

FILM 3342: Race and Gender in American Film

Fall 2016

Thurs : 4:00pm-6:45pm

[GR 3.606](#)

Dr. Shilyh Warren

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Emails are encouraged and will be answered within 48hrs on weekdays

Course Description:

In 2016, the hashtag #oscarssowhite began trending in social media in response to the Academy Awards nominations. It seems that every year, the public is scandalized by the race and gender politics of Hollywood. And yet, the history of American cinema evidences a long trend of stereotyping and exclusion. How can we explain this? And how can we explain the public's desire to see more equality in the movie industry? In this class, we explore the history of identity politics in mainstream American cinema. We will also explore ways that filmmakers, critics, and audiences have contested the Hollywood dream machine in independent and experimental films as well as writing.

Warning: Some of these films contain scenes of graphic and potentially disturbing violence and sexuality. By signing up for this class, you agree to approach the material with generosity, respect, and intellectual decorum. This class is designed for students with an interest in film and a willingness to experience the many emotional, physical, and intellectual responses popular films elicit.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should demonstrate:

- a detailed knowledge of the history of race, ethnicity, and gender in American film
- the ability to think critically about cultural forms of representation
- an understanding of the particular history and impact films about race and gender

Required Textbooks and Materials:

America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, And Sexuality at The Movies, edited by Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). ISBN : 978-1-4051-7055-0

Pleases:

- Please bring hardcopies of our readings (usually the book) to each class.
- Please come prepared to discuss the materials listed **under** the given date of class.
- Please do not expect to watch the assigned film at the UTD library the day it is due or the day before it is due. I usually check these out to prepare my lecture.

Assignments and Grading Policy:

- **10pts - Participation**
 - Attendance (after 2 absences, your grade will be negatively impacted). Emergencies may be brought up with the professor in extreme cases where absence is inevitable.

- You are expected to come fully prepared for each and every class. This means you will have completed ALL the reading and the screening assignments for the day.
- **20pts - 1 Audio-visual presentation on the assigned HW film (10 min. max)**
 - Components:
 - **Introduce the film** (title, director, year, major actors, and how the film was received when it was released by critics and audiences)
 - **Present one clip from the film** (3 min or less). This clip should be a crucial scene that helps us understand the significance of the film. Please have the exact time code for your scene, which we will project from the DVD. Please set up the scene for us, remind us when it takes place in the film and why it is important.
 - **Provide a handout** that includes: your name, the name, director, and year of the film, and **3 discussion questions for the group** (thinking questions, not yes or no questions) about the film and how it relates to our main theme of the week.
- **70pts - 1 Research and Analysis Paper (1250-1500 words)**

This paper will be on a film, director, or genre related to our course topics of race and gender in American film (not necessarily from our syllabus, although you may choose a film we've watched). More details will be forthcoming.

This major assignment has 6 components, each with their own due date.

- Part 1 – Paper proposal - 10 pts – DUE 10/6
 - Part 2 – Research Question – 5 pts – DUE 10/6
 - Part 3 – Introductory paragraph – 10 pts – DUE 10/20
 - Part 4 – Rough draft – 10 pts – DUE 11/3
 - Part 5 – Final draft – 25 pts – DUE 12/7
 - Face to Face Meeting – 10 pts – between 11/3 and 11/17
- Sign up for a face-to-face meeting to discuss your rough draft and revision.

Grading Scale:

A+ = Rare*	B+ = 86-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69	F = Below 60
A = 95-100	B = 83-85	C = 73-76	D = 63-66	
A- = 90-94	B- = 80-82	C- = 70-72	D- = 60-62	

*A+ is reserved for the student who goes above and beyond the course expectations by contributing broadly and significantly to the entire learning experience of the community.

Course Calendar

8/25 Class 1. Introduction

Screening: *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (Steven Spielberg, 1984)

9/1 Class 2. Reviewing the #oscarssowhite Controversy and Understanding the Study of Film

Watch: *The Revenant* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2015)

Read: *America on Film* Chapter 1 (1-20) and Chapter 2 (21-44)

Also read the popular media articles below on the controversy:

Dana Amihire, "Race For The Oscars: A Visual History Of Oscars Diversity," *Dallas Morning News*, February 25, 2016 <http://interactives.dallasnews.com/2016/oscars-diversity/>

"Oscar nominees discuss diversity in Hollywood amid the #OscarsSoWhite backlash," *LA Times*, February 25, 2016 <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-oscars-so-white-reaction-htmlstory.html>

David Cox, "#OscarsSoWhite: who is really to blame for the Oscars' lack of diversity?" *The Guardian*, February 26, 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/feb/25/oscarssowhite-right-and-wrong-academy-awards-audience>

Seamus Kirst, "#OscarsSoWhite: a 10-point plan for change by the hashtag's creator," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/feb/25/oscarssowhite-10-point-plan-hashtag-academy-awards-april-reign>

"What it's really like to work in Hollywood (if you're not a straight white man)," *New York Times Magazine*, February 24, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/24/arts/hollywood-diversity-inclusion.html?_r=0

"The Missing Piece of the Oscar's Diversity Conversation," *The Atlantic*, February 26, 2016 <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/02/hollywoods-black-and-white-filter/460326/>

Beatrice Verhoeven, "Does #OscarsSoWhite Controversy Overlook Diversity in 'The Revenant'?" *The Wrap*, February 12, 2016 <http://www.thewrap.com/the-revenant-oscarssowhite-diversity-overlooked-oscars-academy-awards-hollywood/>

