

RACE AND GENDER IN AMERICAN FILM

Fall 2016
Tuesday & Friday 1:00 PM - 2:20
Conklin Hall 455

Instructor: Jina Lee
Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:00-6:00 and by appointment
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Purpose of Course:

This course will address issues of race and gender through the interrogation of films made in the United States. The focus of this course will be to analyze the ways in which ethnic and gender identity is represented in American film over the past 60 years, and to what particular effect. In an attempt to stretch the conversation past the usual suspects of *Gone with the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation*, we will look at projects not always considered in said conversation. In this way we will hone our critical thinking skills, having to seek out or untangle these themes within a particular film. Cultural context will be a necessary component of our exploration and to that end we will employ scholarship surrounding the times and places in question. We will also analyze the representation of other ethnic groups so that we may construct an American filmic narrative of race gleaned from a variety of perspectives.

This course will include writing assignments with several short responses, film reviews, group presentation, and a midterm and final exam.

Course Requirements:

Exams: You shall be required to write two examinations. The first will cover the first half of the course, the second—the final—the remaining half. The exam format will be the same in both cases: 2-3 short essay prompts. The questions will usually involve comparative analysis of two or more films as well as the application of literary or film theory (from the readings) to specific scenes in the films. Your responses must be in full sentences and grammatically correct.

Group Presentation: You shall be responsible for a small group presentation on a film-- which will require outside research. You and your group mates will review the film assigned for the date your group is assigned. Your group will research the criticism/scholarship surrounding the film and place the film in the context of the themes we examine in this course.

You must submit a works cited page and an outline to the instructor at the start of your presentation. (Further explication will be provided in class.)

Written Assignments: You shall be required to complete and submit in-class responses and critical film reviews. The in-class responses will be a reaction paper to either the assigned reading or film. The critical film review asks you to critically analyze a film for the way it represents race and gender.

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to come to class on time, prepared, participate constructively in class activities, and complete in class assignments.

Grading:

Attendance, Participation, In-class Writing	25%
Midterm and Final Exam	50%
Group Presentation	10%
Film Reviews	15%

Course Policies:

Attendance:

You are free to attend, or not, as you choose. However, excessive absence will lead to failure in the course as your success relies on your continued presence, preparation, and participation. Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F. Please be sure to make it on time. Late-comers inevitably disrupt the class discussion. Whether or not you attend class, you are responsible for any information that is transmitted during class time, whether that be a change of exam time, a cancellation of a presentation, and so forth. My advice is to partner with another student whose notes you can borrow in case you must be absent. I will not be responsible for telling any student what they missed during an absence.

Late assignments/make-ups are not accepted unless previously arranged.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes using another's ideas in a written assignment without proper citation, cheating on an exam, or using an assignment that you have written in another class to fulfill the requirements of this one.

For more information see the University's Academic Integrity Policy at:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: *"On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination / assignment."*

Classroom Courtesy:

Please be respectful of the classroom space by minimizing the number of disruptions. This means showing up on time, not having side conversations, and silencing all electronic devices. You are permitted to use electronic devices for the purposes of taking notes and accessing the readings if necessary. Anyone who is caught using a computer for anything other than class work or similarly using your cell phone to talk or text will be asked to leave and your participation grade will be lowered.

This class covers a significant number of controversial ideas and you are all encouraged to disagree with the assigned texts or with each other. This is both healthy and productive. However, you must remain respectful at all times. Failure to do so will result in removal from the classroom and possible a lower grade.

Students with Disabilities:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973) 353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Required Course Material:

Text:

hooks, bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1996.

Films:

Imitation of Life (1959)**

The Human Stain (2003)**

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar (1995)

Aladdin (1992)

Mulan (1998)**

Spanglish (2004)

Waiting to Exhale (1995)**

Thelma and Luise (1991)

**These are on reserve in Dana Library.

(Please note that you do not need to purchase the films, as many are available for streaming online. If you do not have Netflix or a cable subscription, you can easily rent the films for a nominal fee on itunes, amazon, and/or google play.)

Schedule of Assignments

(Subject to Change)

9/6 Introduction to the course

9/9 In-class viewing of *Crash* and discussion

9/13 In-class viewing of *Crash* and discussion; Establish groups and Group Presentation Requirements

9/16 Discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 1-3; in-class writing response

9/20 Discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 4-7; in-class writing response

9/23 Discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 8-11; in-class writing response

9/27 In-class viewing of *White Men Can't Jump* and discussion

9/30 In-class viewing of *White Men Can't Jump* and discussion

10/4 Review of *Imitation of Life* due; Group 1 presentation

10/7 Review of *The Human Stain* due; Group 2 presentation

10/11 Review of *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* due; Group 3 presentation

10/14 In-class viewing of *The Birdcage* and discussion

10/18 In-class viewing of *The Birdcage* and discussion; discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 11-13; in-class writing response; Midterm Review

10/21 Midterm Exam

10/25 Review of *Aladdin* due; Group 4 presentation

10/28 Review of *Mulan* due; Group 5 presentation

11/1 In-class viewing of *Better Luck Tomorrow* and discussion
11/4 In-class viewing of *Better Luck Tomorrow* and discussion

11/8 Discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 14-17; in-class writing response
11/11 Review of *Spanglish* due

11/15 In-class viewing of *Maid in Manhattan* and discussion
11/18 In-class viewing of *Maid in Manhattan* and discussion

THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/29 Review/comparison of *Waiting to Exhale* and *Thelma and Luise* due;
12/2 Discussion of *Reel to Real*, Chapters 18-21; in-class writing response

12/6 In-class viewing of *The Help* and discussion
12/9 In-class viewing of *The Help* and discussion

12/13 Final Exam Review

12/23 11:45-2:45 Final Exam