History of African American Images in Film

Fall 2016
Wednesdays 3:00-6:30pm
COMM. 1021

Professor: Dr. Novotny Lawrence
Office: 1056B Communication Building
Office hours: M 1:30-4:30, T 11:00-12:00, 3:30-4:30, & by appointment
Email: novotnyl@siu.edu


Black Lenses, Black Voices: African American Film Now by Mark Reid, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin, Signet Publishers.

Note: Additional readings will be assigned

Course Description: This course is an historical and critical examination of the diverse images of African-Americans in cinema. This course includes, but is not limited to, exploring the impact of those images on American society, critical viewing of films, modes of production, and marketing.

Course Format: The course work will consist of lectures, class discussions, screenings and readings. Note: Students are expected complete ALL reading assignments prior to class.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to:
1.) Provide students with an historical overview of the African American experience in film.
2.) Illustrate the roles that have historically circumscribed black performers as well as demonstrate how some directors and performers were at times able to cut against stereotypical representations.
3.) Teach students how to utilize knowledge of the history of African American images in films to critically view contemporary media.
4.) Create a dialogue that focuses on an extremely important, yet sensitive topic. In addition to discussing narrative film, issues subject to exploration include documentary films, hip-hop music videos, television news, reality television, and other significant topics that arise over the duration of the course.

Requirements and Grading: Grades will be based on 5 weekly reaction papers that should be no more than 2 double-spaced pages in length. Papers should include specific references from the readings, and should go beyond simply restating the main points/theories. In writing these
papers, students must grapple with the readings pointing out strengths, weaknesses, and connecting the author’s research to the class content. The total point value of the papers is 50 points.

There will be one 25-point quiz based on lectures, class discussions, reading assignments, and screenings. **Note: I will not give make-up quizzes under ANY circumstances.**

**Midterm:** Your midterm assignment is to produce a 5-8 page literature review that will serve as the foundation of your final paper. As scholars, you are free to select the subject of your choice as long as it focuses on the African American cinematic experience. As you work to complete this document, keep in mind that the goal of the literature review is to familiarize yourself with the relevant scholarly discourse on the topic of your paper. However, it involves more than simply summarizing a book or a journal article. Rather, in the literature review you should demonstrate knowledge of the field, position yourself within it, and show who you are in agreement with, who you disagree with—not just cite sources that support your argument. This assignment is worth 50 points.

There will be a final research paper worth 100 points. I encourage you to begin considering ideas for the paper immediately. You are required to meet with me to discuss your final topic before beginning work on the literature review.

Finally, students will also be evaluated on in-class participation. It is simply not enough to show-up to class; students must bring their voices and be prepared to use them. Students are required to express and support their opinions using the filmic language taught in the course. Participation is worth 25 points.

**DO NOT ASK FOR EXTRA CREDIT!** If extra credit opportunities are given they will be assigned to the entire class at the discretion of the instructor.

There is a total of 250 points for the course. Grades will be assigned as follows:

90% or more of total points: “A”  
80% - 89%: “B”  
70% - 79%: “C”  
60% - 69%: “D”  
59% or below: “F”

**Course Policies:** Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class session. Students are required to arrive on time as latecomers disturb the class. Class begins promptly at 3:30. Arriving after 3:30 will result in a tardy, while arriving after 3:35 will result in a charged absence. More than 1 unexcused absence will result in a 10% decrease of your final grade for each additional absence. Excessive tardiness will also adversely affect your grade. Specifically, arriving to class late 2 times will result in a charged absence. Late arrivals may not sign the attendance sheet until the end of class. If you leave early your name will be removed from the attendance sheet. Forging another student’s signature on the attendance sheet will result in penalties ranging from an “F” in the course to expulsion from the University.

**Students** will remain attentive during lectures, class discussions, and screenings and refrain from talking or other disruptive behavior. I reserve the right to cancel your attendance for any day that you are talking in class or if you are rude to me or to your classmates. Additionally, all notes must be taken by hand. Laptop computers, word processors, or other devices are not to be
used unless a student provides documented proof of extenuating circumstances. Furthermore, although people often think of film screenings as social events, you will be working during these screenings so talking, sleeping, or leaving class for extended periods of time during films will result in a charged absence. I absolutely will NOT tolerate ringing mobile phones, texting, or playing with phones during class. Turn all mobile devices Off before entering class. Finally, do not begin to pack your belongings before class has been dismissed as this can also be disruptive to me and more importantly, other students.

