Edna Bonhomme
Drexel University
HIST 218: Race and Film
Winter Session 2017

Class: Mondays, 6-8:50pm

Course Description

This course will trace the history of race and relations in film from 1915 until the present by exploring familiar racialized and gendered tropes that have emerged in film representations of ethnic and racial minorities and chart changes over time. The course focuses on developing a critical analysis of film and other visual culture through viewing films, researching their history and writing critical--analytical summaries and analyses. To augment our work together in seminars, in on-line discussion sessions each week we will hone our critical techniques through structured argumentation and consideration of current political and media events.

Readings

Required Texts (available for purchase at the Drexel University Bookstore, from online, booksellers and on reserve in Hagerty Library)

- Sherman Alexie. *Reservation Blues.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995.
- Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (8th Edition). New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004.
- Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.* New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, *#FromBlackLives Matter to Black Liberation.* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016.

Other Readings

Additional readings for the course—book chapters and primary source documents—can be found on the course's Blackboard website. Please **bring either detailed notes or a printed copy of the readings to class each session.**

Objectives and learning outcomes

Readings, discussions and assignments are designed to enhance the diligent student's ability to:

- Communicate clearly in writing and orally.
- Critically analyze visual representations and identity stereotypes, themes and other tropes.
- Summarize arguments clearly and concisely.

Course Schedule

Note: Films must be watched prior to coming to class.

Date/Topic	Film/Readings
Week 1, 9 January Introductions: Early Cinema, Race, and Representation	• Go over syllabus • Presentation of films and thematic organization **Reading:** • Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History" in Region, Race, and Reconstruction; Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York, 1982), 153-54. • John Hope Franklin, "Birth of a Nation": Propaganda a History" *Massachusetts Review.* 20:3 (Aug. 1979): 417-434 • Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Chapter 1-3 **Film** • Birth of a Nation (D.W. Griffith, 1915), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3kmVgQHIEY&t=109s **Individual Assignment due Friday, 13 January:** Film Review of *Birth of a Nation* (700-1000 words)
Week 2, 23 January Independent Film Movement	**Reading** • Thomas Cripps, "Oscar Micheaux: The Story Continues," in Manthia Diawara, *Black American Cinema.* • Michael Omi, Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, Chapters 1 and 2 • Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, Chapter 4 and 6 • Margaret Walker, *For My People* (poem) • Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues* (a poem) and *The Dream Keeper* (poem) **Film** • Within Our Gates (Oscar Micheaux, 1920) **Individual Assignment due Friday:** Film Biography of Oscar Micheaux (700-1000 words)
Week 3, 30 January Mammies, Maids, and Mules…Black	**Reading** • Claudia Jones, "We Seek Full Equality for Women"

Women in Early American Cinema	• Barbara J. Fields and Karen Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, Chapter 7, "Witchcraft and Racecraft: Invisible Ontology in Its Sensible Manifestations" • Howard Zinn, Chapter 15 of "A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present" **Films** • Imitation of Life (John M. Stahl, 1934) • Nothing But a Man (Roemer, 1964)
Week 4, 6 February Civil Rights and Resistance	**Reading** • Orozco, Cynthia E. *No Mexicans, women, or dogs allowed: The rise of the Mexican American civil rights movement*, Chapter 7 • Frank Bardacke, "The United Farm Workers from the Ground Up," in *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s* • Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit, I do mind dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*, Chapters 2-4 • **Optional:** Freedom on My Mind (Connie Field, 1994) **Films** • Salt of the Earth (Hibert Biberman, 1954) • Finally Got the News (1970) **<u>Group Project</u>:** Social movements and legislation: Black and Latinos between 1950s and 1960s
Week 5, 13 February Economic Recession, Race, and Sexuality in New York City	**Reading** • Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 2000, Chapter 3 "Gender: The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate" • The Queer Nation Manifesto, "History as a Weapon" ACT-UP, http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/queernation.html • **Optional:** John H. Mollenkopf, *A Phoenix in the Ashes: The Rise and Fall of the Koch Coalition in New York City Politics*, Chapters 2 **Films** • 80 Blocks from Tiffany's (Gary Weis, 1979) • Paris is Burning (Jennie Livingston, 1990) **<u>Group Project</u>:** AIDS and Public Health in New York City from 1980-1990
Week 6, 20	**Reading**