9/8 Class 3. The History of an Industry and a Problem

Watch: *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915)

In-class: *Within Our Gates* (Oscar Micheaux, 1920) and the short films of Zora Neale Hurston

Reading: *America on Film* Chapter 3 (45-77) and Chapter 4 (78-101)

9/15 Class 4. Classical Hollywood and the Construction of Gender and Whiteness

Watch: *Imitation of Life* (John Stahl, 1934)

In-class: *Illusions* (Julie Dash, 1982)

Reading: *America on Film* Chapter 8 (171-186) and Chapter 10 (217-237)

9/22 Class 5. Post-war Anxieties

Watch: *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945)

Reading: *America on Film* Chapter 9 (187-209)

9/29 Class 6. 50s Redux: Masculinity/Femininity

Watch: *Far from Heaven* (Todd Haynes, 2002)

Reading: *America on Film* Chapter 11 (238-256) and Chapter 12 (257-277)

10/6 Class 7. 60s and Latino Representation

Watch: *West Side Story* (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961)

In-class: *Mi Vida Loca* (Allison Anders, 1993)

Reading: *America on Film* Chapter 7 (135-163)

Also: Berg, Charles Ramirez. *Latino Images in Film* (13-56 and 66-86).

****Due 11:59pm. Post in e-learning: Paper proposal and Research Question. What question will you try to answer, discuss, or explain this essay? Write one longer paragraph in which try to explain: what the object of study is (a film, a director, a genre?), what questions you have about this object, and what conclusions you draw from your study. Also try to develop one or two sentences that tell us what your main argument, claim, or thesis is.**

10/13 Class 8: Blaxploitation in the 1970s

Watch: *Foxy Brown* (Jack Hill, 1974)

In-class: *Badass Supermama* (Etang Inyang, 1996)

Guest: Evan Johnson

Reading:

Ed Guerrero, "The Rise and Fall of Blaxploitation," in *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993), 69-111.

George Lipsitz, "Genre Anxiety and Racial Representation in 1970s Cinema," in Nick Browne, ed., *Refiguring American Film Genres, History, and Theory* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 216-20.

10/20 Class 9: An Independent Response

Watch: *The Middle of Nowhere* (Ava Duvernay, 2012)

Read:

Jacqueline Bobo, "Black Women's Films: Genesis of a Tradition" in *Black Women Film and Video Artists* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Gloria J. Gibson-Hudson, "The Ties That Bind: Cinematic Representations by Black Women Filmmakers," *Black Women Film and Video Artists*.

bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 115-131.

****Due 10/20 in class: Introductory paragraph for the Final Research & Analysis Paper. How do you plan to begin your paper? This introductory paragraph should help us focus in on your topic and also understand what your main goal in the rest of the essay will be.**

10/27 Class 10. Brutal Histories: Native Americans on Film

Watch: *On the Ice* (Andrew Okpeaha MacLean, 2012)

In-class: *Reel Injun* (Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, Jeremiah Hayes, 2010)

Read: *America on Film* Chapter 11 (102-122)

Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, Chapter 1, "Genesis of the Stereotype," *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (U of Nebraska P, 1999), 1-15.

11/3 – No class. Submission Day!

****Due 11/3 on e-learning: (Polished) Rough Draft of Final Research Paper. This rough draft should contain proper sentence and paragraph structure, be fully cited, and complete. The only thing that should be "rough" here is the development of the ideas.**

11/10 Class 11. Tigers, Dragons, and Whitewashing: Asian Americans and American Film

Watch: *Better Luck Tomorrow* (Justin Lin, 2002)

In-class: *Anna May Wong – Frosted Yellow Willows: Her Life, Times, and Legend* (Elaine May Woo, 2007)

Read: *America on Film* Chapter 6 (123-142)

Margaret Hillanbrand, "Of Myths and Men: Better Luck Tomorrow and the Mainstreaming of Asian America Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 47.4 (Summer 2008) 50-75.

Amanda Hess, "Asian-American Actors Are Fighting for Visibility. They Will Not Be Ignored," *New York Times*, May 25, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/29/movies/asian-american-actors-are-fighting-for-visibility-they-will-not-be-ignored.html?_r=0

11/17 Class 12. Movie Masala: South Asia

Watch: *Meet the Patels* (Geeta Patel, Ravi Patel, 2014)

In-class: *Sanjay's Super Team* (Sanjay Patel, 2015)

Updated: August 26, 16

Shilpa Dave, "South Asians and the Hollywood Party: Peter Sellers and Brownface Performances," *Indian Accents: Brown Voice and Racial Performance in American Television and Film* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 19-39.

11/24 No class - THANKSGIVING.

12/1 Class 13. Monetizing Diversity

Watch: *Fast and Furious 7* (James Wan, 2015)

Read: Eliana Dockterman, "This Is the Real Reason Furious 7 Is a Box-Office Smash," *Time Magazine* April 5, 2015. <http://time.com/3772166/furious-7-box-office-diversity/>

Mary Beltrán, "The New Hollywood Racelessness: Only the Fast, Furious, (and Multiracial) will Survive," *Cinema Journal* 44.2 (Winter 2005): 50-67.

12/7: Final Papers Due by e-learning at 11:59pm.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor. Please make sure you have the most updated version of this syllabus.