

University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras Campus
College of the Humanities/Department of English/Undergraduate Program

INGL 4225: American Myths & Values in Literary Genres & Film

Instructor: Lynette Cintrón **Office & Office Hour:** P12-Pedreira basement, T 2pm & by appt.

Email: lynette.cintron@upr.edu

Class: Thursday, 3:00-6:20 pm

Room: P 106 (Screening Room)

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: None. Course approved for General Education literature requirement.

Course Description (from catalogue): The study of literary and film genres including the Western, comedy, horror, gangsterism, film noir, musical, and melodrama. The analysis of the theoretical and ideological framework within typical American literary genres and films. Lynette's note: Emphasis will be given to questions regarding cinematic representations of class, race, gender, sexuality and national belonging, as well as topics such as directorial style, theme, and spectatorship. Attention will be given to the ways in which film form relate to content.

Course Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, students will be able to:

- Define basic concepts and theories related to cinematic representation.
- Identify and define basic concepts related to cinematic form.
- Explain the cultural function of cinema in the formation of social identities in the US.
- Discuss the relation between ideology and cinema in the context of US history and society.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and analytical skills appropriate to the study of literature and film.
- Demonstrate critical reading and writing skills.
- Demonstrate knowledge of basic research tools, analyze and interpret diverse, interdisciplinary data and arguments.
- Engage more critically in discussions of US cinematic/literary genres and culture.
- Strengthen English language skills through writing, reading and class discussions.
- Apply the concepts of this course in writing while developing original scholarship.

Course Outline: Introduction to early cinema and film history with attention given to the ideological function of cinema within specific historical contexts. The core of the course will consist of close analysis of films representative of key cultural moments, genres & styles. See course schedule for more details.

Teaching Strategies: Class will usually begin with a brief lecture, followed by a screening and discussion. Films will be screened in class and discussed alongside critical readings. Readings and lectures will be interdisciplinary, drawing on theories about the gaze, representation of ethnic and racial others, spectatorship and authorship. Participation will be expected. Students must complete all the readings before the class for which they are assigned. You are required to BRING the assigned text (digital or hardcopy) to class, and to refer to it in order to support your

arguments. Should contributions to class discussions begin to lapse, I may assign additional homework, or initiate unannounced pop quizzes at any time during class. Up to 11.25 hours of this course may be covered online at Moodle, through a combination of guided forum discussions, quizzes, video lectures & ppt.

Accessibility Resources: Those students who receive services provided by the office of Vocational Rehabilitation must contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester in order to plan reasonable accommodation according to the recommendations provided by the *Oficina de Asuntos para las personas on impedimento* (OAPI) at the Office of the Dean of Students.

Classroom Policies: Please keep in mind that many of the topics and issues that we will discuss may be controversial. The classroom should be a space for sincere intellectual growth, and I encourage respectful discussions and debates.

- **Attendance:** Mandatory and will be taken at all classes.

-Defined as arriving on time, with the assigned course material, and staying until class is dismissed. Unless you have spoken with me ahead of time, do not leave class early, or you will be marked as absent.

-You are allowed 1 unexcused absence without penalty.

-Every absence without an acceptable documented excuse = automatic 1% grade reduction.

-Every **three** times you arrive late (more than 10 min. after class has begun) will equal one absence and will affect your grade.

-**Each absence over three** results in the reduction of your final grade by a letter grade.

*Five or more absences will result in automatic failure of this course—regardless of the circumstances. Whenever possible, please notify me (in person or via email) that you will be absent.

-Turn your phone on silent or off, during the entire class time, including screenings. Using your phone will affect your Participation Grade.

-**Emails:** Always sign your emails so that I know who has sent the message and **always include an appropriate subject line.** Do NOT email me about a matter without checking to see if the syllabus contains the answer. I will not respond to emails that do not contain a signature. I will not respond to email questions for which the answer is in the syllabus. Do not expect a response over the weekend, or within 24 hours.

-**Academic Integrity:** You will be subject to the standards of ethical academic conduct—cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Work found to be unethical will not be counted. Unethical conduct on the part of the student may result in further disciplinary action such as failure of the course.

-**Incompletes:** As a general rule, I advise against Incompletes. To request an Incomplete Course Grade, you must arrange to meet with me IN PERSON, at least ONE week before the last day of

class (NOT FINALS). Should you require an Incomplete because of an emergency, you must let me know ASAP and provide a documented reason.