February Settler Colonialism and Native American Resistance	• Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues* • Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, Introduction and Chapters 9 **Films** • Incident at Oglala (Michael Apted, 1992) • Smoke Signals (Chris Eyre, 1998) **Group Project:** Mapping Indigenous Groups and Struggles: From 1492 to Standing Rock
Week 7, 27 February U.S. Imperialism, Migration and Asian Americans	**Reading** • Noam Chomsky, *Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and U.S. Political Culture*, Introduction • Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move*, Introduction • Robert B. Ito, "A Certain Slant": A Brief History of Hollywood Yellowface" **Films** • Mississippi Masala (Mira Nair, 1991) • Daughter from Danang (Gail Dolgin, 2002) **Group Project:** Migrants and Refugees from the Asian Continent
Week 8, 6 March Race and Gender in America	**Reading** • Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*. Chapter 12, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights" • Toni Cade Bambara, "Reading the Signs, Empowering the eye: *Daughters of the Dust* and the Black Independent Cinema Movement," in Manthia Diawara, *Black American Cinema* • Jillian Báez, "Latina/o Audiences as Citizens: Bridging Culture, Media, and Politics," in *Contemporary Latina/o Media: Production, Circulation, Politics* by Arlene Dávilla **Films** • Daughters of the Dust (Julie Dash, 1991) • Real Women Have Curves (Patricia Cardoso, 2002) **Group Project:** Labor, Race and Gender in the United States
Week 9, 13 March Arab Americans in Film	**Reading** • Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction • Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, Chapters 8-10

	• Fairouz's *Zahrat-il-Mada'in* (Flower of the Cities, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu2qxiFRJrQ **Films** • Reel Bad Arabs (Sut Jhally, 2006) • Amreeka (Cherien Dabis, 2009) **Individual Assignment due Friday:** U.S. Imperialism and the Middle East (700-1000 words)
Week 10, 20 March New Directions in American Cinema	**Reading** • Hamid Dabashi, *Iran Without Borders: Towards a Critique of the Postcolonial Nation*, Chapter 8 • Manning Marable, *Beyond Black and White: From Civil Rights to Barack Obama*, Introduction • Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* • **Optional:** Hilton Als, "Moonlight, undoes our expectations," *New Yorker*, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/24/moonlight-undoes-ou -expectations **Film** • A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014) • Moonlight (Barry Jenkins, 2016) **Individual Assignment due Friday:** Afrofuturism, Diaspora and Cinema (1000-1200 words)

Final Examination: Individual media project to be shared with class

Course Evaluation

Class Participation:	20%
Quiz	10%
Individual Writing Assessments:	20 %
Group Presentations:	20%
Final Examination (Paper or Media Project):	30%

Please see below and Blackboard for more information on the exam and assignments.

Grade Scale

A+	97-100	C+	77-79
A	93-96	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	60-66

B- 80-82 F <60

Course Expectations

Preparation

This class will be conducted in a seminar style. This format requires all participants to read thoughtfully and carefully in preparation for class.

Individual Writing Assessments: The course will be augmented by 2 individual writing assignments (700-1000 words each), in which all students will be assigned a prompt. Timely and thorough completion of each week's readings, film viewings and writing assignments is necessary for successful completion of the course. In order to fully and thoughtfully participate in the discussions, you must read and digest each week's assignments by the dates listed on the syllabus.

Bring copies of the reading and/or your notes to each class session. We will engage in close readings of the texts and I will expect you to refer to specific passages of the texts and specific clips of film in our discussions. In order to simplify access to readings and to diminish the time required to obtain printed copies of texts, I have limited the numbers of readings posted to Blackboard.

Participation

Attentive listening and active participation of all members is valued and necessary.

Selective Verbal Contributions

We can learn from the variety of perspectives, experiences, and skills we each bring to this class. Active participation in each class is expected and may take any or all of the following forms: selective verbal contributions, active listening, and helping or encouraging others to participate. I expect that your comments will be grounded in the readings, use appropriate evidence to support positions and when appropriate/applicable connect to the comments made by other discussants.

I will use the following techniques to generate discussions that will facilitate your learning:

- Cold calling: I will often ask a question then call on a particular student to respond. I will ask students to support their answer with information from the lectures or readings.
- Group work: I will at different points in the semester ask students to work in groups of 3 or 4. I expect that everyone will actively contribute to the group's effort to complete the task at hand.
- Leading class discussion: I may randomly call on a student to lead class discussion by summarizing the reading or identifying the main argument or idea of the reading.
- In-class writing responses/journaling.

Active Listening

Active listening may best be achieved by giving one's full attention to the discussion and to the comments of each individual. Distractions such as text messages, Facebook, email, etc. detract from this effort and from the overall class environment. To that end, **laptops may only be used for accessing readings and notes**. Since the class will be largely discussion-based, you may not find the need to take extensive notes during the discussions.

If I find that people are not being attentive to discussion, I may request that all electronics be put away.

