



Master Course Syllabus

For additional course information, including prerequisites, corequisites, and course fees, please refer to the Catalog: <https://catalog.uvu.edu/>

Semester: spring

Year: 2025

Course Prefix: engl/comm/cine

Course and Section #: 217G-601

Course Title: Race, Class and Gender in US
Cinema

Credits: 3

Course Description

This course investigates representations of race, class, and gender in U.S. cinema. Studying a variety of films from across the history of American filmmaking, we will identify and analyze the strategies that such films employ in relation to dominant ideological formations of race, class, and gender. We will learn and develop analytical tools to apply to films and visual media beyond the scope of the class, and ultimately will participate in meaningful cultural critique across the cultural experiences we share. Some films screened may carry an “R” rating.

Course Attributes

This course has the following attributes:

- General Education Requirements
- Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
- Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
- Discipline Core Requirements in Program
- Elective Core Requirements in Program
- Open Elective

Other: *Click here to enter text.*

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: John Goshert

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and analyze global or intercultural issues as they relate to representations of race, class, gender, and sexuality as portrayed in U.S. cinema.
 2. Identify the evolution stereotypical cultural conceptions in cinema as a reflection of historical context.
 3. Identify specific directors and films crucial to understanding the evolution of cinemas which present the complexity and variety of cultural groups. stereotypes.
 4. Evaluate one's own cultural rules and biases compare and contrast with those of different cultures.
 5. Explain differences between revisionary and reactionary cultural representations.
- Analyze effectively, in written and oral form, the ideological issues surrounding the representation of race, class, and gender in U.S. cinema.

Course Materials and Texts

Required Text

Benshoff and Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality at the Movies*, 3rd edition, Wiley/Blackwell, 2021. ISBN: 978-1118743652

Course Requirements

Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy Policies

While supported with digital resources, this is a face-to-face course. Discussion based class sessions will be the primary means of delivering information and, more importantly, developing course content at students' direction. You should plan to attend and be prepared for each class by completing all viewing, reading and writing tasks scheduled for the day in advance of class meeting. To support and facilitate a discussion-based class environment, **laptop computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices may not be used during class time**. Students should acquire physical copies of course texts, make printouts of reserve readings, and have physical means of notetaking. More than four absences in the term can result in failure of the course.

Course Content Notice

Cinematic/aesthetic texts for this course were chosen for their artistic quality and ability to represent/engage arguments, issues, and sensibilities of their moment. The course text and supplements were chosen for their ability to broaden conversations about cinematic works with insights into philosophical, historical, social and cultural matters either directly concerning particular films, and/or genres, cultural contexts, and concerns related to them. The purpose of this course is to provide introductory skills for critically interpreting cultural texts; it does not endorse or advocate any interpretive approach, political position or cultural stance.

By design, students should plan to engage with challenging content including, but not limited to some of the following:

Representations of murder, rape (including vulnerable people), revolutionary violence, terrorism, suicide, wage slavery, racism (including racial epithets), chattel slavery, imperialism/colonialism, ableism, misogyny, homophobia (including sex/gender/sexuality epithets), genocide, sex and sexuality. These texts may critique social/cultural norms including racism, sexism, fundamentalism/evangelicalism, meritocracy, relativism, individualism, identitarianism, capitalism, American exceptionalism, technophilia, white supremacy, normative taste, democracy.

Codes of conduct will be discussed on the first day of class and revisited as needed; this list will be revised as needed over the term. **Students must keep in mind the distinction between representations of ideas, issues, positions, etc., and their endorsement.**

Plan for active class participation by viewing all assigned films, completing assigned readings and preparing to discuss your experiences. Take notes as you read, including:

1. **Summarizing/connecting ideas:** What makes sense? What's familiar? How can you connect class readings to prior knowledge, current events/issues, and/or personal experience?
2. **Prioritizing important ideas:** What's new? What seems especially significant? Why?
3. **Asking questions:** What doesn't make sense? Which ideas, perspectives and tasks are confusing? How can we work through your questions to clarify challenging concepts and ideas?

During Class, practice the same strategies by:

1. **Summarizing/connecting ideas:** bring your notebook and write down points that come up in discussion, items written on the board, etc. Make connections: why and how are quotes, observations, arguments and claims related? Who do you agree/disagree with and why?
2. **Prioritizing important ideas:** "star" key points and issues. Jot down additional notes to develop these points in your own words.
3. **Asking questions/making observations: Participate actively in class! If things don't make sense, be sure to ask a question (why...?, how...?, what does this mean...?). The point of class time is to work on questions and challenges together.**
4. **Making it practical:** Be sure to think and talk about how class discussions apply to writing projects. Let's work out a question or challenge by using your idea/draft/project as an example.

Avoid becoming distracted by phones and other devices during class. Without exception, device dependency impedes students' capacity to engage in class conversations and threatens success on written assignments.

