

Spring 2021

HSS 403-014: Multiculturalism in Cinema

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Castronova, Louise, "HSS 403-014: Multiculturalism in Cinema" (2021). *Humanities Syllabi*. 390.
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L. Castronova **SPRING, 2021** **Multiculturalism in Cinema**
Senior Seminar **HSS 403 014 (WEDNESDAYS)**

Office Location: 414 Cullimore Hall Phone:(973)596-6484
Office Hours: Available online OR, if needed, the instructor will come
to the campus for a conference. Hours are flexible.

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WELCOME TO INTERNATIONAL CINEMA!

S E M I N A R S Y L L A B U S

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: Bergan, Ronald. THE FILM BOOK - A COMPLETE GUIDE
TO THE WORLD OF CINEMA. New York: DK Publishing, 2011.
ISBN: 978-0-7566-8676-5 (Available as a very inexpensive text in the
NJIT bookstore or online.)

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT: Subscription to NETFLIX needed for
additional movie viewing and reviewing.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this senior seminar, the instructor and the
students will present films for discussion and analysis. To begin, the
instructor will present a series of films. Later on in the semester,
seminar members, now divided into groups, will take center stage. Each
group of students will select a film to present in the seminar. We
will then focus on the film chosen by each group of students. (Of
course, the channels of communication need to be open, and students
need to interact- in their respective groups- in order to prepare
their presentations).

In this seminar, we are aiming for "art house," international or
classic works in the huge and intriguing world of cinema. Perhaps the
subjects of the films shown will be very diverse, but the common
connection should be that these are all windows on the human spectrum
of how we live, our longings, our mistakes, our failures, our triumphs
or our willingness to find humor to cushion the struggles as we move
along. Our mission in this seminar is to share interesting films. We
want to view all of these with open minds.

Moreover, we should try and share each director's artistic vision of
how a tale might be told on screen. We will aim to see each

director's angle and can freely comment on the success or failure of what we believe to be his or her intentions. Does the film in question succeed or fail, in whole or in part? Does the director engage us? Stir our emotions? Lose us somewhere along the story path? Might the director use casting to illuminate the tale being told on screen or miss his or her mark with what we might feel is miscasting? Does the filmmaker give us a dose of reality? Or, might a particular movie be a temporary escape hatch from life's woes? We have heard it so often: "escape to the movies!"

Critiquing is a vital part of this seminar. Sometimes viewers think that reviewing films has to be a negative response. Quite the contrary! It depends on each viewer's "take." Students are free to celebrate their viewing experience, or they can trash a particular film for whatever valid reasons they might find. Of course, there might also be a middle ground, including a combination of good and bad points. The key, however, is to explain the reasons for negative or positive comments. Thinking critically as we analyze what works in the art form of film is something that we want to share with one another.

Further, students are asked to be open minded about all films. Many times, we, ourselves, cannot identify with the action and/or the characters. Sometimes these do not mirror our own lives. However, an openminded viewer knows that lots of stories, novels, poems or movies are simply NOT about us. This does not make these artistic works invalid or worthless. Sometimes we, ourselves, are simply nowhere in the picture...but other human beings are vividly being portrayed up there on the screen. An openminded viewer is AWARE of that, absorbs the story seen on film and then decides what it might indicate about life, love, loss, anger, joy and any and all other aspects that make us human. Lives outside of our own, stories from other lands, these are all part of the larger picture of movies: WORLD CINEMA. Venturing beyond the familiar can make life a unique and intriguing journey.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Although we have had to transfer this face-to-face seminar to an online experience, all class members are still being asked to be PRESENT and to be sure to PARTICIPATE! Plan to be a part of the conversation/discussion between students and the instructor and share your impressions! This will be done via WebEx.

SOME of the films may be subtitled so that we can hear the richness of the dialogue in its original language. (No dubbing allowed in this class). Of course, INTERNATIONAL FILMS SHOWN MUST HAVE ENGLISH SUBTITLES. Every language has its own unique sounds or musicality. For subtitled films, students will need to READ those subtitles and stay focused. If a student group selects a film from a country with a language other than English, SUBTITLES WILL BE NECESSARY for their presentation. In fact, SUBTITLES are a wise choice even on films in ENGLISH if there are accents that might not be easily understood. With our international student population in this seminar, using English subtitles works well for ALL films.