It is perfectly fine to bring a snack (carrot sticks, chips, a smoothie) to class/screenings/discussion sections. However, students are prohibited from bringing meals (pizza, hamburgers, sub sandwiches, combo meals) to class/screenings/discussion sections.

Academic Dishonesty (cheating) will not be tolerated under any circumstances. The College of Mass Communication and Media Arts prohibit the use of someone else’s work. Do not copy another person’s work/quiz/exam. Any student caught engaging in academic dishonesty is subject to penalties set forth by the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts in accordance with SIU.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a disability that prevents the full participation in the course should please contact me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations necessary to enable you to fully participate in the course.

Course Outline (Tentative and subject to change)

Week 1 Aug. 24
Course Introduction
Lecture: The Legacy of Stereotyping

Week 2 Aug. 31
Reading: Toms chapter 1 & 2, White Introduction and chapter 1
Lecture: From Minstrel Shows to Cinema Screens
Screening: The Birth of a Nation (D.W. Griffith, 1915)

Week 3 Sept. 7
Reading: Toms chapter 4, White chapter 2, Black Lenses Introduction and chapter 1
Lecture: Race Films & Oscar Micheaux
Screening: Midnight Ramble (Pearl Bowser, 1994)

Week 4 Sept. 14 Quiz 1
Reading: Toms pgs. 35-69, White chapter 3, & chapter from African American Actresses by Charlene Regester (pdf)
Lecture: Passing and the Oh So Tragic Mulatto
Screening: Imitation of Life (John Stahl, 1934)

Week 5 Sept. 21
Reading: White chapters 4-6
Lecture: Reunion Films
Screening: The Littlest Rebel (David Butler, 1935)
Week 6 Sept. 28  
Reading: *Toms* pgs. 69-100 & 117-136  
Lecture: The Buck & Reunion Mythology  

Week 7 Oct. 5  
Reading: “Horrifying Goons and Minstrel Coons: 1940s” by Robin R. Means Coleman, & *Black Lenses* chapter 4  
Lecture: Black Representation During World War II  
Screening: *Cabin in the Sky* (Vincente Minnelli, 1943)

Week 8 Oct. 12  
Reading: *Toms* pgs. 136-158, *Black Like Me* pgs. 1-101  
Lecture: Dorothy Dandridge  
Screening: *Carmen Jones* (Otto Preminger, 1954)

Week 9 Oct. 19 Literature Review Due  
Reading: *Toms* chapter 6, *Black Like Me* 101-159, & from *African American Actresses* by Charlene Regester (pdf),  
Lecture: A Hero for an Integrationist Age  
Screening: *The Defiant Ones* (Stanley Kramer, 1958)

Week 10 Oct. 26  
Readings: *Toms* chapter 7, *Black Like Me* Epilogue  
Lecture: Precursors to Blaxploitation Cinema  
Screening: *Nothing But a Man* (Michael Roemer, 1964)

Week 11 Nov. 2  
Reading: *Toms* chapter 8  
Lecture: Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s  
Screening: * Shaft* (Gordon Parks, Sr. 1971)

Week 12 Nov. 9  
Reading: From *Women of Blaxploitation* by Yvonne D. Sims (pdf), & *Black Lenses* chapter 5  
Lecture: Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s  
Screening: *Coffy* (Jack Hill, 1973)

Week 13 Nov. 16  
Readings: *African Americans on Television* introduction & chapter 1 & from *Primetime Blues* by Donald Bogle pgs. 140-219 (pdf)  
Lecture: Interlude: Black TV Representation  
Screening: selected episodes of “Good Times” and “The Jeffersons”

Week 14 Nov. 23 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK!!!