Required Texts:

Available at our course website.

<http://online.uprrp.edu/>

Log In with UPR username.

Grading Scale: A, B, C, D, F.

A 90-100	B 84-86	C 74-76	D 64-67
A- 90-93	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	D- 60-63
B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F below 60

Course Requirements:

Classroom Participation: 20%

Quizzes: 10%

Critical Response Paper: 25% (4 pages)

Final Research Paper: 45% (7-8 pages, includes a 10% proposal)

Classroom Participation (20%): Thorough preparation for and active participation in class discussions are expected. You are expected to share your own ideas on the material. Don't get discouraged reading difficult texts. Bring your questions to class- together we will make sense of complicated theories. Check out Close Reading & Active Listening Guide, under "Syllabus & Resources."

* In-class film and video screenings are essential to this course. You are expected to take notes during class screenings (as well as discussions)— your success will depend on it.

* *Attendance* and *participation* are related but, nevertheless, quite different. *Attendance is a requirement.* One's contributions to the course are never based on merely "showing up" regularly. "Showing up" is your **attendance**. What you do when you show up is your **participation**: it is the measure of your engagement in the films/readings/discussions/lectures of the course. Using your phone during discussions and screenings will affect your participation grade. See Grading Criteria for Participation.

Quizzes (No more than 4 quizzes for a total of 10%): May be announced or unannounced. These are brief examinations designed to test your knowledge of, and engagement with the readings and films. A quiz may consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions. Quizzes may be given at the beginning of class or after a screening.

Critical Response Paper (1 paper, 25%): **4 pages** (NOT including the Works Cited page) **12pts.** **Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins all around, MLA.** Keep in mind the scope of

the paper--analyze only ONE film. No late response will be accepted without a documented excuse. Your response must be on a film from our syllabus (including recommended films). The film must appear in our syllabus BEFORE the paper's due date See Schedule for date.

***This is a critical, as opposed to personal or merely descriptive response. Your response must have:**

1. An original title
2. A thesis that is supported by concise and focused arguments, and a conclusion. Written in academic tone.
3. *Use at least one of the assigned articles to analyze the text.* Paper must reflect an engagement with the theories and concepts discussed in the course.
4. Rather than merely discussing the film's content, use Timothy Corrigan (See: Syllabus & Resources) as a reference for how to analyze the ways in which **cinematic form relates to content**.
5. Focus on at least one sequence or scene. Be specific.
6. Response will be evaluated based upon argumentation, content, organization, style and documentation. Spelling and grammar will also be taken into consideration. MLA style & methods of citation are required. See Grading Criteria for Papers.

Some tips:

- Proofread! There is no excuse for not using Microsoft Word's Spelling and Grammar Check. Also, you should read your paper aloud and/or review a hard copy to catch additional errors and improve readability. For more serious editing, give yourself 24 hours between drafts.
- Use the present tense when discussing films and literature (including scholarly texts).
- When summarizing a reading, use the third-person to refer to author/article's main arguments, e.g. "Trumper argues," or "Appadurai contends," or "the article highlights." When discussing films, use the third-person to refer to the director's choices and their effects on the viewer. For example, "Malick's use of a jump cut startles the viewer and draws attention to the break-down in communication between John Smith and Pocahontas." You can also refer to film, e.g. "Although the *The New World* depicts Native culture respectfully (even reverentially), one could argue that the ultimate perspective provided is that of the colonizer." Note that the **FIRST** time you reference someone you must provide their full name. Provide **only** their last name for subsequent mentions. Example, In "Third Cinema Today," Camilo Trumper argues that....
- Include year of film's release in parenthesis, the **first** time you mention it. Eg: Directed by Terrence Malick, *The New World* (2005) depicts...
- When mentioning a character for the **first** time, include the performer's name in parenthesis: Eg, In Brian de Palma's *Carrie* (1976), Margaret White (Piper Laurie) represents....
- Consult Timothy Corrigan's A Short Guide to Writing about Film.

Final Research Paper: (45%-includes a proposal worth 10%). 7-8 pages (not including Works Cited page), double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins all around, MLA. Due via email. Check Schedule for dates. NO final paper will be accepted without a proposal. NO late papers will be accepted. FOLLOW EMAILING INSTRUCTIONS CLOSELY. Failure to do so will cost you up to 5 points!

