WSS 361 (16893): GENDER AND NATION IN WORLD CINEMA

Fall 2010
Tuesdays, 4:15-7:05 pm
Humanities 20

Instructor: Dr. Janell Hobson
Office: Social Science 355
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00 pm, & by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
The aim of this course is to explore cinema from different world regions and take into consideration how “gender” and “nation” are constructed in film narratives. We will examine different film genres (film shorts, documentaries, animation, narrative features, etc.) and film traditions (Hollywood, Disney animation, Hindi cinema, aka “Bollywood,” independent film, etc.) as we address how gender intersects with nationality, race, ethnicity, and sexuality to illustrate global and local concerns. We will also enhance media and visual literacy skills as students engage in different creative and critical projects this semester.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES
This course will reflect Women’s Studies departmental goals and objectives in that students will:

1. dismantle the intersecting ideologies of sexism, racism, classism, etc.
2. conceptualize feminist social justice beyond gender equity and towards community and human dignity.
3. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.

GENERAL EDUCATION GLOBAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES REQUIREMENT
This course fulfills the global and cross-cultural studies general education requirement, which provides students with 1) an understanding of the impact of nations, regions, and cultures upon other nations, regions, and cultures; 2) an understanding of the reciprocal interactions between individuals and global systems; 3) an ability to see cultural groups from their own points of view; and 4) an ability to use the analytic tools of a specific discipline to engage in comparative analyses of cultures, nations, and regions.

REQUIRED READINGS

These books are available for purchase at the University bookstore and Mary Jane Books. Additional readings are available on Blackboard (see “Required Readings” folder).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Blackboard Discussions: Each week on Blackboard, there will be three (3) discussion questions posted as they relate to film and/or reading assignments. You will need to respond to at least one discussion question and participate in an online discussion with your fellow classmates. In addition, you will be expected to reply to at least three (3) other students’ responses and to reply to each student who posts a response to any of your posts as a way to engage in fruitful discussions about the films and readings. You will be given 48 hours after each weekly seminar to post a response to the discussion questions (i.e. – you have to post by Thursday at 7:30 pm), and you will have a week to participate in these discussion threads before they are closed (the following Thursday at 4 pm). If you fail to post a response by Friday at 7:30 pm that week, you will not be given credit for that week’s discussion.

Photo Essay: Playing on the University at Albany theme – “The World Within Reach” – and connecting it to the focus of our class, you will be expected to produce a photo essay, which tells a visual story through the construction of 12 different photographic frames. Each frame, taken by your camera, should be a compelling scene, and the 12 frames – taken together – should tell a complete story as it relates to the “world within reach” theme. You may use any camera of your choice: including cell phone camera or a disposable camera (provided it is digital). The “world within reach” theme can be interpreted in any creative way. You simply need to showcase how, even in a local setting like Albany, the “world” can be accessed. This can be a personal story (e.g. dining out at an ethnic restaurant) or a global story (e.g. documenting a day in the life of an immigrant). What is important is that your 12 photos tell a story illustrating the theme and that makes explicit this theme. Be mindful, also, of how you frame your subjects so as to not reinforce racial, gender, or ethnic stereotypes. This photo essay will be due in class on September 28.

You Tube Video: After creating your photo essay, you will be expected to take the next step in transforming this photo essay into a You Tube Video. You will need to create a You Tube account, if you don’t have one already (it’s free!), and you will need to save your digitized video as a “movie file,” which will then be uploaded onto You Tube. Once you have uploaded your video, share the link on Blackboard. This You Tube Video assignment will be due on October 5.

Comparative Film Review: Select two films screened in class for a film review (750 words, typed and doubled-spaced). This short review should compare the two films in terms of film narrative, genre, and visual style. It should also address how gender and nationality are explored in the narrative, referencing reading assignments. This review is due in class on October 19.

Mapping Cinema Project: Integrating the web page, Google maps, and the digital video, this multimedia project is designed to explore the local and global contexts in which cinema takes place. This group project will focus on one film studied this semester and explore its “locations” – which could include the setting(s) where the film narrative takes place, the set location(s) where the film was produced and cast, or the different locations where movie audiences saw and reacted to the film. More ambitious projects might explore all three dimensions of these local/global locations. Use Google maps to illustrate these
locations and routes, and integrate the digital video (5-7 minutes) to explain or creatively explore these processes. The web page should include text and images that connect the Google map and digital video in a multimedia context. You must submit a proposal with your group on November 16 (1-3 pages, typed and double-spaced). This assignment will count as your Final and will need to be presented (within a 10-minute time frame) on Tuesday, December 14, 5:45-7:45 pm.

HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>DUE DATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard Discussions</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Essay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>September 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Tube Video</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>October 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Film Review</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>October 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping Cinema Project</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Proposal (Nov.16) Final Project (Dec. 14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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GRADING SCALE:

A = 100-93 points  A- = 92-90 points  B+ = 89-87 points  B = 86-83 points
B- = 82-80 points  C+ = 79-77 points  C = 76-73 points  C- = 72-70 points
D = 69-65 points  E = Below 65 points

EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to attend class regularly, to listen effectively to lectures and to others, and to bring reading materials to class. Once you miss two sessions, you stand to lose 5 points for each additional absence from your final grade. Exceptions will be made for illnesses and family emergencies.

Due to the contents of this course concerning gender, sexuality, and racial issues, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. Please turn off cell phones (or keep on vibrator alert in cases of "emergency" calls) before class begins.

Late assignments will result in a 5-point reduction for each day late. After two days late, you will receive a “0” for that assignment.

Plagiarism and cheating are university offenses and will result in failing grades. First time offense will result in a “0” for your assignment. Second offense will result in a failing grade for the course.
TO AVOID PLAGIARISM:
Understand what it means: plagiarism results when someone uses the ideas or writings of another and presents these ideas or writings as her or his own.

When citing sources, it is best to present ideas using your own original words. If you fully understand a source, you will be able to completely describe its themes and ideas in your own words and from your own perspective. However, if you copy a passage that someone else wrote and only change a few words around, it becomes plagiarism.

When quoting directly from sources, it is best to use direct quotes only if the phrasing is apt and powerfully stated; be sure to include proper citation. If the quote is not revelatory or eloquent but simply provides some useful information, then it is best to explain the information completely in your own words while providing proper citation.

TO AVOID COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT:
Since you will be engaged in digital media production and will possibly work with various media sources, you will need to familiarize yourself with copyright policies on “fair use” of others’ creative works. Copyright “fair use” laws allow you to reproduce copyrighted work only if your use of such work is “transformative” of the original or if it contains a small portion of it. It is often difficult to determine the nature of such transformations and portions, so when in doubt, it is safest to seek permission from the copyright owner for free use (if your work is for educational rather than commercial purposes, as is the case for your digital video projects) or to pay a licensing fee. For more information, please visit Stanford University’s website on copyright fair use laws: http://fairuse.stanford.edu/. To access royalty free music in the public domain, please visit: http://www.freeplaymusic.com.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug. 31 Course Overview and Introduction.
SCREEN: “La Jetee.”

Unit One: Gendering the Nation, Nationalizing Gender
SCREEN: “Reassemblage.”

Unit Two: Intersecting Race, Gender, and Nation
SCREEN: “Bell Boys in the Dream Factory” & “Night and Fog.”
Sept. 28  ASSIGNMENT DUE: **Photo Essay** (“The World Within Reach”).
SCREEN: “Nice Coloured Girls.”
WORKSHOP: Windows Movie Maker.

Oct. 5  ASSIGNMENT DUE: **You Tube Video**.

**Unit Three: World Travels**

Oct. 12  *The Complete Persepolis.*
SCREEN: “Persepolis.”

Oct. 19  ASSIGNMENT DUE: **Comparative Film Review** (750 words).
SCREEN: “The World.”

WORKSHOP: Web Design (Introduction to Dreamweaver).

Nov. 2  SCREEN: “Dil Se.”

DISCUSS: Mapping Cinema Project.

**Unit Four: Filming Desire**

Nov. 16  ASSIGNMENT: **Mapping Cinema Project Proposal** (250 words).
SCREEN: “Mulholland Drive.”

Nov. 23  BLACKBOARD: “Amnesia, Obsessions, and Cinematic U-Turns”; H. Love, “Spectacular Failure: The Figure of the Lesbian in *Mulholland Drive.*”
SCREEN: “Looking for Langston.”

Nov. 30  BLACKBOARD: V. Russo, “Who’s a Sissy? Homosexuality According to Tinseltown.”
SCREEN: “The Celluloid Closet.”

**Unit Five: Mapping Cinema**

Dec. 7  *Global Hollywood 2* (chapters 4-5).
SCREEN: “Bedevil.”

Dec. 14  Final Project Presentations: 5:45-7:45 pm.