

ENGLISH 223

Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) in Film

Winter 2017 – Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:20 PM – Red Cedar Hall 202

Instructor: Matt Usner
Office: NSH-213

Email: usnerm@linnbenton.edu
Office Phone: 917-4283

Office Hours: Tue/Thur 11:30-12:00
and 2:30-3:00

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SYLLABUS: This syllabus contains all the vital information about this course—what you'll be learning, what will be expected of you, and what you can expect from me. Essentially, this syllabus is a contract that states what is required of both of us during the term. Since this is a valuable document, you should study it and refer to it often. The better you know the syllabus, the better the chance that you'll do well in the course.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION: The course will investigate cinematic representations of femininity and masculinity and analyze how film, as a commercial art form geared toward mass consumption, can reinforce or challenge socially constructed notions of gender identity. The course will also explore film representations of gender's intersections with other forms of identities--primarily sexuality, race, class, and ability. Using both "classical" Hollywood and contemporary films, this course will introduce students to the central tenets of relevant film and critical theory, and illustrate the ways in which film representations can perpetuate and subvert aspects of dominant ideologies. 3 credits."

PREREQUISITE: A grade of "C" or better in Writing 121 is required before taking this class. If you are not sure that you meet this prerequisite, please speak to me no later than after the first class.

COURSE OVERVIEW: The course will investigate representations of femininity and masculinity in American cinema and analyze how film, as a commercial artform usually geared toward mass consumption, can both reinforce and challenge socially constructed ideas about gender. The course will also explore how cinematic representations of gender intersect with depictions of other forms of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability. Our goal will be to explore the social construction of difference, power, and discrimination in American film--and how those inequalities interact with "real life." Using film examples that span the 120+ years of American film, this course will introduce students to the central ideas of film and critical theory, and illustrate the ways in which film representations can maintain or subvert aspects of dominant ideologies. Because we'll be watching some films from earlier historical periods, as well as some films that are noticeably different than typical Hollywood blockbusters, it will be important to keep an open mind while watching them, realizing that even if a particular selection might not appeal to you on the level of entertainment, this class will still require you to study it closely and think critically about it. This is a discussion-based course, and your active participation will be expected. The best way to be an active participant in class is to thoroughly read--and think about--the textbook selections and come to class prepared to discuss them. Our classroom will be a safe space to respectfully exchange ideas--some of which you may find controversial and/or uncomfortable--and to evaluate (and reevaluate) your own personal viewpoints on these important, thought-provoking issues. Note that some of the films you may be required to watch may contain offensive language, nudity, violence, and/or sexual situations. If, for any reason, you feel the

content of this course might not be agreeable to you, you may be better off withdrawing from it.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Explain how difference is socially constructed.
- Describe how perceived differences, combined with unequal distribution of power across economic, social, and political institutions, result in discrimination.
- Analyze ways in which the interactions of social categories, such as race, ethnicity, social class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and age, are related to difference, power, and discrimination in the United States.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (2nd ed.) by Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin (Wiley-Blackwell, ISBN 978-1-4051-7055-0). The textbook is available at the LBCC bookstore, and it can also be accessed online for free from the LBCC library. The link to access it is

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/linnbenton-ebooks/detail.action?docID=819377>. (Note that if you're accessing this link from a computer not connected to the LBCC network you may be asked to enter your X number and 4-digit year of birth.) The first required textbook reading will need to be completed for the second class period, so make sure you have access to the book by then. Textbook readings are a very important element of this course. It's simply not possible to do well in the course if you don't read the textbook carefully, which means *taking notes* on the readings, not simply underlining or using a highlighter. There may also be occasional required readings from other sources as well. All required readings are listed on the course calendar. Typically there will be a heavier reading load due on Tuesdays than Thursdays.

ACCESS TO REQUIRED FILMS: We will watch 2 or 3 films together in class, as well as several excerpts, but you will also be required to watch a few films outside of class as part of class assignments. Some of these movies *may* be available on DVD in the college library or at other community libraries, or on popular streaming services such as Netflix, but in some cases you may need to rent or buy a copy of the film.

MOODLE: Important course materials—such as assignment instructions, class agendas, and your grades—will be posted on our course site on Moodle (<http://elearning.linnbenton.edu/>). You will need to access these online materials regularly; please plan accordingly. I'll be demonstrating Moodle during our first or second class period.

ASSIGNMENTS & ACTIVITIES:

- *Reading Quizzes (10% of final grade):* Quizzes will be unannounced, and they will usually be given at the start of the class period, although they may also be given later in the period. Quizzes will be short, in most cases less than 10 minutes, and they will ask a single question about the required reading for that class period. For example, you may be asked to define a vocabulary term or two or apply a key concept to a short film clip. There will be 6 reading quizzes, but your lowest score will be dropped, which means 5 scores will count toward your final grade. If you are not present for a quiz, you cannot make it up. The best way to prepare for quizzes is to carefully read and re-read every required selection, and take notes that define key terms and summarize important concepts.
- *Midterm Exam (20% of final grade):* The midterm exam will take place during Week 6. It will cover all the course information up to that point (readings, vocabulary, lectures, films), and it will be

comprised of multiple choice items and short essay questions. No make-ups will be given for the midterm exam, so prioritize accordingly.

