

RTF 359S Film and Social Change, Fall 2020

Course Instructor: Adrien Sebro, Ph.D.

asebro@utexas.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 11AM-12PM, CMA 6.134

Teaching Assistant: Luis Rivera Figueroa

Luis.riverafigueroa@utexas.edu

Office Hours: TBD

Class Schedule: MWF 9-9:50AM, BMC 4.206

Screenings: Monday 5-7:30PM, CMA 3.116

Course Overview:

Often viewed as a medium of “pure entertainment,” film has also had an essential relationship to evolving social conditions in the United States and the struggle for change. This course will focus those moments where cinema has commented upon, documented, and even arguably had a hand in producing social change. The course aims to acquaint students with the film movements, film authors, production conditions, and audience reception practices that have linked film to broader social movements. It will also teach students basic and essential terminology and style for writing about film, which is increasingly vital for competent citizenship in our media-driven public sphere. In addition, it will introduce students to basic theoretical concepts fundamental to understanding social conditions and social change including, power, ideology, hegemony, institutions, etc. Given the time constraints, the course focuses on American cinema with occasional references to influential cinema movements across the globe to place this American discourse in global perspective.

Required Readings:

Readings must be read in advance of your section meeting.

1. Benschoff and Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies*, 2nd Edition
2. Additional readings will be available as PDFs on our course website.

Course Policies:

Weekly Reading Responses

To help drive seminar discussion and participation each student is required to submit at least a **paragraph** in response to one or more of the week’s readings. Reading responses are due on the class canvas page **every Thursday 11:59 PM** (must do AT LEAST 10 throughout the semester).

Film Pitch

During Week 4, we will pick groups in order to create a pitch for a social change film. The groups will present their pitches during Week 6.

Paper Presentation

In **Weeks 15 and 16** each student will conduct a power point presentation to the class on the subjects that their final papers intend to cover. These presentations will aid in strengthening presentation skills as well as mining through any questions or concerns that one may still have while completing their final papers. Great work requires constructive peer feedback.

Final Paper

The seminar final paper is due via hard copy during Week 16. **The final paper is to be 8-10 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, and 1-inch margins.**

Grade Breakdown:

Attendance: 5%

Reading Response: 30%

Film Pitch: 10%

Thesis: 10%

Paper Presentation: 15%

Paper: 30%

NOTE: All screenings and assigned readings are subject to change as the semester progresses.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance in screenings and lectures is mandatory.

Two latenesses and/or early departures count as an absence. Each absence will hurt your final participation grade for attendance.

LAPTOP and CELL PHONE USEAGE: Cell Phones should be silenced during class. Laptops may be used for note-taking only. Use of laptops for other purposes, most especially social media, will counts against your course grade. If you receive multiple warnings about this, it will count as an absence.

ACADEMIC HONESTY and PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a serious offense.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, facilitating academic dishonesty, coercion regarding grades, unauthorized collaboration, forgery, and theft. Also, should a student purchase or otherwise acquire a document from a third party and submit such a document as original work for the class assignment, such action is plagiarism and a violation of the code.

OFFICE HOURS: I am happy to meet with you during office hours to discuss your work, as well as any other questions or concerns you might have regarding the class. If you would like to meet with me during office hours, please email me to schedule a time. If you cannot make my office hours let me know, and we can try to schedule an appointment for a different time.

LATE WORK: Assignments are due by the date and time indicated on the syllabus and assignments. For each day (notice this is not each class but each day) that an assignment is late it will receive a 1 letter grade penalty (ex. an A becomes a B).

Writing assistance: Carefully read through guidelines for the research and writing assignments, passed out well before each due date, as these guidelines will influence the grading of the assignments you turn in. It is recommended that you consult with your TA or me prior to the due dates in order to obtain further clarification regarding the assignments and to discuss possible topics, reference materials, and/or writing difficulties.

The Writing Center offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge for using the Writing Center, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis. Call 471-6222 for hours and/or an appointment. For more information, visit their website at www.uwc.fac.utexas.edu. You may also want to use UT's Learning Center for assistance with studying and writing. It is located in the Jester Center, Room A332. For hours and/or an appointment, call 471-3614. For more information, see the Learning Center's web pages at www.utexas.edu/student/lsc.

The Moody College Writing Support Program, located in BMC 3.322, offers one-on-one assistance without charge to undergraduates seeking to improve their professional writing in all fields of communication. We have student specialists in Journalism, RTF, CSD, CMS, Communication & Leadership and PR & Advertising. In addition, they offer workshops to strengthen core writing skills in each field and to inspire students to strive for excellence. Students may guarantee their time by booking half-hour appointments on their website for

assistance during all stages of the writing process. Writing coaches also will take drop-ins if they are not working with appointments.