Week 15 Nov. 30  
Reading: Introduction and chapter 3 from *The Spike Lee Reader* edited by Paula J. Massood (pdf), *Toms* chapter 9  
Lecture: Black Filmmaking in the 1980s  
Screening: *Do the Right Thing* (Spike Lee, 1989)
**Week 16 Dec. 7**
Reading: chapter 5 from *The Spike Lee Reader* edited by Paula J. Massood (pdf) & “Hoodoo Economics: White Men’s Work and Black Men’s Magic in Contemporary American Film” by Heather J. Hicks (pdf), *Black Lenses* chapter 9
Lecture: As it Stands Today
Screening: TBD

**Week 17 Dec. 16th Final Examination, 2:45-4:45, 1046 COMM, Paper to be submitted during this time.**

---

**Building Emergency Response Protocols**

**University’s Emergency Procedure Clause:**
Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT’s website at [www.bert.siu.edu](http://www.bert.siu.edu), Department of Public Safety’s website [www.dps.siu.edu](http://www.dps.siu.edu) (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. **It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency.** The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

**Students with a Disability:**
Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist students with a disability safely out of the building. Students with a disability will stay with the instructor and communicate with the instructor what is the safest way to assist them.

**Tornado:**
During the spring semester we have a **Storm Drill.**

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to a safe area of the basement. No one will be allowed to stay upstairs. Stay away from windows. The drill should not last more than 10 minutes. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. Students need to be quiet in the basement as the BERT members are listening to emergency instructions on handheld radios and cannot hear well in the basement.

**Fire:**
During the fall semester we have a **Fire Drill.**

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to either the North or South parking lot depending on what part of the building your class is in. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll. As soon as the building is all clear, you will be allowed to return to class.

**These drills are to train instructors and the Building Emergency Response Team to get everyone to a safe place during an emergency.**
**Bomb Threat:**
If someone calls in a bomb threat, class will be suspended and students will be asked to pick up their belongings, evacuate the building and leave the premises. Do not leave anything that is yours behind. We will not allow anyone back into the building until the police and bomb squad give us an all clear. **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES.** Some bombs are triggered by a cell phone signal.

**Shooter in the Building:**
If it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building away from where the shooter is located. If anyone has any information about the shooter, please contact the police after they have gone someplace safe. Put in your cell phone the SIU Dept. of Public Safety 618-453-3771. If there is a shooter on campus you can call this number to report it. There will be a lot of calls going to 911 and the **SIU Police will get your call using 618-453-3771.** It is good to have this number listed in your cell phone for all emergencies here on campus.

If it is not safe to leave, go into a room, lock the door and turn out the lights. Everyone should spread out and not huddle together as a group. Don't stand in front of the door or in line of fire with the door. Students’ chair and desks should be piled in front of the glass and door as a barricade and the teacher’s desk, podium and anything movable can be pushed against the door. This is intended to slow down any attempts to enter the classroom. If it looks like the shooter is persistent and able to enter, make a lot of noise and have the students use everything in their backpacks to throw at the shooter to distract him.

Silence all cell phones after one person in the room calls the police and informs them of their location and how many people are in the room. **Be quiet and wait for the police to arrive.** The police are looking for one or more shooters, and they have no way of knowing if the shooter is in the room people are hiding in. For this reason, when the police enter the room, no one should have anything in his/her hands and each person **MUST** raise his/her hands above his/her head.

**Earthquake:**
In the event of an earthquake, you are advised to take cover quickly under heavy furniture or crouch near an interior wall or corner and cover your head to avoid falling debris. Outside the building are trees and power lines and debris from the building itself that you will need to stay away from. In the building, large open areas like auditoriums are the most dangerous. Do not try to escape on a stairway or elevator. Do not hide under a stairway. We do not recommend that you stand in a doorway because the door could shut from the vibrations and crush your fingers trapping you there.

**Radiation Emergency:**
A radiation emergency could come about due to a complete meltdown of a nuclear reactor core to our west, a catastrophic leak of material from nuclear weapons manufacturing facilities to our south, or as a result of a nuclear weapon being detonated in or around St. Louis, MO, or along the Ohio River valley between Paducah KY and Evansville IN.

Regardless of the source of the radiation, what you need to do in response is the same:

- **Get inside, Stay inside** and **Stay tuned** - Close and lock all windows and doors. Go to the basement or the middle of the building. Radioactive material settles on the outside of buildings; stay as far away from the walls and roof of the building as you can. If possible,
turn off fans, air conditioners, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close fireplace dampers.

