Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s:
Origins, Evolution, & Demise
Spring 2014
Wednesdays 3:00-6:30pm
COMM. 1046

Professor: Dr. Novotny Lawrence
Office: 1056B Communications
Office hours: M 1:30-4:30, T 1:30-4:30 & by appointment
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Additional required readings will be distributed during the semester.

Course Description: This course is an historical and critical examination of the blaxploitation movement of the 1970s. The course includes, but is not limited to, exploring the factors that led to the emergence of the films, the height of their popularity, and the subsequent demise the movement. In exploring these topics we will discuss blaxploitation’s historical significance in addition to its impact on generic conventions, economics, marketing, exhibition, and critical reception.

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

Requirements and Grading: There will be a midterm worth 100 points and a cumulative final exam worth 150 points. Note: Make up examinations will only be given under extenuating circumstances such as severe illness, death in family, and university recognized religious holidays. Students will be asked to provide documentation to support the circumstances. A dentist appointment, medical check-up, work, tickets to a concert, plane/train tickets home, etc... are not acceptable reasons to miss an exam. These things are controllable and thus inexcusable.

There will be 2 quizzes based on lectures, class discussions, reading assignments, and screenings. The total point value of the scheduled quizzes is 50 points. Note: Some quizzes may be unannounced. I will NOT administer make-up quizzes under any circumstances.

There will be one short writing assignment worth 25 points.

There will be one research paper worth 100 points. The paper topic will be assigned later in the semester.
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 will be required to express and support their opinions using information from the readings and lectures as well as the filmic language taught in the course. Participation is worth 25 points.

The total number of points for the course is 450. 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. 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. If you arrive to class more than 5 minutes late you will be marked absent for that class session. Arriving to class tardy 3 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. Make certain that you sign the attendance sheet. It is too late to receive credit for attendance at any time after a class session. 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 rude to me or to your classmates. Furthermore, although some people often think of film screenings as social events, you will be working during these screenings so please keep that in mind. Turn all mobile devices including phones, tablets, etc. . . , off before entering class. Using such devices during class for surfing the web, texting, or other activities is strictly prohibited and will result in the cancellation of the student’s attendance. **Moreover, if a student violates the mobile device policy then I will administer a pop quiz to the entire class on the subject of my choice.** Repeat violators will be subjected to additional consequences. 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. Finally, do not begin to pack your belongings before class has been dismissed as this can also be disruptive.

**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 making the necessary accommodations to enable full participation in the course.
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 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 Disabilities:
Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist disabled students out of the building safely. Disabled students 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 calls. 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 calls. 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:
When it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building where the shooter is located. If you have any information about the shooter, please contact the police after you return home. If you cannot leave, go into a room, lock the door, turn out the lights, and if possible, cover the glass on the door. Silence all cell phones after one person in the room you are in calls the police and informs them of your location and how many 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 with you. For that 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 near an interior wall, a corner, 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.

Women’s Self-Defense Class:
For interested female students and female faculty and staff, the SIU Public Safety Department sets up free self-defense classes. The SIU Public Safety Department will be teaching this class. They teach a free class in the fall and spring at the Rec Center. In the fall you would register at the Rec Center for the Women’s Self-Defense Class or RAD (Rape Aggression Defense) as it is sometimes called. If you have questions about registering for the class, you can send an email to lavong@siu.edu. LaVon is the contact in the Dean’s Office in the Communications building that will assist you to try to find the class you need.

Course Outline (Tentative and subject to change)

Week 1 Jan. 15
Course Introduction
Lecture: The History of Stereotyping in Motion Pictures
Screening: *Classified X* (Mark Daniels, 1998)

Week 2 Jan. 22
Readings: *Toms* chpts. 1, 2, & 3
Lecture: Cinema and Civil Rights
Screening: *Eyes on the Prize*: “Awakenings” (Henry Hampton, 1987)

Week 3 Jan. 29
Readings: *Toms* chpts. 5 & 6, *Equality* chapt. 1
Lecture: Precursors to Blaxploitation
Screening: *In the Heat of the Night* (Norman Jewison, 1967)

Week 4 Feb. 5
Reading: *Equality* chpts. 2, 3, 4
Lecture: Quiz 1 Precursors to Blaxploitation
Screening: *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968)

Week 5 Feb. 12
Reading: *Toms* chapt. 7, *Equality* chpts 5 & 6
Lecture: The Emergence of Blaxploitation Cinema
Screening: *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (Ossie Davis, 1970)

Week 6 Feb. 19
Reading: “The Detective Film as Genre” (pdf), *Equality* chapt. 7
Lecture: Independent Blaxploitation
Screening: *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (Melvin Van Peebles, 1971)
Week 7 Feb. 26 PAPER ASSIGNMENT  
Reading: *Toms*, chapt. 8  
Lecture: Hollywood Takes Notice  
Screening: *Shaft* (Gordon Parks, Sr., 1971)

Week 8 Mar. 5 Exam 1-covers readings, lectures, discussions, & screenings  
Reading: none  
Lecture: The Drug Dealer as Hero  
Screening: *Superfly* (Gordon Parks, Jr., 1972)

Mar. 12 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

Week 9 Mar. 19  
Reading: *Toms*, 194-266  
Lecture: Blaxploitation Cinema and the Horror Genre  
Screening: *Blacula* (William Crain, 1972)

Week 10 Mar. 26  
Readings: “Deadlier than Dracula!”: *Blacula* the Horror Genre (pdf)  
Lecture: Interlude: The Revolution was NOT Televised  
Screening: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Ivan Dixon, 1973)

Week 11 Apr. 2  
Readings: Subverting the System: The Politics and Production of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (pdf)  
Lecture: Revisions in Black: The Pimp as New Gangster Hero  
Screening: *The Mack* (Michael Campus, 1973)

Week 12 Apr. 9  
Reading: “Now that You’ve Seen the Rest... Make Way for the Biggest and the Best!”: *The Mack and the Gangster Genre* (pdf)  
Lecture: Bring on the Heroines!  
Screening: *Coffy* (Jack Hill, 1973)

Week 13 Apr. 16  
Reading: *Women of Blaxploitation*, chpt. 1 & 2  
Lecture: A New Heroine Emerges  
Screening: *Cleopatra Jones* (Jack Starrett, 1973)

Week 14 Apr. 23 PAPER DUE!!!  
Reading: *Women of Blaxploitation*, chpt. 3 & 4  
Lecture: Quiz 2, The Trend Continues  
Screening: *Friday Foster* (Arthur Marks, 1975)

Week 15 April 30  
Reading: *Women of Blaxploitation*, chpt. 7 & 8  
Lecture: The Demise of Blaxploitation  
Screening: TBD

Week 16 Final Examination-cumulative, Monday May 5th 8:00pm-10:00pm, 1046 COMM.