American Studies 274gm: Exploring Ethnicity through Film

Fall 2008  Lecture 10390R  T/TH 9:30-10:50AM  OHE 122

Professor:  Lanita Jacobs
Office:  Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) 128
[Note: To get to my office, you must first enter the Anthropology Department at GFS 120]
Phone:  213-740-1909
Email:  jacobshu@usc.edu
Office Hours:  M/W 10-11AM; also by appt. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

Required Texts:
1. AMST 274 Reader. [This text is abbreviated RDR in the reading schedule.]

Highly Recommended Texts:

Course Description: This course explores the complexities of race/ethnicity in America through analyses of films. We shall ask such questions as: What is ethnicity? How is ethnicity shaped, or how does one “become” ethnic?, What is at stake in claims and visual representations about ethnicity; what politics surround ethnic representations and performances?, How is ethnicity actualized and/or performed?, Can there be an “authentic” ethnicity?, and, finally, How are such complexities reflected and/or constructed in film? Towards these ends, the initial weeks of the semester will be devoted to developing a critical vocabulary for speaking about race/ethnicity. We will also (continuously) hone our visual literacy by looking at the ways notions of ethnicity are privileged, constructed, and contested in film via such techniques as editing, sound, lighting, narration, etc. This middle of the course will focus on case studies in film that illuminate the complexities of ethnicity in relation to specific American ethnic groups. The latter weeks of the course will explore broader complexities of ethnicity, such as ethnic hybridity and inter-ethnic relations encompassing political conflict, interracial love and identity, and residential strife.

Grading: There will be a midterm and final exam covering assigned readings, films, and guest speakers. The midterm is worth 25% (25 points) and the final exam is worth 40% (40 points) of your overall grade. Each of the exams will include short-answer and essay questions and will be non-cumulative. In addition, 10% (10 points) of your grade will be determined by your class participation. As such, you are strongly encouraged to be punctual and stay abreast of assigned readings so that you are adequately prepared to participate in class discussions. The remaining 25% (25 points) of your grade will be determined by a 5-7 page essay (excluding bibliography of 3-5 sources) due in my mailbox in GFS 120 by 5PM on Tuesday, November 13, 2008. All essays must adhere to the following format: double-spaced, 12 point-font, 1” top, bottom, right, and left margins, pages numbered consecutively in upper right hand corner. (Additional guidelines for papers will be posted in Blackboard.) A total of 4 extra-credit points can be earned on the midterm and final exam via a two-point bonus questions based primarily on “optional” readings. The grading scale is as follows:

REMINDER: in RDR = In AMST 274 Reader, Eriksen = Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives, Corrigan & White: The Film Experience, TBA = To be announced
Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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**GRADE BASIS**

- Midterm: 25%
- Essay: 25%
- Final Exam: 40%
- Participation: 10%

**An Official Note on Examinations:** Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and will require documentation from a physician. The content and form of any make-up exam will be at my discretion. In any case, you should inform me via email or phone prior to missing an exam. If you feel you must reschedule an exam on account of having (a) two additional exams scheduled at the same time or (b) three exams in a 24-hour period, inform me at least two weeks prior to our scheduled mid-term. The final exam must be taken at the time noted below. Also, late essays will only be accepted in exceptional cases and will be deducted a minimum of 3 points.

**Attendance:** A grading percentage will not be given for lecture attendance. However, consistent and punctual attendance in seminar is strongly encouraged to increase your understanding of course materials. Your record of attendance may also be considered in the case of borderline grades. It is ultimately your responsibility to be aware of class lectures and assignments. Should sickness, family emergencies, or other events necessitate your absence from class, I recommend that you consult your peers for lecture notes.

**Academic Accommodations:** Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when necessary documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible, preferably by or before fifth week. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30AM-5PM. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

**Class Dynamics:** Class meetings will consist of lecture and discussion, with a clear emphasis on the latter. As such, it is essential that you keep up with the weekly readings and that you submit assignments on time. I also welcome you to actively participate in class by asking questions and sharing your perspectives and personal experiences as they relate to the course. Please also be aware that this course does not seek to rehearse a comprehensive history of American ethnicities, nor does it encompass all ethnic groups in America. Instead, this course seeks to explore the socially constructed nature of ethnicity and the socio-political implications of race/ethnicity in the everyday through an analysis of film.

**Class Resources:** Resources for this course are available through Blackboard. Consult ANTH 274 in Blackboard for access to the course syllabus, grades, essay guidelines, announcements, mock essay and short answer questions, exam study guides, and other helpful information. The optional readings for this course are also highly recommended. Zinsser’s accessible and extremely helpful book *On Writing Well* and Corrigan & White’s Chapter 12 (Writing a Film Essay) are useful guides for your film essay. Inge Bell and Bernard McGrane’s book *This Book is Not Required* is useful for both writing and navigating life as a student. (I wish I could have read their text as an undergraduate). Consider adding their and Zinsser’s text to your library-in-progress and read them at your leisure throughout the semester.

**Discussion Sections:** The teaching assistants for this course are Terrion Williamson (terrionw@usc.edu) and Gretal Vera Rosas (verarosa@usc.edu). Disc 10391R meets on Th 11-11:50AM in THH B9; Disc 10392R meets on F 11-11:50AM in VKC 200; Disc 10393R meets on Th 12-12:50PM in VKC 254; Disc 10394D meets on F 12-12:50 in VKC 258. As you know, discussion section enrollment is based on a first-enroll-first-serve basis. As such, you must attend the discussion section for which you are enrolled.

