

ETHN 101
TuTh 2-3:20pm
WLH 2111

Ethnic Images in Film

Dr. Curtis Marez
Office Hours: Tu 12-2pm
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Teaching Assistants
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This quarter we will learn and practice Ethnic Studies methods for analyzing films by, for, and about Indigenous people and people of color. We will draw on the tools of film studies, including the close reading of films in relation to their contexts of production, circulation and audience reception. But we will use those tools to analyze power struggles in films directed and often written by Indigenous people and people of color, especially women. Their films are about power and participate in power struggles and forms of protest. Ethnic Studies as a field is partly about marginalized peoples, cultures, and knowledges, and this class thus brings together a film studies focus on particular directors with an Ethnic Studies focus on filmmakers as activist artist-intellectuals.

Course Films

13th (Ava DuVernay, 2016) 1h 40 min
A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night (Ana Lily Amir Pour, 2014) 1h 41 min
American Zombie (Grace Lee, 2007), 1h 30 min
Black Panther (Ryan Coogler, 2018), 2h 14 min
Drunktown's Finest (Sydney Freeland, 2014) 1h 35 min
Get Out (Jordan Peele, 2017), 1h 44 min
Mosquita y Mari (Auroro Guerrero, 2012), 1h 25 min
Pariah (Dee Rees, 2011), 1h 26 min

All film screenings will take place during lecture, mostly on Tuesdays. Screenings will start promptly at 2 so respect your classmates and fellow viewers and be on time.

Historically, movie-going has been an important **collective** activity, especially for communities of color, where movie theaters (or alternative venues like churches, union halls, community centers, schools) have served as important public spheres where communities remember the past and reflect critically on the present and the future. This quarter we will try to conjure for our classroom such experiences of collective, critical reflection on films and their significance.

Course Readings: There are no textbooks to buy. All readings are available online except in a few cases where they are only available as PDFs on Triton Ed. Many of the internet articles are

also on Triton Ed as PDFs. We will also treat the films screened in class like assigned texts, meaning we are all collectively responsible for watching required films and participating in discussions of them.

Requirements

1. 50% Two 7-page critical essays about two different assigned films. Paper prompts will be provided and will require you to build arguments based on film form and narrative techniques (see the essay by Rowe for 4/5) and at least two other course readings. You will also have the opportunity to compare and contrast an assigned film and another film or TV show by the same director. Papers can be turned in at Triton Ed, and as paper versions to your TAs.

2. 25% Class participation. In addition to attending all screenings and lectures, members of the class should be active spectators and participants in discussion exercises. Together we will employ Ethnic Studies “active learning” discussion games to encourage the widest possible participation. We will draw use techniques described by Cathy Davidson (“An ‘Active Learning’ Kit: Rationale, Methods, Models, Research, Bibliography,” <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/cathy-davidson/2017/11/15/active-learning-kit-rationale-methods-models-research-bibliography>).

As part of class participation, for every class everyone will turn in a 5x7 GAME CARD with their name and a response to a discussion prompt. It is up to everyone to buy their own 5x7 cards and bring them to class. The prompts for Tuesdays will ask you, based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch? Tuesday cards can be done quickly, in the first two minutes of class as we start the film. Thursday discussion prompts will be announced and completed in less than a few minutes during lecture.

Part Hollywood focus group, part Ethnic Studies teaching lab, think of the GAME CARDS as a creative, brainstorming space. Feel free to experiment with card colors and ink, doodles, drawings, stickers!—anything you’re moved to think about and create in response to the class.

3. 25% Discussion section participation.

Electronic Devices and Laptops. Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used for talking, texting, checking email or surfing the web. You may however use such devices to take notes in class and to search for information related to class discussion when prompted. Repeated use of electronic devices for other purposes will negatively affect your grade.

ADA Statement. If you need accommodations, please inform me and bring a notification letter outlining your approved accommodations. I will make all reasonable efforts to assist you. If you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you must notify me in writing within one week of receipt of the syllabus. You may also seek assistance or information from the Office for Students with Disabilities, 858/534/4382.