Course Policy

Classroom Etiquette

We are a community of learners and learning is difficult to promote unless there is a sense of respect and a willingness to take risks. To that end, let respectful language and tones as well as a desire to understand as much as to be understood guide your contributions and participation in class. Feel free to express your opinions and ideas and to back them up with credible evidence. Please silence your cell--phone during class and please do not use laptops during the class.

Absences

Since attendance is necessary to participate excessive absence (i.e. more than 2 absences) will lower your participation grade for the course. Absences may be excused for religious reasons or serious illness with at least 24 hours advance notice via email, and in the case of illness, a letter from a doctor or advisor. If you are absent it is your responsibility to get the discussion notes and announcements from one of your fellow students.

Lateness

Be on time to class. Two late arrivals count as an unexcused absence (and will cause your grade to be lowered.)

Deadlines

All work is due at the start of class on the dates listed in the syllabus unless otherwise noted. Computer troubles and large workloads are not sufficient excuses for missing deadlines. Save your work often and in multiple locations and plan in advance. Assignments submitted late will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (i.e. A to A-) for each day late. Extensions **may** be granted in extenuating circumstances such as serious, prolonged illness or family emergency. **All assignments must be completed by the end of the examination period in order to successfully complete this course.**

Papers and Exams

An A or A-- thesis, paper, or exam is one that is good enough to be read aloud in a class. It is clearly written and well--organized. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a perceptive, compelling, independent argument. The argument shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, is supported by a well--chosen variety of specific examples, and, in the case of a research paper, is built on a critical reading of primary material.

A B+ or B thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization and clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers or exams in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight into many of the issues raised in the course. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A B- thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates a command of course or research material and understanding of historical context but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer's independent argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence.

A C+, C, or C- thesis, paper, or exam offers little more than a mere a summary of ideas and information covered in the course, is insensitive to historical context, does not respond to the assignment adequately, suffers from frequent factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or inadequate primary research, or presents some combination of these problems.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between A and C- are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a paper or exam that belongs to the D or F categories demonstrates inadequate command of course material.

A D thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student's command of course or research material.

An F thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates no competence in the course or research materials. It indicates a student's neglect or lack of effort in the course.

Class Participation

A student who receives an A for participation in class typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind and asks those questions . An 'A' discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.

A student who receives a B for participation in discussion in section typically does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A 'B' discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

A student who receives a C for discussion attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.

A student who fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of D or F.

Grading Policy

Grades are intended to be a reflection of an individual's ability to demonstrate a meaningful and understandable engagement with the material covered in the course. They are not reflections of the quality of one's intelligence, effort or character. Please do not obsess over grades. Do be concerned with what you learn and how that knowledge transforms you and the world around you.

I take great care in establishing expectations and guidelines for assignments and in assessing assignments. In order to have a grade reconsidered, you must wait 24 hours before submitting a written a statement explaining

the grievance. Keep in mind that your grade could go up or down as a result.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating Policy

I expect that all members of this class will abide by the spirit and letter of Drexel University's policies on plagiarism and cheating in every aspect of participation in this course. For further information, please consult
http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp
and
http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/studentHandbook/general_information/code_of_conduct/
and
http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/facultystaff/integrity/

Communication & Office Hours

I make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. However, email works best for brief factual questions not more in-depth discussion. Please visit me during office hours to discuss your work or clarify content. I also use email and Blackboard announcements to convey information regarding changes in readings or class meeting plans. Be sure to check your email daily to ensure that you don't miss updates. In the age of email and text messages, sometime a good old face-to-face conversation is the best way to address the matters at hand. I encourage you to make it a point to see me at least once this semester. I am happy to discuss any aspects of the course content, assignments, or experience.

Policy on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

It is the University's policy to provide a learning environment that provides all students with the opportunity to realize their full potential. To this end, the goal of the Office of Disability Resources ("ODR") is to assist students with disabilities in becoming self-sufficient, independent, and successful members of the University's community and to provide students with disabilities with equal opportunity of access to University courses, programs, facilities, services, and activities. Students seeking reasonable accommodations for their disabilities must first register with ODR. The staff of ODR will work closely with students to review medical documentation, assess their individual needs, and link them with the services necessary to ensure them the opportunity to participate fully in college life. The Office of Disability Resources website can be found at:
http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/Overview/

Add, Drop and Withdrawal Policies

You can add this course until the end of week 2:
http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_add.asp

If you add this course after the start of the term, you are responsible for completing ALL work that you may have missed. You can drop this course until the end of week 2; the course will then be removed from your transcript:
http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp

The course withdrawal deadline is February. You will have received some graded work prior to this deadline. If you have any questions about your progress at any time of the term, please contact me. If you choose to Withdraw, a "W" will be recorded in your transcript. See http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/pdf/course_withdrawal.pdf.