn, Director)
Reading Due: pp 102-122

Tuesday 12
*Smoke Signals*, 1988 (Chris Eyre, Director) Part I

Thursday 14
*Smoke Signals*—Part II
Class Discussion

Tuesday 19
Class Exam and Discussion
Thursday 21
Discussion: *Orientalism: Hollywood’s Reductive Eye*
Film Clips: *The Mask of FuManchu*, 1932 (Charles Brabin, Director); *South Pacific*, 1958 (Joshua Logan, Director); *Dr. No*, 1962 (Terence Young, Director); *The Deer Hunter*, 1979 (Michael Cimino, Director)

*Spring Recess—March 25th-March 31st*

APRIL

Tuesday 2
*Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 1989 (Wayne Wang, Director) Part I
Reading Due: pp 123-141

Thursday 4
*Eat a Bowl of Tea*—Part II
Class Discussion

Tuesday 9
Discussion: *Queer Images in the American Cinema.*
Ms. Gretchen Jung, Presenter
Reading Due: pp 305-324

Thursday 11
*La Mission*, 2009 (Peter Bratt, Director)

Tuesday 16
*La Mission*, Part II
Class Discussion

Thursday 18
*1961*, 2000 (Jane Anderson, Director)
Class Discussion

Tuesday 23
Class Exam and Discussion

Thursday 25
Discussion: *The Bombshell and the Vamp: GILDA, A Case Study*
Reading Due: pp 217-255
Tuesday 30
*The Ballad of Little Jo*, 1993 (Maggie Greenwald, Director) Part I

MAY

Thursday 2
*The Ballad of Little Jo*—Part II  
Class Discussion

Tuesday 7  
Discussion: *Modern and Postmodern Feminist (Popular) Cinematic Inclinations*  
Dr. Pomo and Ms. Jung. Film Clips from *Tomb Raider*, 2001 (Simon West, Director) and *Catwoman*, 2004 (Pitof, Director); *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, Director)  
**Reading Due:** pp 257-301

Thursday 9  
Discussion: *Hollywood’s Orientalist Nature*  
*House of Sand and Fog*, 2003 (Vadim Perelman Director) Part I  
**Reading Due:** pp 70-76

Tuesday 14  
*House of Sand and Fog*—Part II

Thursday 16  
**TERM PAPERS DUE by 10:30 AM. Late papers will NOT be accepted.**  
Discussion: Semester Overview and Final Exam

**Final Examination:**  
Thursday, May 23, 2013—10:15 AM to 12:15 PM

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*From Lone Star, 1966, John Sayles, Writer/Director*

*Chet Payne:*  
So, I’m part Indian?

*Otis Payne:*  
By blood you are. But blood only means what you let in.
Please feel free to converse with me with regards to your academic progress throughout the semester. Enjoy your experience in this course.