Cheating and Plagiarism. The use of sources such as ideas, quotations, paraphrases, or anything written by someone else must be properly acknowledged and cited. If you have

questions about the proper citation of sources, please ask me. Students who plagiarize are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with University policy. You should be familiar with UCSD's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, available at:

<http://www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm#AP14>.

Discussion Ethics. This class is intended for students interested in challenging commonly held understandings of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation. Given the nature of the course there will likely be a wide range of opinions. Ideally the course will prompt you to think for yourself and to raise questions about conventional views and received wisdom. However, please engage one another in discussion with respect and consideration. Abusive and harsh language, intimidation and personal attacks will not be tolerated. These norms are reflected in the UCSD Principles of Community that we are all expected to follow (<http://www.vcb.ucsd.edu/principles.htm>).

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. Overture: Introducing the Class and Key Film Terms

4/3 Introduction

4/5 Tools for Analyzing Film and Narrative

Carefully read the syllabus and come to class with any questions!

Allan Rowe, "Film Form and Narrative," *An Introduction to Film Studies* (Triton Ed PDF).

I. Film Genres: Coming of Age Stories

4/10 *Mosquita y Mari*

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

On the film's web page, read "Cast and Crew," "Press," and Blog
<http://www.mosquitaymari.com/stills/>

4/12 *Mosquita y Mari*

Ellise Fuchs, "Most of Us Don't Need to Put Labels on It: An Interview with Aurora Guerrero," *Popmatters*, December 5, 2012, <https://www.popmatters.com/164954-interview-with-aurora-guerrero-2495801265.html>

4/17 *Pariah*

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Read through the IMDB page for *Pariah*
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1233334/>

Melissa Anderson, "To Be Young, Gifted, Black and Lesbian in *Pariah*," *The Village Voice*, December 28, 2011, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2011/12/28/to-be-young-gifted-black-and-lesbian-in-pariah/>

4/19 *Pariah*

Ernest Hardy and Dee Rees, "Interview with Dee Rees, Director of *Pariah*," *The Village Voice*, December 28, 2011, <https://www.villagevoice.com/2011/12/28/interview-with-dee-rees-director-of-pariah/>

Brandon Harris and Dee Rees, "Out in the Neighborhood," *Filmmaker Magazine*, November 8, 2011, <https://filmmakermagazine.com/34803-out-in-the-neighborhood-dee-rees-pariah/#.WsK0GiOZN-U>

4/24 *Drunktown's Finest*

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Read the film's IMDB page:
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3091286/?ref_=ttfc_q1

Sydney Freeland and David Graver, "'Drunktown's Finest' Director Sydney Freeland on Growing Up Navajo and Trans," *Vice Magazine*, February 26, 2017.
https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xd5n54/trans-and-navajo-drunktowns-finest-999

4/26 *Drunktown's Finest*

Sophia Mayer, "Pocahontas No More: Indigenous Women Standing Up for Each Other in 21st Century Cinema," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, Issue 10 (Winter, 2015), <http://www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue10/PDFs/ArticleMayer.pdf>

II. Film Genres: Documentaries

5/1 13th

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Ava DuVerna and Rebecca Traister, "Ava DuVernay on Hollywood Racism, Modern- Day Slavery, and Why She's Still an Optimist," *New Yorker Magazine*, September 19, 2006, reprinted in *The Cut*, <https://www.thecut.com/2016/09/ava-duvernay-the-13th-queen-sugar-c-v-r.html>

PAPER ONE DUE

5/3 13th

Ava DuVernay and Ashly Clark, "Constitutional Crisis," *Film Comment* Sept/Oct 2016,
<https://www.filmcomment.com/article/ava-duvernay-interview-the-13th/>

5/8 13th

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Ava DuVernay and Michael Martin, "Conversations with Ava DuVernay: 'A Call to Action': Organizing Principles of an Activist Cinematic Practice," *Black Camera* 6.1 (Fall 2014), 57-91(only on Triton Ed).

