

# ENGL 4127: The Politics of Representation in US Film and Literature

Department of English (Humanities)

University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras

Spring 2023 - 3 Units

Tue-Thu 1:00-2:20, LPM 212 (In Person)

**Instructor :** Daniel Nevarez Araújo

**Email:** [daniel.nevarez1@upr.edu](mailto:daniel.nevarez1@upr.edu)

**Office Location and Hours:** LPM325; by appointment

**Course Description:** This course constructs a history of US cinema paying attention to the ways in which the nation reflects its views on topics such as race, class, gender, and identity through that medium. How has the US seen itself throughout the 20th and 21st centuries? How has each period and genre captured the dominant tone of the era in which it was produced? How has US cinematic creation influenced the collective psyche of its people? How has cinema been, and continues to be, deployed for political, social, and cultural change? How does US cinema help define what it means to be “American?” Mining a plethora of classic and recent films, this course offers the chance to engage with cinema as an artistic/didactic/commercial form, an idea, and a social force.

**Objectives:** Upon completing the course, students will:

- Possess a greater knowledge of US cinema history, including its eras, genres, and dominants.
- Be able to understand and employ key terms and concepts in the analysis and discussion of the various cinematic texts.
- Be able to analyze a filmic text, its parts, its narrative tendencies, and the way these function.
- Better understand and discuss the links between cinema as a social force and a US nation that relies on its cultural depictions for its self-definition.
- Develop critical thinking applicable not only to cinema but other cultural artifacts.
- Improve their reading and writing skills.

**Requirements:**

- Two 1 to 2-page scene analysis. Due date to be determined. (10%)
- Two student-led forums. (10%)
- Four-page Midterm Paper. Due March 16. (20%)
- Seven-page Final Research Paper. Due date to be determined. (30%)
- Participation and quizzes. (30%)
  - As part of the participation component, each student will be asked to help lead discussion once during the semester. A list will be handed out for discussion selection early in the semester.

**Texts:** John Belton. *American Cinema/American Culture*. 5th or 6th Edition. McGraw-Hill Education.

Most films available on <https://archive.org/>.

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Week 1	Thu Jan 26	<b>No Class</b>
Week 2	Tue Jan 31	Introduction
	Thu Feb 2	<b>The Act of Seeing/Looking</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 1: The Emergence of the Cinema as an Institution
Week 3	Tue Feb 7	<b>A Nation Reflected on the Screen: On Citizenship and Racism</b>  Read: Haygood - Movie Night at Woodrow Wilson's White House
	Thu Feb 9	Read: Haygood - The Rare and Extraordinary Sighting of a Black Filmmaker  Watch: Within Our Gates (1920) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtwrCto9az0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtwrCto9az0</a>  Recommended Additional Film: Emperor Jones (1933; HBOMax)
Week 4	Tue Feb 14	<b>Smoke and Mirrors: What Lurks Under the Glamour?</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 10: Film Noir: Somewhere in the Night
	Thu Feb 16	Watch: A Film Noir (Touch of Evil; The Killers; Night of the Hunter).
Week 5	Tue Feb 21	<b>A World at War: Hollywood, Modernism, and WWII</b>  Read: Mulvey - Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema  Watch: The Ethics of Looking And The "Harmless" Peeping Tom <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeSiwHnV5L0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeSiwHnV5L0</a>
	Thu Feb 23	Watch: Citizen Kane (1940) or It Happened One Night (1934)

