Race and Gender in American Film

Spring 2022
21:014:255:01
Thursdays 2:30 – 5:20 PM
Hill Hall 101

Instructor: Dr. Bernie Lombardi
Instructor Email: Bernie.Lombardi@Rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00 – 2:00 PM and by appointment
Office: Conklin Hall 320

The focus of this course will be to analyze the ways in which ethnic and gendered identities are represented in American film since the early twentieth century, and to gauge the effects of those representations. Although this course focuses on the traditional interlocked representations of African Americans and European Americans in classic American films, we will also analyze the representation of other ethnic groups so that we may construct a narrative of race in American film, gleaned from a variety of perspectives. Themes covered include: the origins of racial and gendered stereotyping in film, interracial family romance, film and social activism and Civil Rights, representation in film, model minorities, Whiteness, tokenism, coming-of-age, sexuality, labor, and the white savior, among others.

Course Objectives:

- Learn to distinguish between film representation and historical reality
- Learn the relationship between film theory and film images
- Learn to analyze films as literary and historical narratives
- Acquire specialized vocabulary to discuss and analyze film
- Learn to write a film response essay
• Improve writing and critical thinking skills
• Sharpen public speaking skills through an oral presentation
• Sharpen skills working as part of a team through two group projects
• Learn to create a virtual analytical narrative using multimedia sources
• Develop skills for creating educational and creative content on social media sites such as Tumblr
• Interpret the various intersections of race, gender and sexuality
• Develop a rhetoric for discussing race that manifests sensitivity and care

Note: This syllabus may be subject to change. The instructor will make students aware of changes via email.

Course Requirements

➢ Required Texts:

The majority of films and other texts are posted on the course’s Canvas site. There may be one or two films that you will need to watch via Netflix or rent via Amazon or iTunes. I will let you know in advance if this is the case.

➢ Office Hours

My office hours are for you. Come with any questions you have about assignments, course materials, other pertinent topics. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class period; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. This is an open and safe space for continuous dialogue, and there is no such thing as a “stupid” question. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up a Zoom appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Regarding emails, I will try and get back to students within 24 hours (many times, sooner) Mondays-Fridays. However, I may not respond to emails on Saturdays and Sundays.

➢ Grade Breakdown:

Attendance: 10%
Participation: 10%
Group PowerPoint Presentation: 15%
Quizzes #1-13: 15%
Essay #1: 25%
Essay #2: 25%

➢ Attendance

Students must attend each class meeting having watched the assigned film to its completion, thoroughly read any assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the material in class.
Attendance will be taken twice each class. Once at the beginning and once at the end. Therefore, you receive two marks for each class attended in its entirety. You may miss three marks (three attendances) without penalty; this adds up to 1.5 class sessions. Missing more than 1.5 class sessions or three marks (attendances) will negatively impact your final grade. The only exception for missing more than three attendances is if you can provide proper documentation for all absences. However, these extreme circumstances will require us to meet and discuss your progress in the class. Also note that you cannot make up quizzes and other assignments that are due on a day you miss class.

➢ Participation

You are evaluated in part on your contributions to the discussion. This is not only about quantity of participation, but also about thoughtful participation: selective comments that really move discussion forward and suggest careful engagement with the texts and questions under consideration. Active listening is also part of participating. Being present in the classroom, sharing ideas, and doing your best to make the time we have together productive is far more important than recording and memorizing what is said in lectures.

I do expect you to respect and engage with your peers’ interests, as they can inform and expand your own in valuable ways. I will take note when you respond thoughtfully to other students, when you are open to different perspectives and points of view, when you call classmates by name, when you contribute to the classroom’s energy with alert body language and responsive gestures. Students who routinely contribute to class discussion, show initiative in engaging with the material, and demonstrate their active listening will receive high marks for participation. A critical part of discussions is the posing of thoughtful questions.

Many of the topics this course covers are sensitive and require intellectually mature and respectful participants. Being respectful and open-minded is the best way to learn and grow. Individual and intellectual growth should always be goals while taking courses in college. If you ever feel disrespected or uncomfortable during course discussions, you should not hesitate to contact the instructor.

➢ Group PowerPoint Presentation

Each week, a group of students will introduce an assigned film to the class before we watch it. Presentations will be 10 minutes in length and must cover the following:

1. Historical context: what was going on in the United States at the time the film was released?
2. Reason for making: who made the film? why was the film made? and for what kind of audience?
3. Reception: how was the film received by popular media and news outlets (what kind of press did it get)? Did it receive any awards?
4. Key words: After having researched and watched the film, what are 2-3 key words the class should know before they watch the film? These words should highlight the film’s main themes. Examples include melodrama, interracial marriage, reconstruction, model minority, etc. You should be sure to provide a definition for each word you choose.
5. Introduce two discussion questions for the class to think about as they watch the film.
6. Answer each of the two discussion questions on individual slides. Your answers to these questions should be in paragraph form (roughly 1-2 paragraphs for each question)

All of these questions require that you watch the film in its entirety and conduct outside research before the day you are presenting. *Note: each member of the group must speak at one point during the presentation.

The group presentation is worth 15% of your final grade. All members of the group will receive the same grade for this assignment (I will make few exceptions). It is the group’s responsibility to divvy up the workload as fairly as possible. I highly recommend that groups meet via Zoom or WebEx once or twice before they submit the presentation.

