"The city," as both actual geographic entity and imagined cultural phenomenon, provides a revealing historical window into numerous aspects of American society. Using representations of the city in American film history as our point of entry into these issues, we will explore what these depictions tell us about American cultural concerns. How are mainstream understandings of race, gender, class, and sexuality articulated—or challenged—through cinematic visions of the city? What understanding of the nation’s physical landscape have these images contributed to the collective American historical memory, and how has cultural representation interacted with politics and policy?

Readings


In addition, we will read an assortment of scholarly journal articles, essays from anthologies, and primary source documents. These will be available either on Blackboard under Course Documents (marked as BB on the syllabus) or the Rutgers University Library website databases (http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/).

The easiest way to access them is to do a search directly from the search bar on the main page. Another way is to search under Journals for the journal name. If you have trouble with one method, try the other. If both fail, email me right away. “I couldn’t find the article” is not a legitimate excuse.

Course Requirements:

**Attendance and Punctuality:** You are expected to attend every class, from start to finish. Attendance is mandatory. Your overall course grade will be lowered by one letter-notation for each unexcused absence beginning with the fifth one. More than eight absences for any reason will result in a loss of credit for the course. Only *documented* emergencies and medical occasions, or officially school-sanctioned activities, will qualify as excused absences.

If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.
Note: I realize we are living in unprecedented and uncertain times, and that pandemic realities might affect you, me, or all of us collectively (and that they have already affected many in our community). I intend to approach this and every policy in a spirit of goodwill and generosity—so, the policy is the official word, but I’ll work with anyone individually if and when things come up. Just get in touch and we can talk it through!

**Class Participation.** All students are required to participate in the discussions during class. As a result, you must arrive at class having completed that day’s reading assignment and prepared to talk about it. A valuable part of discussions is the posing of questions; no one is expected to grasp perfectly the significance of all the readings. Engaged questions are just as important as comments. Your participation grade will reflect both the frequency of your participation (too much talking that runs the risk of dominating class time is not an asset) and the quality of your comments and questions. Note that participation also includes active *listening*; sleeping, side conversations, and other forms of non-listening will be met with punitive measures on the participation front.

There’s some tension between the fact that having your video on creates a more cohesive sense of community and the fact that not everyone is always able to have their video on for various reasons. I’m going to encourage having video on to the best of your ability, but I’m also not the video police and it won’t be a requirement except for special circumstances.

**Attendance and Participation together are worth 20% of course grade.**

**Quizzes (10%)**
Quizzes will be extremely short and conducted verbally in class, with 3-5 questions and people called on at random from the roster to answer. If you’re called but not present, you miss the credit for the question. These will occur most class meetings, so the grade will be cumulative.

**Informal response essays (15%)**
Each week you will have a specific prompt for which you will write an informal 1-2 paragraph response on Blackboard. This is due each Monday by noon, and will help structure our discussion. You also must write a brief response to another post each week, by Wednesday at noon. These will not be graded, but they will be counted, and I’ll let you know if your posts are not sufficing.

**Short paper (15%):** You will complete one short formal paper (4-5 pages), which contrasts one of our readings to one of the assigned films. This will be due in class February 22.

**Midterm (20%)/Final (20%):** We will have two exams, to test your knowledge of course materials.
Midterm: March 22
Final: May 10
Grading Guidelines
A: work of exceptional quality, showing profound and meaningful engagement with the materials in question, thoughtful and comparative analysis, superior writing—and most importantly, containing a clear, inventive, and persuasive thesis.
B: work that is above average—shows knowledge and/or contains a thesis, but does not develop it as strongly as it could.
C: adequate work that fulfills the assignment—often based on summarizing rather than thesis or analysis.
D: subpar work that falls short of fulfilling the assignment but deserves some credit.
F: work that fails to earn credit for the assignment, including plagiarism.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be negotiated under extenuating circumstances (which do not include computer-related issues), with some grade deductions, before the due date.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be negotiated under extenuating circumstances (which do not include computer-related issues—always back up your work!), with some grade deductions, before the due date.

