

ENGL 375B6—STUDIES IN EXPLOITATION CINEMA

Fall 2017

Section 2

Tues/Thurs: 11:00-12:15 pm, Combs Hall 112

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WEBSITE (for blog posts and readings)

www.literatureoftheamericas.com

OFFICE HOURS (Combs Hall 324):

Tues/Thurs: 9:00-9:30 am

10:45-11:00 am

12:15-2:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines major topics in low-budget “exploitation” cinema produced around the world from the invention of the movies to the digital age. Although lowbrow cinophile culture (“paracinema”) has traditionally been relegated to the margins by the academy, it has recently begun to gain attention from scholarly communities. This includes us! We will pay special consideration to how “trash” cinema traditions reveal differing attitudes about modernity, global integration, popular culture, the dominance of Hollywood, and the role of gender, class, and race in society. The course covers seven units centered on different national traditions, film auteurs, and exploitation producers in connection with key concepts in cinema studies. It is strongly recommended that you take English 245 (“Introduction to Cinema Studies”) before enrolling in this course, as it will make discussion of the films more rewarding. At the very least, I expect that you acquire a working familiarity of the following film studies terms: 1) mise-en-scene; 2) cinematography; 3) editing, and 4) sound. This course will place a high priority on drawing adequate contexts for exploitation films, especially through questions of production, distribution, and exhibition.

Special Note:

The university is a place where we should aim to stretch our intellectual capabilities in untried, and even uncomfortable, directions. We will approach the materials in this course in the spirit of scholarly inquiry, and with the aid of academic and non-academic sources. However, please note that exploitation films revel in breaking taboos regarding race, sex, gender, class, and religion. This transgression (both market and culture-driven) is a major theme of the course and something we will return to time and again. I do not recommend that you enroll in this class if you are easily offended by visual representations that do not reflect mainstream standards of correctness, and if you are not prepared to suspend judgment before fully engaging with course materials. *If you are the slightest bit unsure about whether or not to remain in this class after reading this, I strongly encourage that you to come speak with me privately. Please be warned!

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

To encourage active viewership by introducing students to the fundamentals of filmmaking, including business aspects (such as marketing, distribution, and exhibition) and creative endeavors (including the deployment of mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound).

To analyze films in their sociohistorical contexts: as a product, reflection, and shaper of culture.

To analyze film genres through a combination of secondary readings and film examples. Careful attention will be paid to the historical, cultural, and political development of genre conventions.

To introduce the role of individual film artistry within the multimillion dollar film industry through a combination of secondary readings and film examples that focus on several filmmakers.

REQUIRED RENTALS (Available at Amazon Instant Video)

Friedkin, William. *The Exorcist* (\$3.99 rental)

Jaekyn, Just. *Emmanuelle* (\$3.99 rental)

Rodriguez, Robert. *Grindhouse: Planet Terror* (\$3.99 rental)

Quentin Tarantino. *Grindhouse: Planet Terror* (\$3.99 rental)

FILMS ON RESERVE (Simpson Library)

Browning, Tod. *Freaks*

Fleischer, Robert. *Mandingo*

Iliadis, Denis. *The Last House on the Left*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course has a constant and sometimes demanding workload. Active participation during class discussion is essential to doing well. At a minimum, I expect you 1) to have excellent attendance, 2) to arrive and leave on time, 3) to have done assigned readings/viewings carefully before class, 4) to turn in your work on time, 5) to bring the necessary materials and texts to class, 6) to listen respectfully to me and to your classmates, and 7) to contribute to class discussion and activities on a regular basis. **It is your own responsibility to find out what you miss when you are not in class.** *I suggest that you exchange email information with at least one other classmate in order to ensure that you are always prepared.* **Do not email me to ask what you missed.** Note that you will receive an *unsatisfactory* mark on your mid-semester report if you fail to comply with these requirements and/or have a working course grade lower than a C. **I will accept no late submissions of any kind from you without a medical note.**