I will do my best to assign you to a group presenting on a date/film that appeals to your interests. Email me three choices, including date and film title, stating your preferences for leading class discussion. In selecting your three choices, consider which topics/films most appeal to you and your schedule (i.e. don’t select a date when you have a paper due in another class). You may also email me specific dates when you prefer not to present. In order to consider your preferences, I must receive your choices by Friday, January 21 at 6:00 PM. I will do my best to accommodate everyone’s preferences, but this will not always be possible. I will assign dates in the order in which I receive your emails.

**Quizzes**

You will be given 13 quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes are meant to assure that you keep up with the workload and to test your comprehension of key themes in the films we watch. You will take the quizzes directly on Canvas and can take them any time from Wednesday at 6:00 AM until Thursday at 2:00 PM. These quizzes should not take longer than 10 minutes of your time; however, you will have 20 minutes total to complete the quiz once you open it. Note: you will only have one attempt to take each quiz. Be sure that you are prepared before you open the quiz, because you will not be able to open it a second time.

These quizzes are worth 15% of your final grade. I will drop your two lowest quiz scores when calculating your final grades. If for some reason you do not take a quiz one week, that quiz will count towards one of your dropped scores. For this reason, you will not have the opportunity to make up a missed quiz for any reason including illness. The quizzes will close at exactly 2:00 PM each Thursday, so be sure to begin by at least 1:40 PM.

**Essays**

You will write two 5-page essays this semester, each worth 25% of your final grade. The first is due Thursday, March 10 in class. The second is due Tuesday, May 10 @3:00 PM via email (this is the course’s designated final exam time). I will assign specific questions for you to answer a few weeks before each deadline. The questions will ask you to consider the films we’ve watched in relation to the course’s themes. Essays must be written in 12-point Times New Roman font, be double-spaced, and have 1 in. margins on all sides.
**Notes on Late Assignments and Course Engagement**

In the event that you know an assignment will be late, you should inform me at least three days prior to the assignment due date. If I consider your reasoning legitimate, I can choose not to penalize for lateness (this is completely up to my discretion). If you are ill or unable to complete an assignment due to a serious family matter, you should provide me with appropriate documentation, such as a doctor’s note.

You should have a plan to ensure that you will have access to the internet on a daily basis throughout the semester. Technical problems, failed internet connections, and computer crashes are not excuses for not completing course work or submitting assignments late. You should plan for what you will do if you have any technical problems.

**Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)**

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. The standard minimum penalties for students who cheat or plagiarize include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade (0 points) for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and possibly including a course grade of F. Likewise for cheating on exams and quizzes. Note that the uncited use of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

The department REQUIRES that the following honor pledge is written and signed on every exam, paper, or other major course assignment that is submitted for grading: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).”

**Accommodation and Support Statement**

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

**For Individuals with Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.
For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: https://tinyurl.com/RUN-DAO.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.
The **Writing Center** has remote tutoring available: [http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter](http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter)

For more resources at Rutgers, Newark, visit: [https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19](https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19)

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### Course Schedule:

**Note:** I will on occasion require that you read an additional review or journal article that is not listed on the syllabus. On such occasions, I will notify you by Monday of the week you are meant to read it and post the text on Canvas.

**Week 1: January 20 – No in person meeting**

1. **Live Zoom meet and greet 2:30-3:00 PM** where we will go over the syllabus together.
2. Preferences for the Group Presentation due Friday, January 21 by 6:00 PM
Week 2: January 27 – No in person meeting

2. Read: “Cinematic Techniques”
3. Quiz #1 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
4. Read takeaway notes

Week 3: February 3 – No in person meeting

2. Read: “100 Years Later, What’s the Legacy of ‘Birth of a Nation’?”
3. Quiz #2 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
4. Read takeaway notes

Week 4: February 10 – No in person meeting

3. Quiz #3 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM

Week 5: February 17 ****First in person meeting: see you in class!***

1. Watch: *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967)
   ***We will discuss *Imitation of Life* and *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* in class
2. Quiz #4 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
3. **Group Presentation #1: The Searchers**

Week 6: February 24

1. Watch: *The Searchers* (1956)
2. Quiz #5 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
3. **Group Presentation #2: Smoke Signals**

Week 7: March 3

4. Quiz #6 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
5. **Group Presentation #3: Mi Familia**
Week 8: March 10

3. Essay #1 due in class
4. Quiz #7 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
5. **Group Presentation #4: The Namesake**

Week 9: March 17

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 10: March 24

2. Quiz #8 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
3. **Group Presentation #5: The Breakfast Club**

Week 11: March 31

2. Read: “What About ‘The Breakfast Club’?”
3. Quiz #9 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
4. **Group Presentation #6: Moonlight**

Week 12: April 7

2. Read: “‘Moonlight’: Is This the Year’s Best Movie?”
3. Quiz #10 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
4. **Group Presentation #7: Gook**

Week 13: April 14

2. Quiz #11 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
3. **Group Presentation #8: The Help**

Week 14: April 21

2. Read: “An Open Statement to the Fans of The Help”
3. Quiz #12 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM
4. **Group Presentation #9: Get Out**
Week 15: April 28

2. Quiz #13 completed by Thursday at 2:00 PM

Tuesday, May 10

1. Essay #2 due @ 3:00 PM