

# **FILM AS CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION – Winter 2024**

**COMM 2350-001** Professor: Chriss Williams      Email: williamsc@wpunj.edu

Office Hours: Email 24/7; Zoom by appointment

**REQUIRED TEXT:** NONE. 3 Reading Packets on Blackboard in the Course Materials section

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to help us study how films explore cultures. Films have proven their tremendous potential as viable means of providing exposure and insights into the vast, but mostly uncharted, realms of cross-cultural communication. Although the technological revolution has reduced the physical boundaries of our world to those of a "village," the social and cultural differences have persisted and managed to keep us as far apart as ever. We notice each other's presence, but often fail to understand one another.

Through weekly viewing and analyzing of films, this course attempts to open a window through which we could see a more critical view of ourselves and a more receptive view of the others. The course will focus on both cultural values and aesthetic aspects of the films.

## **COURSE CONTENT:**

The films have been chosen for their topical relevance to a variety of cultural and social issues such as race relations, sex relations, gender identity, human rights, women and patriarchy, generation gap, immigration, cultural conformity, juvenile delinquency, and disability rights.

That said, this particular section of the course is centered on discussions of Representation. Representation, simply put, concerns who and what we see on film. The "who" are the characters and communities we see on screen. The "what" is the subject matter of the film itself. Beginning with Female Representation, moving through Black Representation, and ending with LGBTQ+ Representation, the course will present a clear understanding of how these distinct groups and cultural sare seen in our world village.

**ONLINE/BLACKBOARD:** I designed this class to be self-directed: YOU can decide when to watch the films, take the Reading Packet Quizzes, the Film Quizzes, and the Paper. ALL work is due by: **11:59pm. JANUARY 26, 2024.** All work will be completed Blackboard (the Paper will be turned in on Bb). If you have ANY technical difficulty, let me know, but seek help via the HELP icon on Blackboard for tech issues.

**PROFESSOR INTERACTION:** There is no discussion board. Rather, I am available all the time via email (if you don't hear back in 24 hours, email again). I may send out email reminders, corrections, and comments—so please, for the duration of this class CHECK YOUR EMAIL for this class DAILY! Once I hit SEND, I assume you got it, and thus: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for any changes, corrections or details disseminated via email. Important info will be put in the Announcements section of Blackboard.

**\*\*\* NOTE: SOME OF THE FILMS HAVE STRONG SEXUAL CONTENT OR THEMES, IMAGES AND WORDS THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED RACIST, AND ARE ONLY SUITABLE FOR MATURE STUDENTS WHO UNDERSTAND THAT IN ORDER TO PROPERLY ADDRESS OF REPRESENTATION IN FILM, WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO SEE AND HEAR DIRECTLY FROM ARTISTS EXPLORING THEM- AND THAT THESE ARTIST MAY CHOOSE NOT TO PRESENT THEIR WORK IN A VERSION SUITABLE FOR GENERAL VIEWERS. IF THIS IS AN ISSUE, PERHAPS THIS IS NOT THE CLASS FOR YOU.**

**IF YOU REMAIN IN THE CLASS, I ASSUME YOU ARE WILLING AND PREPARED TO POTENTIALLY BE OFFENDED BY SOME OF THE MATERIAL IN THESE FILMS. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS-- PLEASE CONTACT ME IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE CLASS BEGINS.**

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**FILM SCREENINGS:** The films chosen will be available on Blackboard. Because this class is about watching and analyzing films, you need to see them all **BECAUSE YOU WILL BE TESTED ON THEM.**

**SECTION READING PACKET QUIZZES:** 12-16 questions based on each READING PACKET. They are OPEN BOOK; you will have ONE HOUR to answer the questions. My expectation is that you will answer the questions as you read the Reading Packet. These questions will not be buried deep in the text, but if you have the Reading Packet open as you take the quiz- you will do fine. Those with Accommodations, take whatever time you require (it may say LATE, but ignore this)- IF you don't know what an Accommodation is, this does not apply to you.

**\*\* Please make sure you have a stable internet connection, so you don't get cut off—DON'T use a cell phone for this reason.\*\***

**SECTION FILM QUIZZES.** On Blackboard, it will be questions about THE FILMS from that SECTION. IF have not watched the films, you won't be able to answer the questions. You will only have 1 minute to answer each question. But if you saw the films, you will know the answer easy. (Example of the type of question: "In HUNGER GAMES, what weapon did Katniss use? A) Gun, B) Knife, C) She didn't use a weapon, or D) Bow and Arrow." IF you saw the movie, you know the answer. If you didn't, you won't.)