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Week 6	Tue Feb 28	<b>A New World/A New Superpower: Aftershocks of WWII in the Collective Psyche</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 11: The Making of the West  Watch: Red River (1948) or Brokeback Mountain (2005; Netflix) or Cowboys (2020; Hulu) or Power of the Dog (2021; Netflix)
	Thu Mar 2	<b>No Class - Día de la Ciudadanía Americana</b>
Week 7	Tue Mar 7	<b>I'm Home: Aftershocks of WWII in the Domestic Space</b>  Read: Singer - Melodrama and the Consequences of Capitalism
	Thu Mar 9	Watch: Written on the Wind (1956) or Safe (1995) or Rear Window (1954)
Week 8	Tue Mar 14	<b>The 60s: Counterculture and Sexual Revolution</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 15: The 1960s: The Counterculture Strikes Back
	Thu Mar 16	<b>Midterm Due</b>  Watch: Shock Corridor (1963; HBOMax or <a href="https://youtu.be/hBFBl_oP68c">https://youtu.be/hBFBl_oP68c</a> ) or Harold and Maude (1971; <a href="https://vimeo.com/526737780">https://vimeo.com/526737780</a> )
Week 9	Tue Mar 21	<b>Defining American: Fear of the Other in the US</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 12: Horror and Science Fiction
	Thu Mar 23	<b>Evaluación Parcial</b>  Watch: Night of the Living Dead (1968) or American Psycho (2000; Hulu) or Get Out (2017; Netflix)
Week 10	Tue Mar 28	<b>"The Creative Treatment of Actuality:" The Construction of Truth Through the Documentary Form</b>  Read: Nevárez - Claims to Truth in Documentary, Parts 1 & 2. <a href="http://cinecero.blogspot.com/search/label/Documentales">http://cinecero.blogspot.com/search/label/Documentales</a>

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	Thu Mar 30	Watch: Titicut Follies (1967)  <a href="https://vimeo.com/389325451">https://vimeo.com/389325451</a>
Week 11	Tue April 4	<b>Hiding in Plain Sight: Postmodernity and Ethics</b>  Read: Sinnerbrink - Cinematic Ethics: Film as a Medium of Ethical Experience Hayes - Get That Camera Outta My Face: Ethics in Documentary Media  Watch: Medium Cool (1968)  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA5BXLIdOec">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA5BXLIdOec</a>
	Thu April 6	<b>Receso Académico</b>
Week 12	Tue April 11	<b>Nation-building Through War: Warfare in the US Psyche</b>  Read: Belton - Chapter 9: War and Cinema
	Thu April 13	Watch: Full Metal Jacket (1987; HBOMax) or Da 5 Bloods (2020; Netflix)
Week 13	Tue April 18	<b>Performing: The Commodification and Gendering of Bodies</b>  Read: Feldman and Hakim - "From Paris is Burning to #dragrace: Social Media Celebification of Drag Culture."
	Thu April 20	Watch: Paris is Burning (1990; HBOMax) or Pariah (2011; BluRay)
Week 14	Tue April 25	<b>24/7 Anxiety: Cinema at the Turn of the Century</b>  Read: Riegler - "Mirroring terror:" The Impact of 9/11 on Hollywood Cinema
	Thu April 27	Watch: Hedwig and the Angry Itch (2001; BluRay) or Memento (2000; HBOMax) or Requiem for a Dream (2000; BluRay) or The Dark Knight (2008; Hulu)

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Week 15	Tue May 2	<b>The US Since 2016</b>  Read: Bingham - American Cinema of the 2010s: Themes and Variations
	Thu May 4	Watch: Blackkklansman (2018; BluRay) or Don't Look Up (2021; Netflix)
Week 16	Tue May 9	<b>The US Since 2016 continued</b>  Read: Rangwala - Liberal Containment in Marvel Movies of the Trump Era
	Thu May 11	Watch: Student Choice
Week 17	Tue May 16	<b>No Class</b>

**Policies:**

-Attendance is **MANDATORY**. You are allowed 5 absences throughout the semester without any effect on your grade. Each absence beyond that limit is worth **HALF A GRADE POINT** taken off of your final grade in the course. In the event of sickness, please bring a doctor's note. On occasions when you have a scheduled engagement (sports commitment, music performance, family festivity, etc.), please inform the instructor ahead of time so that an arrangement can be made to serve as a substitute for the missing class.

-Please refrain from using cellphones, laptops, or other electronic devices during class. Silence your cellphones. If you expect an important call or suspect an emergency, feel free to walk out of the classroom to answer. The instructor will remind you of this only twice in the semester (during first class and the class following the end of the Add/Drop period). Failure to comply will reflect on your overall grade.

