

Film Studies FILM 409.4 L01
Special Topics in Film Studies (Contemporary African-American Cinema)
Winter 2012

M 11:00-12:50 (lecture), W 11:00-13:50 (screening)

Instructor: Brendan Kredell
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Office Hours: MW 14:00-17:00 or by appointment

Additional Information

Attendance at lectures and screenings and informed participation are essential components of this course and will help determine your final grade. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the required reading. Some of the materials and topics presented in class may include explicit content (sex, violence or language). If these materials make you uncomfortable, you are encouraged to speak with the professor. You will not be exempt from any class assignments but we will work together to accommodate your concerns.

Course Description

Last year marked the twentieth anniversary of what some critics have referred to as the “New Wave of Black Cinema,” referring to the unprecedented number of films directed by African-American filmmakers released by Hollywood studios in 1991. For our purposes in this course, we can look back to that year as the beginning moment of what we will term the “contemporary era” in African-American cinema. In this course, we will survey a wide variety of films produced by African-American filmmakers, beginning in 1991 and proceeding roughly chronologically until the present moment. In addition, we will also consider films produced by African Canadian filmmakers during the same era, juxtaposing issues of representation, production, and exhibition confronted across the two cinemas. **Prerequisite: FILM 201.**

Objectives of the Course

In this course, we will trace the recent history of African-American cinema, beginning in 1991 and continuing until roughly the present moment. One of the main goals of the course will be to consider whether anything is gained by grouping these films together as a category, and if so, what. At the same time, we will also focus on issues ancillary to the texts themselves, exploring the industrial history of African-American cinema during this time period and investigating how issues of presentation and representation were in flux over a twenty year time period.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Produce a sustained written analysis that incorporates ideas that are introduced during the course
- Demonstrate an engagement with and mastery of the theoretical issues underpinning the films screened in the course
- Write a term paper that follows all appropriate academic protocol

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are welcome to use laptops and other electronic notetaking devices in this course. That being said, the classroom is a space for learning, and I expect that students' behaviour will reflect a shared appreciation for the importance of an open and high-level discourse within the classroom. Towards that end, the use of laptops should be strictly limited to the purposes of taking notes. **Laptops (and all other electronic devices) are expressly prohibited during course screenings.** Likewise, mobile phones and other devices are prohibited at all times. Failure to respect these rules may result in a revocation of your privileges to use devices in the classroom.

Textbooks and Readings:

Mark A. Reid, *Black Lenses, Black Voices: American Film Now*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

Paula Massood, *Black City Cinema: African-American Urban Experiences in Film*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003.

Additional readings available via Blackboard.

Assignments and Evaluation

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Participation <i>Students are expected to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. Full marks will be given to students who regularly demonstrate through their participation in class discussions an engagement with the course readings and screenings.</i>	10%
Weekly Response Essays (250-300 words) <i>Students are required to write a one-page response to a discussion prompt posted at the end of class each week, relating to that week's reading and/or film screening. Essays are due prior to the beginning of class each Monday, and should be submitted via Blackboard.</i>	10%
In-Class Presentation	15%

Students are required to plan for and lead class discussion on one film/reading of their choosing during the course of the semester. Depending on course enrollment, students may be asked to work in groups. Topics will be assigned during the first course meeting.

Short Paper (750-1250 words) 25%
*Students are required to write a short essay on a reading of their choice. This essay is due in lecture the Monday prior to reading week (**February 16**), and should be submitted via Blackboard.*

Abstract and Annotated Bibliography (250-500 words) 5%
*In advance of the final paper, students are required to submit a 250 word abstract outlining the argument they expect to make in that assignment. In addition, students should submit an annotated bibliography of at least three sources. This is due on **April 4** and should be submitted via Blackboard.*

Final Paper (1800-2400 words) 35%
*In lieu of a final examination, students are required to write a research paper investigating a topic of the student's choosing, per my approval. Papers are due on the last day of the term (**April 13**), and should be submitted via Blackboard.*

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of one-third of a letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Quizzes and examinations will not be rescheduled except in the case of medical emergencies. Students without proper medical documentation will not be permitted to make up missed quizzes or examinations.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also**

you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they

appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following

university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Will be posted on Blackboard.