History of African American Images in Film

Fall 2015
Wednesdays 3:30-7:00pm
COMM. 1046

Professor: Dr. Novotny Lawrence
Office: 1056B Communication Building
Office hours: M 1:30-4:30, T 1:30-4:30, & 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, connecting the author’s research to the class concepts. 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 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. However, it involves more than simply summarizing a book or a journal article. Rather, in the literature review you should show evidence of knowing the field and locate yourself in it, showing 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. As scholars, you are free to select the subject of your choice as long as it focuses on the African American cinematic experience. I encourage you to begin considering ideas for the paper immediately. You are required to meet with me to discuss your final topic before compiling 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.

**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.

**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, Department of Public Safety's website 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 somewhere safe.

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.

**Rave Mobile Safety Alert System:**
We recommend that you sign up for the Rave Mobile Safety Alert System. It is a new system that replaces the WENS 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. If you were signed up for WENS it does not roll over. 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 contact Officer Mary Stark marys@dps.siu.edu.

Course Outline (Tentative and subject to change)

Week 1 Aug. 25
Course Introduction
Lecture: The Legacy of Stereotyping

Week 2 Sept. 1
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. 8
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. 15 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. 22
Reading: *White* chapters 4-6
Lecture: Reunion Films
Screening: *The Littlest Rebel* (David Butler, 1935)

Week 6 Sept. 29
Reading: *Toms* pgs. 69-100 & 117-136
Lecture: The Buck & Reunion Mythology

Week 7 Oct. 6
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 Minelli, 1943)
Week 8 Oct. 13 NO CLASS FALL BREAK

Week 9 Oct. 20 Literature Review Due
Reading: *Toms* pgs. 136-158, *Black Like Me* pgs. 1-101
Lecture: Dorothy Dandridge
Screening: *Carmen Jones* (Otto Preminger, 1954)

Week 10 Oct. 27
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 11 Nov. 3
Readings: *Toms* chapter 7, *Black Like Me* Epilogue
Lecture: Precursors to Blaxploitation Cinema
Screening: *Nothing But a Man* (Michael Roemer, 1964)

Week 12 Nov. 10
Reading: *Toms* chapter 8 & from *Women of Blaxploitation* by Yvonne D. Sims (pdf), & *Black Lenses* chapter 5
Lecture: The Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s
Screening: *Coffy* (Jack Hill, 1973)

Week 13 Nov. 17 Quiz 2
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 Jeffereons”

Week 14 Nov. 24
Reading: *African Americans on Television* chapter 2 & 3 & *Black Lenses* chapter 6
Lecture: The L.A. School
Screening: *Killer of Sheep* (Charles Burnett, 1979)

Week 15 Dec. 1
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. 8
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. 17th Final Examination, 2:45-4:45, 1046 COMM
IMPORTANT DATES *
Semester Class Begins ........................................ 08/24/2015
Last day to add a class (without instructor permission): 08/30/2015
Last day to withdraw completely and receive a 100% refund: 09/06/2015
Last day to drop a course using SalukiNet: 11/01/2015
Last day to file diploma application (for name to appear in Commencement program): 11/18/2015
Final examinations: ............................................ 12/14–12/21/2015

Note: For outreach, internet, and course drop addears, visit Registrar’s Academic webpage: http://registrar.siu.edu/

FALL SEMESTER HOLIDAYS
Labor Day Holiday 09/07/2015
Fall Break: 10/10–10/13/2015
Veterans Day Holiday 11/11/2015
Thanksgiving Holiday 11/25–11/29/2015

WITHDRAWAL POLICY – Undergraduate only
Students who officially register for a session may not withdraw merely by the stopping of attendance. An official withdrawal form needs to be initiated by the student and processed by the University. For the proper procedures to follow when dropping courses and when withdrawing from the University, please visit http://registrar.siu.edu/pdf/academiccatalog1516.pdf

INCOMPLETE POLICY – Undergraduate only
An INC is assigned when, for reasons beyond their control, students engaged in passing work are unable to complete all class assignments. An INC must be changed to a completed grade within one semester following the term in which the course was taken, or graduation, whichever occurs first. Should the student fail to complete the course within the time period designated, that is, by no later than the end of the semester following the term in which the course was taken, or graduation, whichever occurs first, the incomplete will be converted to a grade of “F” and the grade will be computed in the student’s grade point average. For more information please visit: http://registrar.siu.edu/grades/incomplete.html

REPEAT POLICY
An undergraduate student may, for the purpose of raising a grade, enroll in a course for credit no more than two times (two total enrollments) unless otherwise noted in the course description. For students receiving a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F, the course repetition must occur at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Only the most recent (last) grade will be calculated in the overall GPA and count toward hours earned. See full policy at: http://registrar.siu.edu/pdf/academiccatalog1516.pdf

GRADUATE POLICIES
Graduate policies often vary from Undergraduate policies. To view the applicable policies for graduate students, please visit: http://gradschool.siu.edu/about-us/grad-catalog/index.html

DISABILITY POLICY
Disability Support Services provides the required academic and programmatic support services to students with permanent and temporary disabilities. DSS provides centralized coordination and referral services. To utilize DSS services, students must come to the DSS to open cases. The process involves interviews, reviews of student-supplied documentation, and completion of Disability Accommodation Agreements. http://disabilityservices.siu.edu/

PLAGIARISM CODE

MORRIS LIBRARY HOURS
http://www.lib.siu.edu/about

SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: http://safe.siu.edu

SALUKI CARES
The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students and their families, SIU will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For Information on Saluki Cares: 618-453-5714, or sucares@siu.edu. http://salukicasres.siu.edu/index.html

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. We ask that you become familiar with the SIU Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) programs. Please reference the Building Emergency Response Protocols for Syllabus attachments on the following pages. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency.

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE
SIU consists people from all walks of life, from many different cultures and sub-cultures, and representing all strata of society, nationalities, ethnicities, lifestyles, and affiliations. Learning from and working with people who differ is an important part of education as well as an essential preparation for any career. For more information please visit: http://www.inclusiveexcellence.siu.edu/

LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES
Help is within reach. Learning support services offer free tutoring on campus and math labs. To find more information please visit the Center for Learning and Support Services website:
Tutoring: http://tutoring.siu.edu/
Math Labs: http://tutoring.siu.edu/math_tutoring/index.html
WRITING CENTER
The Writing Center offers free tutoring services to all SIU students and faculty. To find an open Center or Schedule an appointment please visit: http://wriesc.siu.edu

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
Our office's main focus is to ensure that the university complies with federal and state equity policies and handles reporting and investigating of discrimination cases. For more information visit: http://university.siu.edu/#

Additional Resources Available:
SALUKINET: https://salukinet.siu.edu/CP/none/displaylogin
ADVICEMENT: http://advisement.siu.edu
SIU ONLINE: http://onlines.siu.edu/