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TOWARDS A CRITICAL LITERACY OF “ETHNICITY” AND FILM

Week 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION, QUESTIONS OF ETHNICITY: What is race and/or ethnicity? How can race/ethnicity be understood?
8/26
8/28
   • Eriksen: Chapter 1 (What is Ethnicity?)
   • Eriksen: Chapter 2 (Ethnic Classifications)
   • Song: Introduction, Ethnic Identities: Choices and Constraints (Optional; in RDR)
   • Film: Understanding Race

Week 2: QUESTIONS OF ETHNICITY: What is race and/or ethnicity? How can race/ethnicity be studied?
9/2
9/4
   • Eriksen: Chapter 3 (The Social Organization of Cultural Distinctiveness)
   • Film/Clips: TBA (To be announced)

Week 3: VIEWING ETHNICITY IN FILM: How do we “read” films critically? How do films “speak” to questions of ethnicity/race?
9/9
9/11
   • Corrigan & White: Chapter 1 (Preparing Viewers and Views)
   • Corrigan & White: Chapter 2 (Exploring a Material World)
   • Film/Clips: TBA

Week 4: SPEAKING OF ETHNICITY AND FILM: How do we “read” films critically? How do films “inflect” ethnicity/race? What do we make of viewer responses to films? Most importantly, can we speak honestly about race/ethnicity in film?; What issues emerge during frank discussion?
9/16
9/18
   • Eriksen: Chapter 4 (Ethnic Identity and Ideology)
   • Connolly: What’s In a Name (in RDR)
   • Films/Clips: TBA

ETHNICITY IN AMERICA: CASE STUDIES IN FILM

Week 5: INDIGENOUS AMERICANS: Self-definition/Critique, Representation, Appropriation
9/23
9/25
   • Eriksen: Chapter 7: Minorities and the State
   • Price: Laughing without Reservation (in RDR)
   • Root: “White Indians”: Appropriation and the Politics of Display (in RDR)
   • Films/Clips: TBA

Week 6: AFRICAN AMERICANS: Racial Authenticity, Sexuality, Representation
9/30
10/2 Midterm
   • Hall: What is the “Black” in Black Popular Culture (in RDR)
   • Film: Black Is ... Black Ain’t

Week 7: AFRICAN AMERICANS: Race, Authenticity, Politics, Humor
10/7
10/9
   • Jacobs-Huey: The Arab is the New Nigger (in RDR)
   • Jacobs-Huey: On Michael Richards, Race, and Empathy (in Blackboard)
   • Guest Speakers: TBA

Week 8: EUROPEAN AMERICANS: Race, Assimilation, “Whiteness”
10/14
10/16
   • Corrigan & White: Chapter 8 (Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes, and Formulas)
   • Waters: The Costs of a Costless Community (in RDR)
   • Film/Clips: TBA

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Week 9: **JEWISH AMERICANS: Migration, Assimilation, (American) Identity**
10/21  
- Corrigan & White: Chapter 5 (Telling Stories about Time)
10/23  
- Brodkin: A Whiteness of Our Own (in RDR)
- Brodkin: Race Making (*Optional*; in RDR)
- Film/Clips: TBA

Week 10: **LATINOS/CHICANOS, PUERTO RICANS: Gender Roles, Family, Culture, Community Organizing**
10/28  
- Corrigan & White: Chapter 7 (Other Cinematic Shapes)
10/30  
- Eriksen: Chapter 8: Identity Politics, Culture and Rights
- Santa Ana: Insurgent Metaphors (*Optional*; in RDR)
- Film/Clips: TBA

Week 11: **T.A. LECTURES**
11/4  
- Corrigan & White: Chapter 10 (Global and Local) - *Optional*
11/6  
- Additional Readings/Films: TBA and posted in Ares Electronic Reserves

Week 12: **ASIAN AMERICANS: Identity, Language, Cultural Authenticity, Assimilation, Gender**
11/11  
- Kibria: The Racial Gap (in RDR)
11/13  
- Tuan: “I’m American with a Japanese Look” (in RDR)
- Fung: Center the Margins (*Optional*; in RDR)
- Song: Comparing Minorities’ Ethnic Options (*Optional*; in RDR)
- Film/Clips: *Do It On the Oriental, I’m the One I Want* (Margaret Cho), *Miss India Georgia*

**Essays Due on Tuesday, November 13th at 5PM in Jacobs-Huey’s Mailbox in GFS 120**

Week 13: **ARAB AMERICANS: National Identity, Assimilation, Gender, 9/11**
11/18  
- Ansary: An Afghan-American Speaks (in RDR)
11/20  
- Abu-Lughod: Do Muslim Women Really need Saving (in RDR)
- Eriksen: Chapter 6 (Nationalism)
- Film/Clips: TBA

**BROADER CONSIDERATIONS: ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND HYBRIDITY**

Week 14: **INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS/CONFLICT**
11/25  
- Jackson: Making Harlem Black (in RDR)
11/27  
- Hunt: Raced Ways of Seeing
- Film: *Flag Wars*

Week 15: **DEBATING MULTICULTURALISM**
12/2  
- Eriksen: Chapter 9 - The Non-Ethnic
12/4  
- Glazer: “We Are All Multiculturalists Now” (in RDR)
- Hollinger: Towards a Postethnic Perspective (in RDR)
- Film/Clips: TBA

**FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DEC. 11TH, 11-1PM IN OHE 122**

*The Reading & Exam Schedule may be subject to trimming, additions, etc.*

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**COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Textbooks in Bold)**

**AMST 274 Reader.** [This text is abbreviated RDR in the reading schedule.]