1. For this paper you will analyze the film or films (max. 2-no exceptions) of your choice (this is your primary source). Film can be from outside our course. Film can also be from within our course but **cannot be the film analyzed in your critical response.**

2. You are required to pay attention to film FORM as well as content and analyze the ways the relate to each other.

3. Your final paper should show original thinking. It should NOT be about how well you can describe a primary source, but about the complexity of an argument that emerges from a sustained analysis of your primary source(s).

4. You must use at least two secondary sources to support your arguments. You must include at least 1 source from outside our course.

5. Paper will be evaluated based upon argumentation, content, organization, style and documentation (MLA). Spelling and grammar will also be taken into consideration. Clear arguments and correct documentation using MLA citation method are required.

-You are required to submit a 1-2 page proposal via email (check schedule for due date & follow emailing instructions). Your proposal must include:

1. A tentative title.
2. A clear thesis.
3. Brief description of your project. 1 – 2 paragraphs.
4. A preliminary list of primary sources (i.e., the film/s you will analyze).
5. A preliminary list of **annotated** secondary sources. At least TWO secondary sources must be provided. One of the sources must be a scholarly source from outside the course.
5. Intellectual question(s) that motivate your work.

The proposal will allow me to make recommendations and catch any potential problems or difficulties before you set-out to develop your work.

Grading Criteria:

Participation

A: Active, consistent, meaningful participation. You come to class prepared not just to respond questions but also to initiate discussion with comments and questions. You come to class ready to make and argue claims about the readings and films. You attend to the comments of others in

class, agreeing, elaborating, or respectfully disagreeing. You bring our attention to passages from the reading or scenes from films to make your point; and at times connect such thinking with earlier readings/films or class discussions. You frequently take notes during screenings, lectures and discussions. “A” participants are not necessarily the most knowledgeable, they will remark just as much on what they have *not* understood (or misunderstood) about the readings as what they have understood about them.

B: You come to every class, have *almost* always done all the reading, and consistently respond to the questions of others and the questions of the instructor. “B” participants comment with frequency and their comments show that they have comprehended the readings. Like A grade participants, B grade participants initiate comments on their own, but not as frequently. Finally, they take notes during class.

C: You come to almost every class, usually have done most of the reading, most of the time, but do not demonstrate through preparation and ongoing engagement with the material. You contribute infrequently, maybe once a week. You rarely or infrequently takes notes during class discussions, lectures, or film screenings. “C” participants rarely initiate comments in class. Use of your phone.

D: You may be physically in class most of the time, and may contribute a few times throughout the semester (usually when called upon). When called upon, “D” participants tend to respond with little thoughtfulness, reflection, or willingness to engage with the readings or with the ideas of others. “D” participants rarely or infrequently take notes during class discussions, lectures, or screenings. Notable use of your phone during screenings, lectures and/or discussions.

F: The result of a combination of not coming to class, failing to take part in class discussions, not engaging with other students or with the instructor when called upon, or failing to take sufficient notes. You are always on your phone.

Papers

A: This is an excellent paper. It engages with ideas that are complex. Your text unfolds like a story; you guide your reader through a narrative-like progression from one idea to the next. The writing flows well from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. When discussing a scene or sequence, attention is paid to film form as well as content. Minimal spelling and grammatical errors. Academic tone sustained throughout.

B: This is a good paper. It fulfills the requirements of the assignment. A “B” paper goes beyond merely summarizing your source material. It demonstrates analytical skills and goes beyond mere explanation or summary. Most of the ideas in this paper are good. Some ideas may even be great, but their support may need to be fuller in some areas. Some transitions may be abrupt. There may be some awkward sentences in this paper or some inconsistencies in tone. Attention is paid to film form as well as content. A few spelling or grammatical errors are okay in a “B” paper. Academic tone sustained throughout.

C: This is the most complicated type of paper. This paper has a number of strengths, but it also has some obvious weaknesses. A “C” paper will show a basic understanding of the expectations

for the assignment even if they are not all fulfilled. The most common problem is a paper that is overly explanatory rather than analytical. Sometimes there may be analysis, but it needs to be more intellectually complex or is poorly defended. There are some good ideas in this paper, but they tend to be haphazardly presented or unrelated to the analysis. There may be lapses in logical reasoning. The writing tends not to flow that smoothly from sentence to sentence or from paragraph to paragraph, and the wording may be awkward in many places. Papers that merely summarize material from the readings or class sessions will receive a grade no higher than a “C.” A large number of spelling or grammatical errors will put a paper into this category, although some “C” papers can be grammatically sound. Tone and language may be too informal. Lacks attention to film form.