- **Critical Analysis Essay (20% of final grade):** This essay (5 typed pages minimum) will ask you to choose a film (from guidelines I provide you) and analyze a specific issue of representation in it. You will have the option of revising this paper for the chance at a higher grade, as long as the original paper is submitted on time.
- **Group Presentation and Individual Reflection (20% of final grade):** The class will be divided into groups early in the term, and each will be required to make a 45-60 minute class presentation on a film of my choice. Each film will focus on a particular aspect of cinematic representation--race/ethnicity, ability, and class--and each group will be required to read an accompanying textbook chapter and include key concepts from it in their presentation. Additionally, each group member will be required to write a summary of his or her contributions to the team project. Presentations will take place near the end of the term.
- **Final Exam (25% of final grade):** The final exam will be held on the Tuesday of Finals Week from 2:30 to 4:20. It will test you on vocabulary terms from the entire term and require you to answer an essay question in response to a film we watch the week before the exam. More specific information will be forthcoming later in the term.
- **Class Participation (5% of final grade):** This course will have some mini-lectures in it, but your active participation is required. I will be our discussion leader, nudging the conversation forward as needed. To be an active participant, you will need to share your informed ideas and opinions, pose thoughtful questions, and apply ideas from our readings. As with any exchange of ideas, everyone will need to be tolerant of viewpoints that may differ from their own. You are welcome to disagree with any ideas of mine or your classmates', but you must do so respectfully. Use opposing viewpoints as opportunities to reflect on your own beliefs: ask yourself *why* you believe *what* you believe, and ponder *why* someone might hold a different view. Tolerance can be an amazingly profound educational experience.

GRADING: You can earn up to 500 points in this course:

ASSIGNMENTS	POINTS	% OF FINAL GRADE
6 Reading Quizzes (lowest score dropped)	5 quizzes @10 points each = 50	10%
Midterm Exam	100	20%
Critical Analysis Essay (can be revised)	100	20%
Group Presentation + Individual Reflection	75 + 25 = 100	20%
Final Exam (vocab section + essay)	60 + 65 = 125	25%
Class Participation	25	5%
POINT TOTAL	500	100%

Your final grade will be determined by the following point breakdown:

GRADE	TOTAL POINTS	DESCRIPTION
-------	--------------	-------------

A	500 to 448 points (89.6% and up)	Passing work that is <u>excellent</u>
B	447 to 398 points (89.4% to 79.6%)	Passing work that is <u>good</u>
C	397 to 348 points (79.4% to 69.6%)	Passing work that is <u>average</u>
D	347 to 298 points (69.4% to 59.6%)	Non-passing work that is <u>below average</u>
F	297 and below (59.4% and below)	Non-passing work that is <u>fundamentally lacking</u>

COURSE POLICIES AND CAMPUS RESOURCES:

- **No-Show Policy:** Unless prior arrangements have been made with me, students not attending the first two class sessions will be withdrawn.
- **Attendance Policy:** Missing class means missing valuable instruction time, which means that you give yourself the best chance to do well by attending every class. Because due dates for assignments are always announced in advance, an absence is not an excuse for missing a due date. If you must miss a class, contact me before the next class to make arrangements for getting me the work that was due on the day of your absence. I reserve the right to lower your final grade for more than 3 absences.
- **Phones in the Classroom:** Human beings have survived without cell phones for tens of thousands of years; I'm confident that you can survive without yours for our 80-minute class periods. Silence your phone and put it in your pocket or bag--not in your lap, not face down on your desk. When you use your phone in class, you are distracting yourself and others, including me. So don't do it. If you do, I'll gently remind you to put it away. If you keep doing it, I'll not-so-gently ask you to leave. As a father of a young child, I will have mine on and with me, but you will not see or hear it. I--and your classmates--expect the same courtesy from you. If there is a serious need to have your phone out, such as a family emergency, please put it on vibrate and let me know at the start of class.
- **Laptops/Tablets in the Classroom:** I strongly prefer that students do not use these devices in the classroom unless instructed to, but if you feel that you must, please talk to me before doing so.
- **Policy on Late Work:** In fairness to all students, an assignment that is submitted after its deadline will either lose points or not receive credit. Specific policies for late work will be included with assignment instructions; read them carefully.
- **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Presenting someone else's ideas in writing as if they are your own is plagiarism, and it is a serious academic offense. Any plagiarized elements in your writing will result in, at minimum, a zero for the assignment and, at maximum, automatic course failure. If you ever borrow information from an outside source to put in an essay, you must cite it properly. If you're not sure how to do this, please ask me for help before submitting your paper. Once you submit a paper, the policy mentioned above will be enforced.
- **Office Hours:** Feel free to visit me during my office hours (listed at the top of this syllabus) to

discuss any questions or concerns you have. It's best to schedule a time in advance, but I won't mind if you stop by unannounced.

