BSAS FILM 3310
Cultural Identity and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Film

Course Description

Argentina and the United States – along with Australia, Canada and Brazil- are considered to be “countries of immigrants”, whose societies have been largely influenced by the mass migration waves of the mid-19th century as well as subsequent immigrant arrivals. Both societies have been defined as “melting pots”.

This class will examine the ways in which racial and ethnic differences have been visualized in the United States and Argentina. Students will study how Hollywood has created films that analyze issues of race and ethnicity in a multicultural United States and, in a comparative perspective, examine how independent filmmakers have portrayed ethnic relations in Argentina’s social and economic reality of the 21st century.

We will explore how images have helped to “inscribe” a diverse range of narratives around cultural identity. By tracing the visual markers of difference(s) historically, we will discuss how images have operated both to “naturalize” structural patterns of oppression as well as to critique and challenge received notions regarding diversity.

Course Learning Objectives

• To do an overview of approaches to multiculturalism.
• To analyze theories of race, ethnicity and nationalism and their reflection in practice.
• To discuss various models of interethnic relations (segregation/separation, assimilation, amalgamation, accommodation, integration, inclusion)
• To analyze definitions and forms of discrimination (direct, indirect, victimization) as well as levels of discrimination (personal, cultural, institutional, structural).
• To examine bias and explore the relationship between film and national culture in the United States and Argentina.
• To analyze the ways in which racial and ethnic difference has been visualized in the United States and Argentina through application of image “codes” (framing, focus, costume, setting, performance) in films.
• To understand how images support and disseminate narratives regarding racial and ethnic difference in the United States and Argentina.
• To critique narratives regarding racial and ethnic difference in the United States and Argentina.

Required Materials

Course Reader prepared by professor.

Methodology

Students are expected to read the assigned materials and participate actively in class discussion. The six films to be analyzed will be viewed in class.
**Evaluation and grading**

The course requires the writing of **two papers** on topics suggested by the professor. In addition, students will have one **oral assignment**.

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<td>First paper</td>
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<td>Second paper</td>
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<td>Oral assignment</td>
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To pass this course you must fulfill all instances of evaluation and attendance requirements. Any paper receiving a 3 (three) or below is considered a requirement not met. Make-ups will be at the professor’s discretion.

**Requirements:**

To credit the course the student must fulfill all requirements including reading, hand in the **two papers** on time, participate in class and meet the attendance requirement.

**Attendance:**

A minimum 75% attendance is necessary to pass this course.

**Grading scale:**

10 (ten)  | Excellent  
9 (nine)  | Very Good  
8 (eight) | Good       
7 (seven) | Above Average  
6 (six)   | Average    
5 (five)  | Below Average  
4 (four)  | Lowest Passing Grade  
3 (three) 2 (two) 1 (one) | Failure

**Plagiarism:**

You commit plagiarism if you:

1. Fail to acknowledge the sources of any information in your paper which is not either common knowledge or personal knowledge.
2. Fail to acknowledge direct quotation either by using quotation marks or (for longer passages) indentation.
3. Merely paraphrase the original words of your source.
4. Borrow the ideas, examples, or structure of your source without acknowledging it.
5. Take, buy, or receive a paper written by someone else and present it as your own.
6. Use one paper for two different courses, or re-use a paper previously submitted for credit, without the prior approval of the instructor and instructors.

You commit collusion if you:

1. Allow someone else to write your papers.
2. Allow someone else to edit your papers without your instructor’s knowledge or permission.

Source: University of Texas, Austin

Should you get caught committing plagiarism you will receive an automatic 1 (one).
Contents and Schedule

Week 1

* The puzzles of Race, Ethnicity and Nationality *

Introduction:

Terms for Multicultural Studies: Defining “Race,” “Ethnicity,” and “Nationality” by Professor Gregory Jay, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.


“The Other”


Film viewing: *A Chinese Tale (2011)*

An Argentine comedy that chronicles a chance encounter between Robert and a Chinese named Jun, who wanders lost through the city of Buenos Aires in search of his uncle, the only living relative who has. Robert meets Jun at the time that the latter is thrown into the streets from inside a taxi after being assaulted by the driver and his henchmen. From then began a forced and strange coexistence between the two, because Roberto does not speak Chinese and Jun does not know a word of Spanish.

Week 2

* History by Hollywood *

Class discussion:


Week 3

**Film viewing: The Help (2011)**
An aspiring author during the civil rights movement of the 1960s decides to write a book detailing the African-American maid’s point of view on the white families for which they work, and the hardships they go through on a daily basis.