No incompletes will be granted unless the matter has been discussed with me in advance.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)
You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu. All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge.

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 including a course grade of F and referral to the academic integrity board. I aspire to be your ally and supporter in all possible ways, but on matters of plagiarism, expect no sympathy. Cases will be handled in a draconian manner, and excuses will not be entertained.

Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities notice:
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’ 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:
Policy on Classroom Conduct
Video or audio recording of the instructor or other students is not permitted, and constitutes a violation of the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct.

In class discussions, I expect universally respectful interactions. In examining our texts, there may be differing perspectives, disagreements, and debates. This is fine; through such dialogue comes greater understanding. When challenging someone else’s perspective, though, refrain from personal attacks or blistering scorn. If someone makes what you consider an offensive or disrespectful comment, note that this does not absolve you of adhering to the iron-clad rule of respect in responding to it. If the instructor tells you to stop speaking, you must stop speaking.

Failure to abide by these rules, or other interference with the classroom learning environment, will result in a lowered course grade, or removal from the classroom.

Policy on Office Hours
My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to say hello. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. I’m flexible on timing as long as it’s after noon, so we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Content notice
Some of the material in this course will deal with charged issues of race and sexuality, and some material might include coarse language, scenes of violence, and depictions of sexuality. I will try to alert you to anything that might be potentially upsetting in advance, but know that throughout, the course features adult content. If you are concerned about specific triggers, please speak with me early, and I will work with you.

Tentative syllabus of readings

Week 1 (Jan 21): Introductions
Thurs: Intros, syllabus

*Mini-assignment: your vision of the city
Week 2 (Jan 25/28): City Symphonies, “White Slavery”

Mon: Watch Manhatta (1921) and Sightseeing in Newark (1927)

Thurs: Watch The Traffic in Souls (1913)

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Week 3 (Feb 1/3): The Segregated City

Mon: Janet Staiger, Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema, pp.116-146 (BB)

Thurs: Paula Massood, Black City Cinema, ch.2
Watch Dark Manhattan (1937)

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Week 4 (Feb 8/10): Cities of Noir

Mon: Edward Dimendberg, Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity, selection BB

Thurs: choice of film: The Naked City (1948), Pickup on South Street (1953), The Big Heat (1953)


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Week 5 (Feb 15/17): Blaxploitation and the Urban Ghetto

Mon: Watch Super Fly (1972)

Thurs: Massood, Black City Cinema, ch.3

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SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22

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Week 6 (Feb 22/24): 1960s Urban Documentary


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Week 7 (March 1/3): The “Post-racial” Ghetto

Monday: Watch Do the Right Thing (1989)
Thurs: Massood, *Black City Cinema*, ch. 4

**Week 7 (March 8/10): “New Black Cinema,” con’t.**

Monday: Watch *Boyz N the Hood* (1991)

Thurs: Massood, ch.5 and ch.6
Newspaper coverage of *Boyz N the Hood*
*Take-home midterm handed out*

**ENJOY SPRING RECESS, MARCH 13-21**

**Midterm due March 22**

After midterm, rest of class to be determined by group discussion. One topic will be:

**Week 8: Beyond the Black/White Binary: Chinatown**

*Chan is Missing* (1982)
Peter Feng, “Being Chinese American, Becoming Asian American: *Chan is Missing*,” *Screening Asian Americans*

Other possibilities:
*The Exiles* (1961): Native Americans and urban erasure
*Cruising* (1980): NYC gay underworld immediately before AIDS crisis
*Falling Down* (1993): white flight/white fear
*Se7en* (1995): the “evil” city
*Wassup Rockers* (2006): Latino punk rock and Black/Latino/white tensions
Tyler Perry selection: sub/urban Black middle-class cinema
*Shortbus* (2006): the queer city
*Pariah* (2012): lesbian youth in the modern-day NYC

**FINAL EXAM DUE: 3pm, Monday May 10**
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,

**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-TAO.

**For emergencies**, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

*Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy. Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students’ right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.*