

ETHN 101: Ethnic Images In Film
Los Angeles Film and Urban Crisis Since 1965

Instructor: Aundrey M. Jones

Time and Location: MW 11:00am-2:50pm at HSS 1315

Office Hours and Location: by appointment at Mandeville Coffee Cart (Art of Espresso)

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Course Description:

The Watts Riots of 1965, at the time, was regarded as the largest, full-scale urban uprising that the nation has seen in recent history. The years following Watts were met with much conflict, mainly concerning the rise of neoliberalism, full-scale militarized forms of policing and surveillance, and the violent neutralization of Black youth. This course will broadly examine the larger trends in political shifts that have occurred since the late 1960s, an era that marks the rise and end of the Black Power Movement and into what's called the War on Drugs. The city of Los Angeles has been seen as the epicenter of both ethnic/racial utopia *and* conflict geographically situated in the entertainment hub of the nation. Taking these factors into consideration, we will ask: how do we read social conflict through the lens of film? What are the stakes that Hollywood has served, and continues to serve, in creating, maintaining, and restructuring Los Angeles as a multicultural haven despite widening racial conflict and political crisis? How has film been used as both a cultural and political medium for the reimagining of Los Angeles' past, present, and future?

List of Films (in order of viewing):

Los Angeles Plays Itself

Made in America

Bush Mama

Bless Their Little Hearts

Colors

Menace II Society

Boyz n The Hood

Higher Learning

Crash

Training Day

Course Structure:

- In-class film screening (approx. 1 ½ hours)
- 10-15 minute break
- Lecture and discuss as class

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance & Participation: 25%
- Weekly Critical Responses: 40%
- Final Essay: 35%

Attendance and Participation – 25%

Attendance and participation are crucial for your success in this course. I cannot stress that enough. If you need any accommodations, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me during office hours. Part of your course grade will be based on your efforts to do the assigned readings and to think critically about them; your willingness to interact with other students; and your ability to thoughtfully engage with course texts and topics. All weekly readings must be completed before each class. Please come to class prepared to take careful notes, listen to each other, discuss ideas, and participate in a constructive and collaborative place of learning. Students will be allowed **one unexcused absence**; more than 2 unexcused absence will result in a substantially lower grade. Excused absences require proper documentation and notification. It is each student's responsibility to provide me with this information and arrange for make-up assignments when necessary.

Critical Response Papers – 40%

Each student is responsible for producing **four** critical response essays ranging from 500-600 words. The purpose of critical response papers are to reflect on the week's readings and films. Consider the following guidelines:

- 1) Briefly describe the main argument(s) and key points of the text.
- 2) Detail your own understanding of the main argument.
- 3) Briefly discuss how the readings relate to one another.
- 4) Relate to the film.

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. I expect a hard copy to be turned in by hand due the following Monday. Please do not email me your response unless I specifically tell you to do so.

Final Paper – 35%

Your final paper will be an analysis of a research topic relevant to the course (5-7 typed pages) and must engage with course material. It must also include a bibliography and properly follow conventions of citation and formatting according to MLA, Chicago, or APA style. More details will follow throughout the quarter. There will be **no in-class final exam**.

ADA Statement:

If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of this course, you should inform me as soon as possible of your needs. I will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you.

Week 1: Visualizing the City and its History of Conflict

Films: *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and *Crips and Bloods – Made in America*

- Horne, Gerald. "Black Fire: 'Riot' and 'Revolt' in Los Angeles. 1965 and 1992," pp. 377-404
- Murch, Donna. "Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth-Century War on Drugs," pp. 162-173.

Week 2: L.A. Rebellion, Black Filmmaking, and Neoliberalism in Los Angeles

Films: *Bush Mama* and *Bless Their Little Hearts*

- Field, Allyson Nadia. "Rebellious Unlearning: UCLA Project One Films (1967-1978)," pp. 83-118.
- Martin, Michael. "Struggles for the Sign in the Black Atlantic: Los Angeles Collective of Black Filmmakers," pp. 196-224.

Week 3: Class Politics and Urban Crisis in Los Angeles

Films: *Colors* and *Menace II Society*

- Bennett, Dionne. "Looking for the 'Hood and Finding Community: South Central, Race, and Media," pp. 215-228.
- Widener, Daniel. "How to Survive in South Central: Black Film as Class Critique" from *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* pp. 250-282.

Week 4: The Legacy of John Singleton (1968-2019)

Films: *Boyz n the Hood* and *Higher Learning*

- Dyson, Michael Eric. "Between Apocalypse and Redemption: John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*," pp. 90-109.
- McClinton, Dream. "Higher Learning: in praise of John Singleton's forgotten masterwork." <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/may/04/higher-learning-john-singletons-forgotten-masterwork>
- St. Félix, Doreen. "Mourning John Singleton, A Guardian of Black Cinema." <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/mourning-john-singleton-a-guardian-of-black-cinema>

Week 5: Multiethnic Relations in the 21st Century Metropolis

Films: *Crash* and *Training Day*

- Sexton, Jared. "The Ruse of Engagement: Black Masculinity and the Cinema of Policing," pp. 39-63.
- Shujah, Shazia. "Personal But Not Political: A Critical Analysis of the Movie *Crash*'s Educational Potential," pp. 147-159.