- Bring pets inside with you, if you can. Bring in any supplies from outside that your pets might need for at least 24 hours.
- If you were outside when it started, carefully remove your outer layer of clothing before entering the building, if you can. Radioactive material can settle on your clothing and your body, like dust or mud. Once inside, wash the parts of your body that were uncovered when you were outside. Then put on clean clothing, if you can. This will help limit your radiation exposure and keep radioactive material from spreading.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask, cloth, or towel if you must be outside and cannot get inside immediately.
- Vehicles do not provide good protection from radioactive material.
- Schools, daycares, hospitals, nursing homes, and other places have emergency plans in place to keep people safe at the facility.
- Providing shelter to someone who was outside during a radiation emergency can save their life without endangering your own. They will have to remove outer layer of clothes before they enter the building and wash the parts of their body that were uncovered. Give them clean clothing or coverings that you have. This will help limit their radiation exposure and keep radioactive material from spreading.

**Hazardous Materials:**

While there are many possible scenarios where hazardous materials spill, explode, are released into the air, and/or burn, a train derailment is the most likely cause of a serious incident. Regardless of how the incident begins, the following guidance should be followed.

Listen to local radio or television stations for detailed information and instructions. Follow the instructions carefully. You should stay away from the area to minimize the risk of contamination. Remember that some toxic chemicals are odorless.

- **If you are asked to evacuate**
  - Do so immediately.
  - Take pre-assembled disaster supplies.
  - Help your neighbors who may require special assistance—infants, elderly people and people with access and functional needs.
  - Follow evacuation routes, temporary shelters, and procedures.
  - Don’t leave your pets. If you evacuate take them with you.
- **If you are caught outside**
  - Stay upstream, uphill, and upwind!
  - Try to go at least one-half mile from the danger area.
  - Move away from the accident scene and help keep others away.
  - Do not walk into or touch any spilled liquids, airborne mists, or condensed solid chemical deposits.
  - Try not to inhale gases, fumes and smoke. If possible, cover mouth with a cloth while leaving the area.
  - Stay away from accident victims until the hazardous material has been identified.
- **If you are in a motor vehicle**
  - Stop and seek shelter in a permanent building.
  - If you must remain in your car
    - Keep car windows and vents closed
    - Shut off the air conditioner and heater.
- **If you are requested to stay indoors**
o  Bring pets inside.
o  Close and lock all exterior doors and windows.
o  Close vents, fireplace dampers, and as many interior doors as possible.
o  Turn off air conditioners and ventilation systems.
o  Seal gaps under doorways and windows with wet towels or plastic sheeting and duct tape.
o  Seal gaps around window and air conditioning units, bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans, and stove and dryer vents with duct tape and plastic sheeting, wax paper or aluminum wrap.
o  Use material to fill cracks and holes in the room, such as those around pipes.
o  If gas or vapors could have entered the building, take shallow breaths through a cloth or a towel. Avoid eating or drinking any food or water that may be contaminated.

**Rave Mobile Safety Alert System:**
We recommend that you sign up for the Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. It is a system to alert you through emergency text messages on your cell phone and emails for emergencies on campus, weather reports and emergency school closures. You have to sign up for Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. Go to Saluki Net, go to my records tab, under SIUC Personal Records, click on View My SIUC Student Records, Under Main Menu click on Personal Information, click on View and Update Addresses and Phones, in the middle of the page click [Update Addresses and Phones], under phones click Primary: This will take you to Update Addresses and Phones – Update/Insert, under primary phone number for this address put in your cell phone and submit. For more information, visit dps.siu.edu, contact SalukiTech at 453-5155 or salukitech@siu.edu.

**CPR/Defibrillator and First Aid Class:**
If you would like to take a CPR/Defibrillator and/or First Aid class, contact LaVon Donley-Cornett, lavong@siu.edu or call 453-7473.

**Women's Self Defense Classes** are offered to female students faculty and staff by the Department of SIU Public Safety. For more information call the Department of SIU Public Safety 453-3771.