**Class discussion:**

Association of Black Women, “An Open Statement to the Fans of The Help”.


**Week 4**  
*Politics and Anti-Racism in Crash (2004)*

**Class discussion:**


**Film viewing: Crash (2004)**
American drama film co-written, produced, and directed by Paul Haggis. The film is about racial and social tensions in Los Angeles, where several characters’ stories interweave during two days.

**Week 5**  
*Politics and Anti-Racism in Crash (2004)*

**Class discussion:**

Hsuan L. Hsu, “Racial Privacy, the L.A. Ensemble Film, and Paul Haggis’s Crash,” *Film Criticism* 31, Numbers 1/2 Fall/Winter 2006, pp. 132-56.


Lesette R. Heath, “Seeing Beyond Black and White: A Critical Reading of Race and Ethnicity in the Film Crash” excerpts from the thesis submitted to The Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication, Baltimore, Maryland, December 2009.

**SYMPOSIUM: Paul Haggis’s Crash.**

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### Week 6

**Race Relations and Stereotypes in *Gran Torino* (2008)**

**Class discussion:**


**Film viewing:** *Gran Torino* (2008)

The film tells the story of Walt Kowalski, a retired Polish American Ford factory worker and Korean War veteran, who has recently been widowed. His neighborhood in Highland Park, Michigan, formerly populated by working-class white families, is now dominated by poor Asian immigrants, and gang violence is commonplace.

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### Week 7

**Race Relations and Stereotypes in *Gran Torino* (2008)**

**Class discussion:**

**Reviews:**


**Journal articles:**


Francesca Tognetti, “*Gran Torino*: a foreign neighborhood”, *Other Modernities*, Università degli Studi di Milano, N. 2, 10/2009, pp. 378-381.

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### Week 8

**Mass Immigration and Cultural Identity in Argentina**


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**Week 9**

* Economic crisis, immigration and the new independent Argentine cinema *

**Herencia/Inheritance (2001)**

**Film viewing:** *Herencia/Inheritance (2001)*

Italian immigrant Olinda has lived in Buenos Aires for years. Having chased her lover to the city, Olinda found herself alone, eventually working to start her own restaurant. Younger German Paul has also come to Buenos Aires after his lover. After a chance encounter, Paul and Olinda begin an unlikely relationship.

**Class discussion:**

**Director’s Interview:**


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**Week 10**

* Migrating to the Third World: *Bolivia (2001)* *

**Film viewing:** *Bolivia (2001)*

The film tells the story of Freddy (Freddy Flores), a Bolivian with a gentle disposition, who loses his job. With little work opportunities in Bolivia, he leaves his wife and three daughters and travels to Argentina to search for employment as an undocumented worker. He hopes to make money and later return to his family.

**Class discussion:**


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**Week 11**

* Migrating to the Third World: *Bolivia (2001)* *

**Film viewing:** *Bolivia (2001)*

**Class discussion:**


**Week 12**

* The search for personal and cultural identity: El abrazo partido/Lost Embrace (2004) *

**Class discussion:**

Victor A. Mirelman, Haim Avni, Ignacio Klich & Efraim Zadoff, “Historical Overview: Jews in Argentina,” Jewish Virtual Library, A Division of The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise
http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejudaica_e00002_00002_0_001284.html

**Film viewing:** *El abrazo partido/Lost Embrace (2004)*

Ensemble drama set at a shopping centre in downtown Buenos Aires; the shopkeepers are mainly Argentinean Jews, apart from a Korean couple who run a Feng Shui store. The main focus is on Ariel, a young man who works in his mother's lingerie store and is searching for his true identity.

**Week 13**

* The search for personal and cultural identity: *El abrazo partido/Lost Embrace* (2004) *

**Class discussion:**

**Reviews:**

http://www.villagevoice.com/content/printVersion/188854/


**Journal article:**


**Conclusion:**


**Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance**

CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Students are also expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read
assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Attendance is mandatory and is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and ultimately in a F for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons**
If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, you must send an e-mail to let the Director of Academic Affairs (DAA) or Resident Director know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting by emailing. Note that calling the CAPA Center is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation**
Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity**
The faculty expects from you, the student, a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class**
All devices such as laptops, I-pods, I-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are NOT allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Director of Academic Affairs or the Resident Director at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators**
In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission**
Late submission of papers due, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behavior during Examinations**
During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.