D: A “D” paper has fewer strengths and a greater degree of weakness than a “C” paper.

F: This is only for a paper that does not meet any of the requirements for the assignment.

Additional Resources:

Cinema: Electric Sheep Magazine: A Deviant View of Cinema.

<http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/>

JAC Online journal of Rhetoric, Culture & Politics. <http://www.jaconlinejournal.com/>

Senses of Cinema. Film Journal. <http://sensesofcinema.com/>

Film Noir Foundation <http://www.filmnoirfoundation.org/home.html>

Open Culture (free genre films and documentaries) <http://www.openculture.com/>

American Memory Collection, Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/ndlmps.html>

Internet Movie Database (IMDB) <http://www.imdb.com/>

Film Comment <https://www.filmcomment.com/>

BFI (British Film Institute): <http://www.bfi.org.uk/>

At UPR Biblioteca- online databases:

GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, *Camera Obscura*, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *Film Quarterly*, *Film Comment*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Sight & Sound*, *Literature/Film Quarterly*

Podcasts:

Gender Rebels (gender & sexuality) <https://genderrebels.podbean.com/>

The Read (pop culture) <http://thisistheread.com/>

Pop Culture Happy Hour <http://www.npr.org/podcasts/510282/pop-culture-happy-hour> (podcast)

Who Shot Ya? (cinema, discussion of current films) <http://www.maximumfun.org/shows/who-shot-ya>

Switchblade Sisters (discussion of genre films with April Wolfe):

<http://www.maximumfun.org/shows/switchblade-sisters>

You must Remember This. (Hollywood history with Karina Longworth):

<http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/>

Race/Gender/Sexuality:

<http://www.advocate.com/> The Advocate
<http://everydayfeminism.com/> Everyday Feminism
<https://equalityarchive.com/>
<http://www.colorlines.com/>
<https://www.bitchmedia.org/>
<https://genderqueer.me/> Transgender & Nonbinary Resources
<http://blog.angryasianman.com/p/about.html>
<http://nativeappropriations.com/> Forum for discussing representations of Native peoples
<https://www.bleedingcool.com/> Bleeding Cool (Comics, TV, Film News)
<https://theestablishment.co/> & <https://medium.com/>

Writing Resources:

GLAAD Media Reference Guide:

<http://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq>
<http://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> Online Writing Center of U @ Purdue.
<http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/resources> Online Writing Center, Harvard.
<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl> Grammar tips by Grammar Girl.

Schedule (subject to revision)

3/15: Introductions & Syllabus

Screening: Dir. Raoul Peck. *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017).

3/22: Foundational Myths: The Birth of U.S. Cinema & the Politics of Representation

-Benshoff & Griffin. Chapter 1: "Introduction to the Study of Film Form and Representation" & Chapter 2: "The Structure & History of Hollywood Filmmaking."

- Marita Sturken & Lisa Cartwright. Chapter 3: "Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge."

Screening: Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. *The Cheat* (1915). Clips from Dee Dee Halleck's *Gingo in Mañanaland* (1995).

Recommended Reading: Omi & Winant. "Racial Formations."

Recommended Film: Dir. D.W. Griffith. *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3kmVgQHIEY> (Youtube & Eng Lab)

3/29: NO CLASS Spring Break

4/5: Class Matters & the Horatio Alger Myth

-Benshoff & Griffin. "Class & American Film."

-Lisa Duggan. Introduction to *The Twilight of Equality*.

Screening: selected clips: Charlie Chaplin. *The Kid* (1921), *The Gold Rush* (1925), *Modern Times* (1936), Hal Roach's *Our Gang*. Youtube. Dir. Sean Baker. *The Florida Project* (2017). Rent or buy on itunes/amazon. Recommended: Harold Lloyd. *Safety Last* (1923). Youtube.

4/12: The Frontier Myth & The Western as Paradigm

-Richard Slotkin. Introduction. "The Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History."