Since communication outside of class hours will be electronic but students may have multiple means of contact on file, everyone will **activate UVU Canvas messenger** and **plan to check email** regularly. You can set UVU email and Canvas notifications to be forwarded to any preferred email, but Canvas/UVU email will be the only means for maintaining predictable student-instructor contact. In cases where an attachment is required, direct email should be used. Expect about a 24-hour turnaround for email responses M-F; weekend communication solely at instructor's discretion. Individualized assistance with the course and any projects gladly given as one on one and/or small group conferences.

Resources: If you ever have questions about the class in general or your work in particular, take advantage of office hours; they are there for your benefit. It is your responsibility to make sure assignments and class activities are clear. Meet a couple of people in class who can give you notes, peer reviews, assignments, etc. on the days you can't make it. Take advantage of tutoring services in the writing center (FL 201 and online at <https://www.uvu.edu/writingcenter/>). Students of all levels will benefit from advice, readings, and discussions, in individual and small-group settings, face to face and online, which are provided free of charge by tutors.

Film Log Guidelines

1 page Film Logs help you reflect on an initial film viewing and provide opportunities for contributing to class discussions. After watching each keystone film, respond to guiding questions in Canvas, being sure to go beyond yes/no answers by providing examples and evidence (**including time stamps**) for your thoughts. Graded pass/fail. **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Response Paper Guidelines

Response Papers help you analyze a film. Following class discussions use the response paper to explain your interpretations of each keystone film's meaning, significance, and so on. While this paper is,

primarily, an expression of your opinions on, experiences with, and ideas about our films and other texts, you should nonetheless work toward developing evidence-based arguments. The best responses take on a **specific/detailed** issue from your viewing (plus textbook reading, class discussions, presentations, etc.), which is then worked out in some *critical/analytic* detail.

Don't just summarize the text: instead, argue for a particular position, for a particular "reading." Your treatment of whatever topic you choose will be enhanced not only by a strong thesis, but also by your incorporation of specific material from the film, such as dialogue or other citations. This is in keeping with that old adage of "showing" rather than "telling" as you work out your argument/position.

Consider also addressing questions you have about the films—perhaps centered on a scene, event, character, etc. How do specific aspects or parts of the film inform the significance of the whole? You may also think about developing connections between works—how do formal characteristics, topics, characters, etc. resonate across periods, across gender and/or ethnic boundaries, etc.? How are those characteristics treated differently and why?

The final response paper, a narrative self-and-course evaluation, is due with the final project.

Final Project Guidelines

The final project is essentially a researched argument on any topic within the scope of the course (cinematic exploration of race, class, gender, and/or sexuality in the US). You may use any course film(s) or develop a project on a film of personal interest with one caveat: ensure in making your choice that the subject matter merits close examination, and that you can develop a research question and set of sources to explore it. The final project will incorporate research (to be discussed), including articles in scholarly and professional journals, and general audience sources, such as documentaries, watch along videos, DVD commentary tracks, reviews, Ted Talks, online forums, etc.

Grade Distribution/Notes

Film Logs: 25%

Response papers: 25%

Final Project: 25%

Attendance/Participation: 25%

Grading Standards—Per UVU catalog:

A: "an honor grade indicating superior achievement"

B: "a grade indicating commendable mastery"

C: "indicates satisfactory mastery"

D: "indicates substandard progress and insufficient evidence of ability to succeed in sequential courses"

F: "indicates inadequate mastery of pertinent skills or repeated absences from class"

Course materials are determined by standards of academic inquiry and a commitment to the exchange of ideas; materials will not be "rated G" or censored in any way. As contemporary historian Robin DG

Kelly recalls, texts that may seem unsafe, challenging and triggering “were our sources of social critique and weapons . . . [I]t never occurred to us to refuse to read a text simply because it validated the racism, sexism, free-market ideology, and bourgeoisie liberalism against which we railed. Nothing was off limits. On the contrary, delving into these works only sharpened our critical faculties.”

- Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and the possibility of administrative action.
- Attendance is required. You should plan to attend and be prepared for each class meeting. Because we will take a discussion/workshop approach to the course, attendance and participation will weigh significantly in your grade.
- All written work will follow MLA style guidelines, and be submitted to Canvas as doc, docx, or PDF only (google docs and other unformatted documents will not be accepted)
- **With the exception of film logs**, late work will receive a 10% grade deduction for every day past the deadline, beginning at the posted assignment closing day/time.
- Per UVU policies: “Each student is expected to take an active role in the learning process by meeting course requirements as specified in written syllabi” (VII.A). Thus, the course syllabus comprises a contract between instructor and students, who will be held to its terms and expectations, for “The right to receive academic credit and/or academic degrees when all specified requirements and course work have been satisfied” (V.L). That is, the student has the right to receive credit for work that meets or exceeds satisfactory performance; however, the student also has the right to fail based on those same performance conditions.
- It is not only your right, but also your responsibility to ask questions, to raise challenges, to discuss readings, and to otherwise participate in the class as it unfolds over the semester.