III. Film Genres: Horror and Science Fiction

5/10 *American Zombie*

Read the film's IMDB page, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0765430/?ref_=nv_sr_1

Grace Lee and Brian Gallagher, "Grace Lee Talks American Zombie," *Movie Web*, March 25, 2008, <https://movieweb.com/exclusive-grace-lee-talks-american-zombie/>

5/15 *American Zombie*

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Grace Lee and Neelanjana Banerjee, "Making an Impact: Q & A with Filmmaker Grace Lee," Center for Asian American Media, August 8, 2016
<https://caamedia.org/blog/2016/08/08/making-an-impact-qa-with-filmmaker-grace-lee/>

5/17 *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

Read the film's IMDB page, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2326554/>

Manohla Dargis, "A Redesign of Dracula's Cape," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2016,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/21/arts/sheila-vand-in-a-girl-walks-home-alone-at-night.html>

5/22 *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Amy Nicholson, "Meet the Woman Behind the Year's Best Iranian Vampire Western," *Rolling Stone Magazine*, November 19, 2014, <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/features/girl-walks-home-alone-at-night-ana-lily-amirpour-20141119>

5/24 NO CLASS

5/29 Get Out

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Read the film's IMDB page, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5052448/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

J.T. Roan, "Social Death and Insurgent Discourses in Jordan Peel's *Get Out*," Black Perspectives <https://www.aaihs.org/social-death-and-insurgent-discourses-in-jordan-peeles-get-out/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/20/magazine/jordan-peeles-x-ray-vision.html>

5/31 Get Out

Rizvana Bradley, Vestiges of Motherhood in Recent Black Cinema," *Film Quarterly*, Winter 2017,
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59bd603cb1ffb64dbd8f40f3/t/5a236ffc419202b1df0d5156/1512271886824/bradley+vestiges+of+motherhood.pdf>

6/5 Black Panther

GAME CARD DUE AT START OF CLASS: Based on the reading, what do you anticipate will be most interesting to you about the film we are about to watch?

Reading TBA

6/7 Black Panther

Reading TBA

6/11 FINAL PAPER DUE

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ETHN 101 Spring 2018

Filmographies for Assigned Directors

Aurora Guerrero:

“What do I Care for Morning,” episode of *Queen Sugar* (TV show, 2017)
“Daddy’s Girl,” (episode of TV show *Fly*, 2018)
Mosquitqa y Mari (writer and director, 2012)
La Mission (assistant to the director, 2009)
Real Women Have Curves (assistant to the director, 2002)

Dee Rees, director and writer:

“Kill All Others,” episode of *Philip K. Dick’s Electric Dreams* (TV show, 2018)
Mudbound (2017)
Bessie (TV movie, 2015)
Pariah (feature film, 2011)
Pariah (graduate school short, 2007)

Sydney Freeland:

“Our Love is God,” episode of TV show *Heathers* (2018)
Diedre and Laney Rob a Train (2017)
Her Story (TV show, 2016)
Drunktown’s Finest (writer and director, 2014)
Hoverboard (short film, writer and director, 20012)

Ava DuVernay:

A Wrinkle in Time (2018)
13th (writer and director, 2016)
Queen Sugar (writer and director, various episodes, TV show, 2016-)
Selma (2014)
Middle of Nowhere (writer and director, 2012)

Ana Lily Amir Pour

Legion, Episode 10 (2018)
The Bad Batch (writer and director, 2016)
A Girl Walks Home at Night (writer and director, feature film, 2014)
A Girl Walks Home at Night (writer and director short film, 2011)

Grace Lee, director and writer

Off the Menu: Asian America (2015)
American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs (2013)
Janeane from Des Moines (2012)
American Zombie (2007)
The Grace Lee Project (2005)

Jordan Peele

Get Out (writer and director, 2017)
Keanu (writer, 2016)
Key and Peele (writer, TV show, 2012-15)

Ryan Coogler, writer and director

Black Panther (2018)
Creed (2015)
Fruitvale Station (2013)

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