-Ella Shohat & Robert Stam. "The Western as Paradigm"

-Onondaga Nation Press Release. "We've ID'd Geronimo"

Screening: Dir. John Ford *Stagecoach* (1939). ENG Lab

Recommended: John Ford. *The Searchers* (1956). ENG Lab.

Dir. Paul Thomas Anderson. *There Will Be Blood* (2007).

4/19: Challenging Imperial Imaginaries & the Road Movie

DUE: Critical Response Paper at top of the class hour

-Walter Salles. "Notes Towards a Theory of the Road Movie."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/11/magazine/11roadtrip-t.html>

-Walt Whitman. "Song of the Open Road" (1856).

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48859/song-of-the-open-road>

-Sherman Alexie. "Imagining the Reservation."

Screening: Dir. Chris Eyre *Smoke Signals* (1998) (ENG LAB)

Recommended film: Dir. Neil Diamond. *Reel Injun* (2009)

4/26: Crime Fiction & Film Noir

-Shrader P. "Notes on Film Noir."

-Cain, James M. *Double Indemnity*. Chapters 1 & 2.

-Abbot, Megan. Introduction to *The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction & Film Noir*.

Recommended: Lott, Eric. "The Whiteness of Film Noir." J. Scaggs. "The Crime Thriller."

The *Film Noir Reader* series by Alain Silver & James Ursini & James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts*. (Richardson Seminar Room).

Screening: Dir. Billy Wilder. *Double Indemnity* (1944). Eng. Lab. Recommended classic Hollywood noirs: *Gilda*, *Out of the Past*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Night and the City*, *Kiss me Deadly*, *Touch of Evil*, *Laura*, *Affair in Trinidad*.

5/3: Gangsterism & New American Cinema

- Warshaw, R. "The Gangster as Tragic Hero."
- Pauline Kael. "Bonnie & Clyde." In *The New Yorker*.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1967/10/21/bonnie-and-clyde>
- Brown, Emma. "His *Bonnie & Clyde* Jolted U.S. Cinema."
- Leigh, Danny. "Tired of Blockbusters? Why Hollywood Needs another *Bonnie & Clyde* Moment."

Screening: Dir. Arthur Penn. *Bonnie & Clyde*. 1967. Eng Lab.

Recommended: Jack Shadoian. *Dreams and Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film*. Oxford UP, 2003. (Richardson Seminar Room).

Films: Dir. Howard Hawks. *Scarface* (1932, Eng. Lab). Dir Martin Scorsese. *Goodfellas* (1991, Netflix. & Eng. Lab). Dir. Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* (trilogy at Netflix).

5/10: Melodrama & "The Woman's Film": Revisiting Douglas Sirk

- Elsaesser, T. "Tales of Sound & Fury."
- Watch this Interview with Todd Haynes before class (aprox 23min.): "Todd Haynes from Fassbinder to Sirk and Back." Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZTrOQL23XY>

Screening: Dir. Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven* (2002). Eng. Lab.

Recommended: -Manuel Betancourt. "Douglas Sirk: From the Archives."

<https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/sirk-from-the-archives/>

Dir. Douglas Sirk. *Imitation of Life* (1959) & *All that Heaven Allows* (1955).

***DUE! FRIDAY, 5/11** by midnight, via email. **FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL** – follow email instructions. *

5/17: The Superhero/Comic Book Film

Special Guest: Miguel Melendez Readings & Screenings TBD

5/24: The Social Justice Musical

-Luis Valdez. Introduction to *Zoot Suit*.

Dir. Luis Valdez. *Zoot Suit* (1981). Eng lab

5/31: Excavating the Past: Dee Rees's Period Drama & A New (New) American Cinema

Readings TBD.

Screening: Dir. Dee Rees. *Mudbound* (2017). Netflix.

6/5: The Heart of Whiteness: Race & Horror – Last class

-Paul Wells. "Configuring the Monster"

-Dianca London. "Get Out & the Revolutionary Act of Subverting the White Gaze." <https://theestablishment.co/get-out-and-the-revolutionary-act-of-subverting-the-white-gaze-c769cb620496>

-Taylor Steele. "The Horror & the Work." <http://blacknerdproblems.com/the-horror-and-the-work-what-get-out-teaches-us/>

Screening: Dir. Jordan Peele. *Get Out* (2017). Eng Lab.

***DUE! JUNE 14:** FINAL PAPER via email by 11:59. Follow email instructions.*