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Be assured that I want students to learn and to receive the good grades they deserve. Please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with the course. Written assignments include: 1) seven blog posts about the reading/viewing, 2) a 4-page midterm essay applying key theoretical concepts to one unannounced film, 3) a 5-page case study for one seminal exploitation film (which emphasizes production, distribution, exhibition, and cultural legacy). In addition to class discussion, oral assignments include a class-long group presentation on a film and one critical essay/book chapter. You will receive detailed directions for completing each one of these assignments. The following is the grade distribution:

Attendance and Blog Posts: 20%

Group Presentation: 20%

Midterm Essay: 25%

Final Case Study: 35%

GRADING CRITERIA

I have designed the following criteria guidelines to help you grasp how I conduct a large part of the grading. I divide formal written assignments in the following ways:

***Papers: Content and Analysis (70%)**

--An average paper (C) demonstrates a superficial understanding of the topic; it is usually based almost exclusively on class notes. It generally relies too much on summary rather than explicit analysis of textual points, and uses quotations ineffectively.

--A better paper (B) incorporates readings that have been assigned in other contexts (including in-class assignments), analyzes literary and film devices as they are employed in a text, and uses specific quotations from texts in order to illustrate the grounding of its analysis.

--A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and includes a more sophisticated understanding of the chosen topic. That is, an “A” paper uses the tools of textual analysis, apt use of quotation, concise and explicit remarks justifying that analysis, while drawing on all the available resources of the course.

***Papers: Form, Style, Mechanics and Usage (30%)**

--An average paper (C) demonstrates a reasonable control of basic English syntax, verb and subject (including pronoun) agreement, tense consistency, proofreading, paragraph organization, etc.

--A better paper (B) demonstrates an ability to vary sentence structure, has few if any proofreading errors, employs careful transitions and organization in a more sophisticated way, and controls grammar.

--A superior paper (A) demonstrates all the qualities of a “B” paper, and in addition demonstrates an ability to control complex sentence structure, vary verbs effectively, and contains no proofreading errors.

***Blog Posts (7 altogether)**

I will grade these as part of your participation grade. I require that you 1) post by the deadline, 2) respond to my question/comment with ample evidence that you have completed the required reading/viewing, and 3) post a response only after careful reflection, and using correct grammar and punctuation.

***Group Presentation:**

I will assign your group a letter grade based upon 1) how well you engage the assigned film with respect to production, distribution, exhibition, and legacy, 2) how well you apply the accompanying critical article to the film you are presenting, 3) how well you relate the film to the course unit under analysis, and 4) how well you collaborate with your classmates and answer questions from me and from your peers.

HONOR CODE

You must pledge all of your work, as the honor pledge obtains for all work submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for this course. Violations, without exception, will be referred to the Honor Council.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you already receive services through the Office of Disabilities Services and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Please bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Services and need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I will be happy to refer you. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.

Engl375B6—Studies in Exploitation Cinema

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Section 2

Week #1

THE CINEMA OF ATTRACTION

[*Keywords: cinema of attraction, paracinema, B-movie]

- Tues 8/29 Introduction to the course
 Thurs 8/31 Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde":
<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/historiography/Gunning.pdf>
- Week #2**
 Tues 9/5 Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style":
<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Trashing-the-Academy.pdf>
- Thurs 9/7 Elijah Drenner, *American Grindhouse* (2010):
<http://umw.kanopystreaming.com/video/american-grindhouse>
50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am
- Week #3**
CLASSICAL EXPLOITATION
 [*Keywords: independent film, exploitation, Production Code]
- Tues 9/12 Eric Schaefer, "*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*": *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* [chapter 1]:
<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Bold-Daring-Shocking-True.pdf>
- Thurs 9/14 William Beaudine, *Mom and Dad* (1944):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjBYCpx7ZwM>
- Week #4**
 Tues 9/19 Louis J. Glasnier, *Reefer Madness* (1936):
<http://umw.kanopystreaming.com/video/reefer-madness-2016-release>
50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am
- Thurs 9/21 ***Presentation:** Tod Browning, *Freaks* (1931); Mikita Brottman, *Offensive Films* [chapter 1]
- Week #5**
UNDERGROUND AND AVANT-GARDE
 [*Keywords: art film, cult film, midnight movie]
- Tues 9/26 Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* [chapter 1]:
<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Cutting-Edge.pdf>
- Thurs 9/28 Robert Wiene, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920):
<http://umw.kanopystreaming.com/video/cabinet-dr-caligari-1919>
- Week #6**
 Tues 10/3 David Lynch, *Eraserhead* (1977):
<http://umw.kanopystreaming.com/video/eraserhead>
50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am
- Thurs 10/5 ***Presentation:** Georges Franju, *Eyes Without a Face* (1960); Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* [chapter 1]
- Week #7**
CULT AUTEURSHIP
 [*Keywords: auteur, male gaze, sexploitation]
- Tues 10/10 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema":
<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Laura-Mulvey-Visual-Pleasure-and-Narrative-Cinema.pdf>
- Thurs 10/12 Doris Wishman, *Nude on the Moon* (1961):
<https://archive.org/details/Nude.on.the.Moon.1961.AVI1Gb>