- **LBCC Student Email:** Please make sure that you check your student email regularly throughout the term. Should I need to contact you, I will be emailing your student account. You can find information about accessing your LBCC email here: <http://www.linnbenton.edu/roadrunner-mail>
- **The LBCC Writing Center:** The LBCC Writing Center (WH-200) is a fantastic free resource for students. Tutors are available to assist you with all aspects of your writing assignments. The Writing Center also offers online tutoring services as well. Get more information here: <http://www.linnbenton.edu/learning-center/writing-center>
- **The LBCC Library:** The LBCC library is located on the first floor of Willamette Hall. Get more information here: <http://library.linnbenton.edu/home>
- **Center for Accessibility Resources (CFAR):** LBCC is committed to inclusiveness and equal access to higher education. If you have approved accommodations through the Center for Accessibility Resources (CFAR) and would like to use your accommodations in this class, please talk to your instructor as soon as possible to discuss your needs. If you believe you may need accommodations, but are not yet registered with CFAR, please go to <http://linnbenton.edu/cfar> for steps on how to apply for services or call 541-917-4789.
- **Non-Discrimination Policy:** Everyone in the LBCC community has the right to think, learn, and work together in an environment of respect, tolerance, and goodwill, and we will honor that right in our classroom.
- **Food and Drink in the Classroom:** Drinks are fine; food is not.
- **Our Classroom's "Golden Rule":** To maximize learning by minimize distractions from it.

COURSE CALENDAR (I reserve the right to make scheduling changes with advanced notice)

DATE	TOPICS, MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES	READING DUE BEFORE CLASS
WEEK 1 Tue 1/10	Course introduction; Introduction to film studies as an academic discipline: entertainment, analysis, and the changing nature of film	None
Thur 1/12	Discussion representation and reality; Recent research studies on "the gender gap"; First reading quiz?	<i>America on Film (AoF) Ch. 1 (3-20)</i>
WEEK 2 Tue 1/17	History and structure of Hollywood filmmaking; Introduction to gender representation; women in classical Hollywood filmmaking	<i>AoF Ch. 2 (21-44), Intro to Part IV (213-216), and Ch. 10 (217-237)</i>
Thur 1/19	Exploring the visual parameters of women in film: Berger's <i>Ways of Seeing</i> and Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"	<i>AoF Ch. 11 (238-255)</i>
WEEK 3 Tue 1/24	Masculinity in classical Hollywood filmmaking; Gender in American film since the 1960s; Begin film #1	<i>AoF Ch. 12 (257-277) and Ch. 13 (278-302)</i>

Thur 1/26	Form presentation groups and assign topics; Conclude film #1	None
WEEK 4 Tue 1/31	Introduction to sexuality and American film; Heterosexuality, homosexuality, and classical Hollywood; Schedule presentation dates; Begin film #2	<i>AoF</i> Intro to Part V (305-308), Ch. 14 (309-328), and "Still Looking" (article on Moodle)
Thur 2/2	Sexualities on film since the sexual revolution; Assign Critical Analysis Essay; Conclude film #2	<i>AoF</i> Ch. 15 (329-355)
WEEK 5 Tue 2/7	Introduction to race/ethnicity and American film; The concept of whiteness in American film; African-Americans and American film; Film choice due for Critical Analysis Essay; Begin film #3	<i>AoF</i> Intro to Part II (47-49), Ch. 3 (51-77), and Ch. 4 (78-101)
Thur 2/9	Conclude film #3; Brief review for midterm	None
WEEK 6 Tue 2/14	Midterm Exam	None
Thur 2/16	Optional individual conferences to discuss Critical Analysis Essay	None
WEEK 7 Tue 2/21	Critical Analysis Essay due; Share essay topics; Prep time for group presentations	None
Thur 2/23	Group Presentation #1	Reading to be announced
WEEK 8 Tue 2/28	Group Presentation #2	Reading to be announced
Thur 3/2	Group Presentation #3	Reading to be announced
WEEK 9 Tue 3/7	Group Presentation #4	Reading to be announced
Thur 3/9	Group Presentation #5	Reading to be announced
WEEK 10 Tue 3/14	Begin film #4 (used for Final Exam)	Reading to be announced
Thur 3/16	Conclude film #4 (used for Final Exam); Prep for final	Reading to be announced
WEEK 11 Tue 3/21	FINAL EXAM - 2:30-4:20 (Optional revision of Critical Analysis Essay due)	