**PAPERS.** You have 2 short papers to write. Details Below.

### **GRADES:**

Section 1 Reading Packet Quiz	10%	Section 1 Film Quiz	10%
Section 2 Reading Packet Quiz	10%	Section 2 Film Quiz	10%
Section 3 Reading Packet Quiz	10%	Section 3 Film Quiz	10%
BOGEL PAPER	20%	BECHDEL TEST PAPER	20%

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Hopefully, you will look at every social issue differently after you leave this class. Moreover, you will understand how film can be used to engage others in adopting, swaying, or helping an issue. Specifically: You will leave this class able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of global issues relevant to cross-cultural communication.
- Demonstrate increased understanding of the co-cultures in a multicultural environment and foreign cultures
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills in analyzing visually expressed messages
- Communicate effectively, in both written and oral forms, interpretations of visual messages shaped in different cultural contexts
- Identify cultural differences, similarities, and intercultural relations
- Demonstrate an appreciation of humanistic values through exposure to a variety of high and low-context cultures

The films screened in this course were chosen for their topical relevance to the subject matter.

**\*\*\*\* BEFORE YOU BEGIN, WATCH THE "HOW TO TAKE THIS CLASS" VIDEO ON BLACKBOARD. \*\*\*\***

## 2 SHORT PAPERS

(Watch the video about these papers before doing them):

### ***BECHDEL TEST PAPER (at least 500 words):***

- Using the Bechdel Test (3 parts: at least two named women, talking to each other, about something other than a man), analyze LOST IN TRANSLATION, THE PIANO, and SET IT OFF. ***Discuss using at least 1 scene from each movie.*** Did each pass? Explain.

### ***BOGEL PAPER (at least 500 words):***

- Thinking of Bogel's 5 categories, create 5 stereotypes in which to fit members of your ethnic/racial group or the group you identify with. (Because Bogel used Black folks, if you are Black, create 5 difference stereotypes.) Use specific examples from any film (not just the ones we screened in class) or TV show to support your ideas. Be sure to name your group and give the 5 stereotypes a name.

## ***Films & Readings are in the Course Materials section of Blackboard***

**SECTION 1: FEMALE REPRESENTATION:** Women are seen through a “Male Gaze.” That is, men mostly create the images we see, so it is through their eyes that we “see” women. This idea was proposed by Laura Mulvey. This section explores that idea and if there is a test for it.

**Screen:** Lost in Translation *(This film features some nudity.)*

**Screen:** The Piano *(This film features nudity, including male nudity, it is brief and during a sexual encounter.)*

**Screen:** Set It Off *(This film features some nudity and the “N-Word.”)*

**Screen:** Bechdel Test Clip (3 mins)

**Readings:** Cross Culture Intro, Mulvey, Saco, Bechdel

### ***Section 1 Assignments:***

Section 1 Film Quiz

Section 1 Reading Packet Quiz

Bechdel Test Paper

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**SECTION 2: BLACK REPRESENTATION:** Black folks have been in film since the beginning. But they have often been seen in stereotypical roles. Donald Bogle created 5 stereotypes of Black folks we see in films.

**Screen:** Eve’s Bayou *(The film hints at incest.)*

**Screen:** One False Move *(Violence- The film is about robbery suspects on the run.)*

**Screen:** Do The Right Thing *(The film features many racial and ethnic slurs, including the N-word)*

**Readings:** Bogel *(Bogel uses racially insensitive words to describe how Black folks have been portrayed in film.)*

### ***Section 2 Assignments:***

Section 2 Film Quiz

Section 2 Reading Packet Quiz

Bogle Paper

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**SECTION 3: LGBTQ+ REPRESENTATION:** Historically the LGBTQ+ community has had to hide in plain sight in film, seen only to those who knew what to look for. Over time, that has changed allowing a full vision of the community to be seen.

**Screen:** Celluloid Closet *(This film uses insensitive words and terms to describe members of the LGBTQ+ community as it covers the history of this group in film and media.)*

**Screen:** Beginners *(Some nudity.)*

**Screen:** Moonlight *(The film features some racial and ethnic slurs, including the N-word. Violence.)*

**Readings:** Homosexuality in film, Portrait of the Father as a Gay Man, Moonlight isn’t all about sex, What happened to ‘Queer’ Cinema”

### ***Section 3 Assignments:***

Section 3 Film Quiz

Section 3 Reading Packet Quiz

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE BY 11:59pm JANUARY 26<sup>ST</sup>, 2024**