Required or Recommended Reading Assignments

See course calendar below

General Description of the Subject Matter of Each Lecture or Discussion

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

January

WEEK 1

T 7 Course intro

Homework: Interest/Resource report

R 9 Choose film for screening

Chapter 1 (3-21)

WEEK 2

T 14 Student selected film screening/discussion

Chapter 2 (22-48)

R 16 Student selected film screening/discussion

WEEK 3

T 21 Complete student selected film screening/discussion

W 22 **Film Log #1 due: *Shadows***

R 23 **Keystone film #1: *Shadows* (view before class time)**

Intro part 2: Race and Ethnicity (51-54)

Chapter 4: African Americans (83-109)

WEEK 4

- T 28 Chapter 11: Visual Parameters of Women (242-258)
Excerpt: *Faces* (Criterion)
R 30 Excerpt: *I Am Not Your Negro* (Kanopy)
F 31 **RP #1 due**

February

WEEK 5

- M 3 **Film Log #2 due: *Chan is Missing***
T 4 **Keystone film #2: *Chan is Missing* (view before class time)**
Chapter 6: Asian Americans (130-149)
R 6 Excerpt: Charlie Chan/Fu Manchu
Excerpt: *Shopping for Fangs* (Amazon r/b streaming)

WEEK 6

- T 11 Excerpt: *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*
Excerpt: *Life is Cheap But Toilet Paper is Expensive* (PC)
W 12 **Film Log #3 due: *Five Easy Pieces***
R 13 **Keystone film #3: *Five Easy Pieces* (view before class time)**
Part IV intro: Class (175-178)
Chapter 9: Class after the Depression (194-215)

WEEK 7

- T 18 Chapter 12: Masculinity (259-277)
Excerpt: *Blue Collar* (Amazon DVD)
Excerpt: *Norma Rae* (Amazon r/b streaming)
Excerpt: *Stranger than Paradise* (Criterion)
Excerpt: *A Face in the Crowd* (Criterion)
Excerpt: *Repo Man* (PC)
R 20 Catch up/review
F 21 **RP #2 due**

WEEK 8

- M 24 **Film Log #4 due: *Born in Flames***
T 25 **Keystone film #4: *Born in Flames* (view before class time)**
Part IV intro: Gender (219-222)
Chapter 13: Gender since 1960s (278-300)
R 27 Part V intro: Sexuality (303-306)
Chapter 14: Heterosexuality, Homosexuality (307-324)
Excerpt: *Fireworks* (YT)
Excerpt: *The Children's Hour* (YT)

Excerpt: *Desperate Living* (Criterion)
Excerpt: *Paris is Burning* (Kanopy, Criterion)
Excerpt: *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (PC)

March

WEEK 9

- M 3 **Film Log #5 due: *Pow Wow Highway***
T 4 **Keystone film #5: *Pow Wow Highway* (view before class time)**
Chapter 5: Native Americans (111-129)
R 6 Excerpt: Charlie Hill (YT)
Excerpt: 1490s (YT)
Excerpt: *Dead Man* (PC)
Excerpt: *Smoke Signals* (PC)
F 7 **RP #3 due**

WEEK 10

- T 11 No class
R 13 No class

WEEK 11

- M 17 **Film Log #6 due: *Bamboozled***
T 18 **Keystone film #6: *Bamboozled* (view before class time)**
Chapter 3: Whiteness (55-82)
R 20 Excerpt: *Hollywood Shuffle* (PC)
Excerpt: *Richard Pryor on the Sunset Strip* (YT)
Excerpt: *Blazing Saddles* (PC)
Excerpt: *Killer of Sheep*

WEEK 12

- T 25 Excerpt: *Watermelon Woman* (Criterion)
Excerpt: *Black Power Mixtape* (YT)
Excerpt: *Wattstax* (YT/PC)
R 27 Catch up/review
F 28 **RP #4 due**

WEEK 13

- M 31 **Film Log #7 due: *Girl Fight***

April

- T 1 **Keystone film #7: *Girl Fight* (view before class time)**

Chapter 7: Latinos (150-172)

- R 3 Excerpt: *Alambrista!* (Criterion)
Excerpt: *Salt of the Earth* (YT)

WEEK 14

- T 8 Excerpt: *Up in Smoke*
W 9 **Film Log #8 due: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night***
R 10 **Keystone film #8: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (view before class time)**
Intro Part VI: Ability (355-358)
Chapter 16: Images of Disability (359-381)

WEEK 15

- T 15 Excerpt: *Brother from Another Planet* (YT)
R 17 Catch up/review
F 18 **RP #5 due**

WEEK 16

- T 22 Open Office Hours
R 24 **PROJECT DUE**
RP #6 due

Required Course Syllabus Statements

Generative AI

- Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and the possibility of administrative action.

Using Remote Testing Software

This course does not use remote testing software.

This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

Required University Syllabus Statements

Accommodations/Students with Disabilities

Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU [Accessibility Services](#) at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at DHHservices@uvu.edu

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

Academic Integrity

At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their [rights and responsibilities](#). In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in [UVU Policy 541: Student Code of Conduct](#).

Equity and Title IX

Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – TitleIX@uvu.edu – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

Religious Accommodation

UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.

To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu. If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a [specially dedicated space](#) for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.