**Radical Film History**  
Fall 2015  
26:510:533  
Thursdays 5:30-8:10pm, Conklin 447

Professor Whitney Strub  
wstrub@rutgers.edu  
243 Conklin Hall (inside Women’s & Gender Studies main office)  
Office hours: Thursday 3-4 and by appointment (widely available, on campus almost every day)

This research seminar will begin with an historical overview of efforts to link film to a radical praxis, from the silent era through digital production. While primarily centered on the United States, the scope will be global, ranging from Latin American Third Cinema to Chris Marker’s attempts to create a participatory workers’ cinema in post-1968 France. Other topics might include films of the Popular Front era, the Hollywood Ten, Black filmmaking and the “L.A. Rebellion” school, Newsreel and the New Left, queer and feminist film, and the cinema of postcolonial resistance movements. While close textual analysis will mark our studies, we will also foreground historical questions of production, distribution, and reception. Students will write an original research paper engaging with a specific history of radical film.

As a research seminar, this course is set up in two phases. For the first half of the semester, we’ll engage in intensive readings (and viewings) designed for two purposes: to serve as a somewhat rapid crash-course survey in radical film history, and also to provide methodological models for the sorts of work students might undertake. Then in the second half of the semester we will shift to focusing on the research and writing process, as students pursue their own projects; we will meet to share feedback, notes on progress, and ideally, mutually supportive collective encouragement.

The course is not premised on any doctrinaire definition of radical film. The most robust cinematic traditions of radical film practice emanate out of the Left, but students interested in the Right might certainly investigate its filmic legacies as well. *Radical* might also invoke the oppositional *formal* practices of underground and avant-garde film, too. So students are encouraged to think capaciously in defining their own research projects here.

**Required books:**  
There are no required books for this course. All readings will be in the form of journal articles and book chapters—on the logic that these provide the best models for the sort of work we’ll be doing. Unless otherwise noted, all articles should be available through the databases subscribed to by the Rutgers Library website. All book chapters will be posted as pdfs on the course Blackboard.
**Note:** I ask that laptops remain closed during our meetings. So please either print the readings, or access them on a reading device (Kindle/Tablet/etc) that doesn’t double as a web browser. You will need the readings on hand during our meetings.

**Grading and Class Requirements**
* Participation and responses to films/readings (25%)
* ONE short essay, 5-7 pages (25%)
* Final paper, 25 pages (50%)

1. Participation and responses: The expectation is that students will come to class having read the week’s assigned pieces carefully and considered them, and will carry the discussion based on that work. Responses will be weekly and informal, in the realm of 300-500 words, on a shared blog to be chosen by the class (Wordpress? tumblr?). The expectation here is that each member posts at least once per week (before noon Thursday), and also comments on at least twice on other posts.

2. Short essay: This will involve reading a film from class—something assigned to watch, or emanating out of the readings—against 2-3 reviews from the time of its release, thinking historically about how and why the critics approached it as they did, and how different perspectives may be afforded by a critical distance of time and/or positionality. **DUE IN CLASS THURSDAY OCT. 15.**

3. Final paper: This will be an independent research paper, based on your own work in primary and secondary sources. It might also be a comparable project—digital essay, essay-film, etc.—of equal research and analytic rigor.

Each of these will be elaborated in a more formal assignment sheet.

**Venues to Acquaint Yourself With:**
Anthology Film Archives: [http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/](http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/)
Film Forum: [http://filmforum.org/](http://filmforum.org/)
Maysles Documentary Center: [http://maysles.org/mdc/](http://maysles.org/mdc/)
Film Society at Lincoln Center: [http://www.filmlinc.org/](http://www.filmlinc.org/)
These are just some examples of the rich film culture we are privileged to live near—be adventurous and explore!

**Course Schedule**

**Sept. 3**
Introductions
Sept. 10: Development of Radical Film

Watch:
Salt of the Earth (DVD on reserve at Dana, also on YouTube here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9oY4rmDaWw)
Battleship Potemkin Odessa Stairs sequence (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laJ_1P-Py2k)
(entire film can be viewed online through Rutgers Library)


Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmerman, “The Home Movie and the National Film Registry: The Story of Topaz,” Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memory (California, 2008)

And two short primers on Soviet montage:
Glen Johnson’s Hitchcock page: http://faculty.cua.edu/johnsong/hitchcock/pages/montage/montage-1.html

Sept. 17: 1960s Underground/Experimental Film

Watch:
Hold Me While I’m Naked (1966, 14 min.): http://www.ubu.com/film/kuchar_naked.html
Symbiopsychotaxiplasm (1968), on reserve at Dana


**Sept. 24: Class, Colonialism, and Resistance**
Watch: *Battle of Algiers* (1966)


**Oct. 1: Toward a Revolutionary Cinema?**
Watch: *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* (1973) OR *Bush Mama* (1975)


**Oct. 8: Gender, Sexuality, and Film**

No viewings required; will show selections from Pat Rocco and Barbara Hammer in class


Marlo David, "Let It Go Black": Desire and the Erotic Subject in the Films of Bill Gunn, "Black Camera" 2.2 (2011)


**Oct. 15: Toward a Black Feminist Cinema**

Watch: *Watermelon Woman* (1996)

L.H. Stallings, "Redemptive Softness": Interiority, Intellect, and Black Women's Ecstasy in Kathleen Collins's Losing Ground," *Black Camera* 2.2 (2011)


Matt Richardson, “Our Stories Have Never Been Told: Preliminary Thoughts on Black Lesbian Cultural Production as Historiography in The Watermelon Woman,” *Black Camera* 2.2 (2011)


**Oct. 22**
Individual meetings with professor and self-assigned readings/viewings

**Oct. 29**
Collective workshopping of projects

**Nov. 26/Dec. 3**
Rough draft feedback sessions