Personal Pronoun Preference: Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Services for Students with Disabilities: Upon request, The University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students with physical or learning disabilities should provide the professor with a letter requesting reasonable academic accommodation, and work directly with the professor to determine what accommodations are needed. This letter can be obtained from Services for Students with Disabilities, located in the Student Services Building. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY, or visit their [website](#).

Please inform me within the **first three weeks of class** if you have a physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disability and need accommodation to take part in or to complete the required work for this course.

University Resources for Self Care: Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For *immediate* support, visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, 5th floor | [512-471-3515](tel:512-471-3515) | cmhc.utexas.edu

- CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | [512.471.2255](tel:512.471.2255) | cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html
- CARE Counselor in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW
 - M-F 8-5p | CMA 4.134 | [512-471-7642](tel:512-471-7642) (Please *leave a message* if she is unavailable)
- *FREE Services* at CMHC include:
 - Brief assessments and referral services
 - Mental health & wellness articles -cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html
 - MindBody Lab - cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html
 - Classes, workshops, & groups -cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.

3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies. Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu. The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/> Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Important Safety Information: If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

The University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. **By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them.** Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1:

Wednesday

Intro and Syllabus Review

Friday

Althusser, L “Ideological apparatus of the State”

The Immigrant (1916, 22 min)

Week 2: Neighbors

Screening

Do the Right Thing (1989, 2hr 5)

Monday

America on Film, Part 1: “Intro. To Film Form and Representation”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Anthony Appiah. “Cosmopolitanism.”

America on Film, Part 1: “Intro. To Film Form and Representation”

Week 3: The “Social Problem” and Segregation

Screening

White Dog (1982, 1hr 30)

Monday

Jones, S. Antonio Gramsci. Chapters 3: Beginning on page 45

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Russell Campbell. “The Ideology of the Social Consciousness Movie.”

Week 4:

Screening

Selma (2hrs 8)

Monday

America on Film, Part 2: “African Americans and American Film”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Linda Williams. “The American Melodramatic Mode”

Week 5: Strategies of Resistance: Collective Action Against Institutions

Screening

Salt of the Earth (1954, 1hr 34)

Monday

Charles Ramirez Berg. “Bordertown, the Assimilation Narrative and the Social Problem Film.”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Biberman. *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film*: 7-38.

Week 6:

Screening

Harlan County USA (1976, 1hr 45)

Monday

Social Change Film Pitch

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

1. Julio Garcia Espinosa. “For an Imperfect Cinema.”

2. Alan Rosenthal, *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making*, “Barbara Kopple and Hart Perry”

Week 7:

Screening

How to Survive a Plague (2012, 2hr)

Monday

Stephen Mamber, "Cinema Verite" -Select readings

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Cecilia Treter, "Voices of AIDS: The HIV virus and the shaping of a cultural memory"

Week 8: Internal (R)evolutions: Subjective Evasion in Passing and Becoming

Screening

Orlando (1992, 1hr 34)

Monday

Adrian Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black" in *Transition*, No. 58, 1992.
Illusions (1982, 34 min)

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Judith Butler. "Gender as Performance: An interview."

Week 9: SPRING BREAK

Week 10: Black Femininity and Black Masculinity

Screening

Moonlight (2016)

Monday

Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, selections.
Pariah (2007, 28 min)

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Paper/Thesis Discussion

Friday

TBD

Week 11: Majority as Minority: Religious Battles and Cultural Wars

Screening

Stop the Pounding Heart (2014, 1hr 41)

Monday

Bryan Stone. “Modern Protestant Approaches to Film (1960 to the Present).”

Wednesd

Film Discussion

Friday,

Ben Sampson. “‘Holywood’ Case Study: Fireproof and the Rise of Sherwood Pictures.”

Week 12: Systems of Oppression

Screening

The Hunting Ground (2015, 1hr 43)

Monday

Turn in and discuss thesis ideas (HARD COPY)

Valerie Smith. “The Documentary Impulse in African American Film and Video.”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

TBD

Week 13: Travesties of Law and Order

Screening

The 13th (2016, 1hr 40), *When They See Us* (select episode, 2019)

Monday

Angela Davis. “Race and Criminalization.”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Malik Miah. “Institutional Racism & the 13th Amendment.”

Week 14: Surveillance State / Surveillance Power

Citizenfour (2014, 1hr 54)

Monday

Philipp Stückrath. “State Control vs. Personal Liberty in Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report* and the Present-Day United States.”

Wednesday

Film Discussion

Friday

Lisa Park. “Cover Your Webcam.”

Week 15:

Student Paper Presentations

Week 16:

Student Paper Presentations

Final Hard Copy Papers Due in Mailbox Friday May 8th