READINGS:

Students will need to complete the textbook readings (and any additional online readings which may be assigned.) The textbook offers a huge and informative picture of world cinema in informative chapters. All readings are intended to enhance our grasp of the subject of movies. Therefore, please read the text with an inquiring mind. Consider the author of the textbook, Ron Bergan, a film scholar, as he shares insights into great movies and accomplished directors. Read about the scope of movies as a global art form.

MOVIE BLOGS:

All students will need to offer a written response to all films shared in the seminar (via seminar viewing OR for homework) by offering a personalized MOVIE BLOG or FILM JOURNAL that captures their impressions.

(How long? At least a page...but many students, in the past, have really taken off like a rocket on what a film means from their perspective. They have shared some beautiful observations and insightful concepts about characters, situations, a director's success or failure, an actor's triumph in a basically weak story, etc.) There are definitely no right or wrong responses---only interesting, supported observations and opinions to be shared. FYI.....YOU WILL USE THIS BLOG OR JOURNAL for reference during the mid-term and final exam. So...please make the writings a vital source of recorded impressions.

RESEARCH PAPER

COMPLETE THE (REQUIRED) WRITTEN RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT! (Details will be given in the future). THIS RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT IS MANDATORY.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS (YOU NEED TO BE SEEN and HEARD as WELL!!)

BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT in your group when it presents the movie selected by all group members. Students in each respective group will be a part of a panel discussion BEFORE showing their film selection and AFTER the viewing.

There are guidelines and time boundaries. (These will be detailed later and distributed on the Group Instruction page). Believe me, there will be plenty of room for creativity!

EXAMS: A MID-TERM and a FINAL EXAM

Successful completion of a mid-term exam and a final exam. (Details on both will be given in class). Student film choices and presentations will be a part of the final exam writings. So...stay tuned and be attentive to what your classmates have to share with us.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS may involve additional movie viewing (using NETFLIX) and review writings. Students are responsible for seeing these films, and these additional selections will also be a part of the mid term and final exams.

FYI: AS YOUR INSTRUCTOR, I will sometimes send emails and/or post assignments ...so please check for messages/details on an assignment-- on a regular basis. THANKS!

TEXTBOOK READINGS: (YES, READ THE ENTIRE TEXT. IT's a worthwhile look at cinema!)

The Story of Cinema pages 12-59 (These two chapters are on the
How Movies are Made pages 63-75 beginnings of movie making.)

Movie Genres pages 79-125 (classification of films)
World Cinema pages 129-177 (a global perspective)

A - Z of Directors pages 180-251 (important directors who have made
strides in world cinema)

TOP 100 Movies pages 257-343 (a look at influential films)

CALENDAR: SENIOR SEMINAR-
MULTICULTURALISM IN CINEMA

FYI: Alas! This calendar is not written in stone. Just as in real life, changes are sometimes necessary. The same holds true for the listings below. Hopefully, these entries will all work out as planned. Any changes? Students will be notified via email.

HONORS CREDIT REQUIREMENTS (for any students taking Multiculturalism in Cinema for HONORS CREDIT) will be sent to those students who notify me of their taking the course for HONORS CREDIT.

WEEK 1 Review of seminar requirements. Student introductions. Discussion and exchange of ideas on cinema, past, present, future, etc. Be ready to talk. (I look forward to hearing your ideas). Forming groups for presentations at a future date. If time permits, a film will be shown during our first session.

WEEKS 2,3,4,5,and 6 and 7 - Instructor's selection of films for discussion/evaluation will be shown. QUIZZES may be given if there is a lack of participation. I don't want to "threaten" graduating college seniors with quizzes. Instead, I just want all of you to participate and share your points of view! Sharing insights into the world of film is what this seminar is about!

REMINDER: for every film shown, students are asked to write feedback in which they evaluate the highlights (and/or low points) of each selection. THINK: FILM BLOG or JOURNAL

FYI....IMPORTANT DETAILS ON STUDENT PRESENTATIONS WHICH WILL BEGIN AFTER SPRING BREAK....