Week #8

Tues 10/17
Thurs 10/19

Fall Break
***Midterm Due**

Week #9

Tues 10/24

Doris Wishman, *Bad Girls Go to Hell* (1965):

<http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2gpz6s>

50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am

Thurs 10/26

***Presentation:** Ed Wood, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959); Rob Craig, *Ed Wood, Mad Genius: A Critical Study of the Films* [chapter 6]

Week #10**BODY GENRES**

[*Keywords: body genre, affect, excess]

Tues 10/31

Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess":

<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Film-Bodies3.pdf>

Thurs 11/2

William Friedkin, *The Exorcist* (1973) (\$3.99 Amazon rental):

https://www.amazon.com/Exorcist-Ellen-Burstyn/dp/B00124PXW8/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1501717742&sr=1-1&keywords=the+exorcist

Week #11

Tues 11/7

Just Jaeckyn, *Emmanuelle* (1974) (\$3.99 Amazon rental):

https://www.amazon.com/Emmanuelle-English-Subtitled-Alain-Cuny/dp/B00BP4WND2/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1501717646&sr=1-1&keywords=emmanuelle

50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am

Thurs 11/9

***Presentation:** Robert Fleischer, *Mandingo* (1975); Linda Williams, "Skin Flicks on the Racial Border: Pornography, Exploitation, and Interracial Lust"

Week #12**VIDEO NASTIES**

[*Keywords: movie palace, grindhouse, VHS]

Tues 11/14

Jack Stevenson, "Grindhouse and Beyond":

<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Grindhouse-and-Beyond.pdf>

Thurs 11/16

Jake West, *Video Nasties: Moral Panic, Censorship & Videotape* (2010) (in-class screening)

Week #13

Tues 11/21

Dario Argento, *Tenebrae* (1982):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOkcIupz2js>

50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am

***Presentation:** Ruggero Deodato, *Cannibal Holocaust*; Kay Dickinson, "The Horrific Sights and Incompatible Sounds of Video Nasties"

Thurs 11/23

Thanksgiving Break

Week #14**EXPLOITATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

[*Keywords: analogue film, DCP, torture porn]

Tues 11/28

Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change":

<http://www.literatureoftheamericas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Anne-Friedberg-The-End-of-Cinema.pdf>

Thurs 11/30

Robert Rodriguez, *Grindhouse: Planet Terror* (2007) (\$3.99 Amazon rental):

https://www.amazon.com/Grindhouse-Planet-Terror-Rose-McGowan/dp/B002I7IC58/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1501717781&sr=1-1&keywords=planet+terror

Week #15

Tues 12/5

Quentin Tarantino, *Grindhouse: Death Proof* (2007) (\$3.99 Amazon rental):

https://www.amazon.com/Grindhouse-Death-Proof-Rosario-Dawson/dp/B002J2PB10/ref=sr_1_1?s=instant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1501717821&sr=1-1&keywords=death+proof

50-Word Blog Post Due by 9:00 am

Thurs 12/7

***Presentation:** Denis Iliadis, *The Last House on the Left* (2009); Carol Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* [chapter 3]

Week #16

***Final Projects Due**