-Please respect your peers and their opinions. No personal attacks will be tolerated. Many of the topics we will engage with can be controversial; therefore, in all cases, formal language is to be utilized. Offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist language will not be tolerated. You are to address the instructor and your peers with respect. You are more than welcome to disagree with either the instructor or your peers' opinions, but never in such a way that will devolve into offensive language or personal attacks. When in doubt, it is best to approach a text as a formal construct (how is it written?, what is the author trying to say?, how are words functioning?, etc.); that way we avoid making the task of reading and discussing at text personal.

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**-Plagiarism constitutes an automatic failing grade and can lead to suspension or expulsion from the university. Please make sure you cite any references, examples, or text taken from other authors accordingly. Give credit even when you use the resource to argue against it. This includes, and is not limited to, internet resources. When in doubt, consult the MLA Handbook. ([https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html))**

-Finally, in the event that you have any technical issues with the online learning system, do not hesitate in contacting APOYO TÉCNICO at 787-764-0000 Ext. 80400 or at their webpage: <https://dtaa.uprrp.edu/help-desk/>

-Enjoy this experience and never hesitate in contacting me with concerns.

## **Important Notices:**

### **Reasonable Accommodation**

Students receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that reasonable accommodation and any necessary equipment can be provided, in keeping with the recommendations of the Coordinating Office for People with Disabilities (Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimentos -- OAPI) under the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs. Students with special needs must also inform the instructor of any accommodation-related needs.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University of Puerto Rico promotes the highest standards of academic and scientific integrity. Article 6.2 of the UPR General Student Bylaws (Certification No. 13, 2009-2010, of the UPR Board of Trustees) establishes that “academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: fraudulent actions, obtaining grades or academic degrees using false or fraudulent pretexts, entirely or partially copying academic work from another person, entirely or partially plagiarizing the work of another person, entirely or partially copying responses from another person to examination questions, having another person take any test, oral or written examination on the student’s behalf, as well as assisting or facilitating any person to incur in the aforementioned conduct.” Fraudulent conduct refers to “behavior with the intent to defraud, including, but not limited to, malicious alteration or falsification of grades, records, identification cards or other official documents of the University of Puerto Rico or any other institution.” Any of these actions shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions in accordance with the respective disciplinary procedure, as stated in the current UPR Student Bylaws.

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## **Discrimination / Sexual Harassment**

The University of Puerto Rico prohibits discrimination in education, employment and in the provision of services based on race, color, sex, age, nationality, ethnicity, origin or social status, ancestry, marital status, religious or political ideas or beliefs, veteran status, other-abledness (disability), sexual orientation, and gender identity in any of its forms. The university also prohibits sexual harassment. According to the Institutional Policy Against Sexual Harassment at the University of Puerto Rico, Certification No. 130, 2014-2015 of the Board of Governors, any student subjected to acts constituting sexual harassment should contact the Office of the Student Ombudsperson, the Office of the Dean of Students, and/or the Coordinator of the Office of Compliance with Title IX for further orientation and/or to file a formal complaint.

## **Contingency Plan in Case of Emergency**

In the event of an emergency or interruption of classes, your professor will communicate with you via institutional email to coordinate the continuity of the course offering.  
(The full document can be found at: <https://estudiantes.uprrp.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Reglamento-General-Estudiantes-de-la-Universidad-de-Puerto-Rico-2016-2017.pdf>)

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Feldman, Zeena and Jamie Hakim. "From *Paris is Burning* to #dragrace: Social Media and the Celebification of Drag Culture." *Celebrity Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 4 (2020), pp. 386-401.

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Goldberg, Jonathan. *Melodrama: An Aesthetics of Impossibility*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

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Haygood, Wil. *Colorization: One Hundred Years of Black Films in a White World*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021.

Malone, Alicia. *The Female Gaze: Essential Movies Made by Women*. Coral Gables: Mango Publishing Group, 2018.

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Sinnerbrink, Robert. *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Siomopoulos, Anna. "The Birth of a Black Cinema: Race, Reception, and Oscar Micheaux's Within Our Gates." *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 111-118. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41167256>

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