INFORMATION ON GROUP PRESENTATIONS: All students will be assigned to groups well in advance of presentations. All members in each group should AGREE and have SOME INPUT in regard to the selection made and presented. Each student needs to CONDUCT SOME RESEARCH on the film the group has selected. Group members need to interact! What aspects of the film will EACH GROUP MEMBER focus on? Give the matter attention and thought!

POSSIBILITIES:

Will it be a background on the actors? Some insights into the life and body of work by the director? The cinematography of the film? The powerful musical score of the film? Might someone look and see what the film critics had to say about the film? Are there very important scenes that require our undivided attention? What are they? In essence WHICH STUDENT will discuss WHAT aspect of each film?

This needs to be worked out well in advance of the presentation. Of course, we don't want to lose the energy of a spontaneous and interesting interchange between the presenters (group members), all other class members, and the instructor! So how should the student presentations be constructed?

INTRODUCTION (something said by each student. AGAIN, we need to SEE YOU! Each student's introductory comments should be around FIVE MINUTES. The introduction should set the stage for all of us, as viewers, in regard to the film that we are about to see.

THEN...we watch the film. AT THE CONCLUSION: students will come back and offer closing comments. (AGAIN, no more than FIVE MINUTES for each student. Give opinions!

Questions from the audience? These can be mentioned in our WEBEX meeting which will occur RIGHT AFTER THE STUDENTS have all offered closing comments. WHAT ABOUT GRADING? Only in rare instances does everyone in the group receive the same grade. The grades for presentations are based on INDIVIDUAL EFFORT. Did each group member prepare? Is there a gradual transition from ONE SPEAKER to the NEXT? Have TWO speakers in the same group talked about the same thing?? (Not well organized!)

REMINDER: The focus in our seminar is on ART HOUSE films (including international works) OR classics. The goal is to select SOMETHING INTERESTING and UNFAMILIAR to many in the seminar.

INTRIGUE US! SURPRISE and ENLIGHTEN us! Of course, I will be available to assist each group in making a film choice that is appropriate for the seminar. NO MORE THAN TWO HOURS in LENGTH for the film, please.

IMPORTANT: WE NEED TO HEAR EACH STUDENT AND NEED TO SEE EACH STUDENT AS WELL. Method to be used? KALTURA CAPTURE. (instructions will be in CANVAS)

WEEK 8- MID TERM EXAM... on all films (seen in the seminar and those assigned online) EXAM will be done during Week 8 seminar session. Remember that the first student presentation (GROUP 1 film) will be ON THE MID TERM EXAM. In addition, MOVIE BLOGS 1 (each student's written feedback that corresponds to the films we have shared in the seminar) will ALSO BE DUE.

WEEK 9- SPRING SEMESTER BREAK - WEEK of MARCH 14th through MARCH 21st

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SEMESTER BREAK, GROUP 1 will deliver its FILM and PRESENTATION. SO.....

STUDENTS TAKE CHARGE NOW!

WEEK 10 STUDENTS' CHOICE - GROUP 1 STUDENT PRESENTATION Number 1 which means that the first group of students will go first (on PRESENTATION and FILM. DATE will be on Wednesday, MARCH 24th

ALSO-- INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH TOPICS MUST BE GIVEN to the instructor for approval.

WEEK 11 Group 2 (STUDENT PRESENTATION AND FILM)

WEEK 12 GROUP 3 (STUDENT...PRESENTATION AND FILM)

WEEK 13 GROUP 4 (STUDENT PRESENTATION AND FILM)

WEEK 14 GROUP 5 (STUDENT PRESENTATION AND FILM) (RESEARCH PAPERS
ARE DUE BY THE DEADLINE GIVEN) FYI...It will be on EARTH DAY - APRIL
22nd

WEEK 15- TBD

There will be a Final Exam in our Multiculturalism in
Cinema seminar. This exam will be based on student presentations and
textbook readings as well. The second half of student movie
reviews/commentaries (MOVIE BLOGS 2) will also be due.

HAVE AN ENJOYABLE SEMESTER!