Introduction and Course Description
In 2002, Hollywood celebrated the “end of racism” within its movie industry with awards to Halle Berry, Denzel Washington and Sidney Poitier. As with America, this historic moment was cited over and over again as a sign of America’s racial progress. No longer reduced to maids or clowns on screen, blacks in the twenty-first century supposedly had access to all the prestige and opportunities of white actors. Reflecting, a “new” kind of racism that focuses more on diversity and representation, than power, access, equality or eliminating state violence, Hollywood has ushered in the era of new or post-Jim Crow racism.

This course, while examining the historic involvement and place of African Americans in film, will pay specific attention to this contemporary discourse, examining various forms of representation and constructions of black identity and experiences with several recent films. Although the course centers on images and representation, we will also use film as a means to talk about larger historical/social issues. We will learn about, discourses on racism, the Black freedom struggle, cultural resistance, gentrification, the war on drugs, deindustrialization, police brutality, the prison industrial complex, the cultural politics of sports, history and a number of other issues crucial to understanding the history and contemporary position of African Americans.

Specifically, this course will look at films that have resulted in widespread debate as to representations, identity, and voice. Examining the ways in which images and narratives can reflect AND challenge dominant, this class challenges its participants to bury the idea “that it is just a movie” to see the powerful function of Hollywood image making within both classical and new racism. Garnering an understanding of the history of these images, and of African American actors, directors and cultural productions, while deconstructing complex social/cultural meanings, will thus be the task of this course.

Prerequisites
It is important that everyone arrives in class with an open-mind, a critical gaze (a willingness to go beyond common assumptions) and most importantly a willingness and desire to read and write. Without writing and reading skills (as well as a desire to engage in those elements of learning) this class will be a struggle. Without passion and focus, problems will arise. For those students who want to improve all these skills, this class will
facilitate that process and assist you in tapping into the resources on campus.

**Required Reading**

- Course readings available on COURSE BLOG and passed out in class – [http://ces338summer2013.wordpress.com/](http://ces338summer2013.wordpress.com/)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance**

You are expected to attend class every day, arrive on time, and participate in an informed and consistent manner. Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in problems in this class. After one absence (excused and unexcused) each missed class will lead to a 5% deduction (per day) from your overall grade. On one occasion you can do a write-up on the film watched in class to counteract an absence. This may seem punitive but class discussions are the most important element of the class. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were away.

**Participation (26 points)**

In order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class each and every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading (WHICH IS ESSENTIAL), but arriving at class with a readiness to discuss the issues for that day. Recognizing that silence is not always a result of a lack of interest or preparation, I envision participation along many lines. Participating in class not only consists of talking, but also includes listening (please do not talk while others are speaking), interacting with your peers, and contributing to our classroom energy (body language, being engaged – no newspapers, no playing “rock, paper scissors,” or cell phones).

A note on participation: those who wished to receive b/t 22-26 points should be at every class, should come prepare, should be attentive during films, and should actively participate and contribute to course discussions; for those looking to secure 18-22 points, you should be in class everyday, be attentive, and contribute on occasion. Absences, sleeping during class, disengaging, being disrupted and otherwise taking away from the class will result in low participation score

**Film Essays** (50 points)

Whereas a film review provides an overall summary of a film’s content, a critical review essay shall explore, in depth, a particular aspect of a film through critical analysis. Rather than assuming that your reader has not seen the film (as with a review), a critical film essay works from the premise that the reader has seen the film. This allows you to engage and dialogue with the film through deep analysis. A critical film essay might explore the construction of femininity or masculinity in a particular film, or its conception of race, racism, African American culture, sexuality, American opportunity or race relations. You should incorporate course readings as to enhance your argument and critical analysis of the film. Challenge yourself to think in new ways through this paper.

The first critical film essay is due **May 24**. You must choose a film screen during
classes #1-4

The second critical essay is due June 9. You must choose a film screen during classes #5-9

**Daily Class Preparation (24 points)**

4 times through the term you will be required to turn in a daily class preparation papers, which should include (1) a short reaction to the reading, highlighting its argument, major themes and your thoughts/analysis about points raised (please note, you can also use this space to engage the reading creatively through poetry or spoken word); (2) a list of several key quotes from that reading; (3) a list of several questions taken from that reading. **It is estimated that each daily class preparation will be 1-2 pages and they must be uploaded on the course blog as comment in Daily Class Prep Thread for that day's film.** They are due by 9 AM on that day’s class. (NO EXCEPTIONS) – (6 points x 4)

Your grade will be derived from the following assignments and requirements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Schedule</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Due Date</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 28, 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 14, 2011</td>
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**We hold right to change due dates in your favor according to your needs and desires – Communicate**

**Grading Scale**

- 100-93: A
- 92-90: A-
- 89-87: B+
- 86-83: B
- 82-80: B-
- 79-77: C+
- 76-73: C
- 72-70: C-
- 69-67: D+
- 66-60: D
- 59 and Below: F

**Tentative Course Schedule**

*(ALL readings/assigned materials will be on course blog or will be passed in class)*

May 7– #1
Film: *Classified X*
May 9 - #2
Film: *Bamboozled*

Reading:  
http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/;  
http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/links/bamboozled/;  
http://www.alternet.org/story/14825/thoroughly_modern_mammy/;  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWyl77Yh1Gg;  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiQlugPTl8A;  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tfZ8MOUKlw

May 14 - #3
Film: *Killer of Sheep*

Reading:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXw-8MXhVE;  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-LAazDfOxc (Parts 1-6);  

May 16 - #4
Film: *Middle of Nowhere*

Reading:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZRc61ZljNE;  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhf0L3nMRtM

May 21 - #5
Film: *Sankofa*

Reading:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmmKjNfrFxQ;  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYrapfjM7iA;  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CSM_vr0Z94

May 23 – #6
Film: *Daughters of the Dust*

Reading:  
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/fabio-parasecoli/daughters-of-the-dust-b_1452858.html;  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT-hm-h_jCM
May 28 – #7
Film: Beasts of the Southern Wild


May 30 – #8
Film: Mississippi Damned

Reading: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA5f47ihycs; http://www.afterellen.com/movies/2009/7/mississippi-damned

June 4 – #9
Film: Night Catches us


June 6 – #10
Film: Dead Presidents

Reading: https://umdrive.memphis.edu/ajohnsn6/rhetoric%20of%20hip%20hop/dead%20presenze.pdf; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5_qnqxy0k (parts 1-7)

June 11 – #11
Film: Brother to Brother

June 13 – #12
Film: *Pariah*

[http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/01/pariah_film.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/01/pariah_film.html);

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances and shifts in class needs. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made in your absence.

**Course Policies**

1. To be successful in this class you must read prior to arrival to class; you need to be prepared each and every day

2. The following are unwelcome and unacceptable within this class. Doing work for other classes, reading newspapers, sleeping, and using phone during class will result in an absence for that day.
   
   a. Sleeping, daydreaming or otherwise tuning out during class
   
   b. Habitual tardiness. If you are late, you MUST SIT IN THE FIRST ROW AND SPEAK WITH ME AT THE CONCLUSION OF CLASS. If you arrive after 15 minutes, this will count out 1/2 of an absence
   
   c. Packing up your notebook and other materials prior to the end of class
   
   d. Reading the newspaper, another book, or otherwise focusing on something other than class
   
   e. Chatting to classmates
   
   f. Getting up during class because you feel thirsty or hungry.
   
   g. Leaving class early

2. Turn cell phones off upon arrival to class – Absolutely no texting or phone calls
DURING CLASS. Please note that if I see your cell phone/other handheld device (not if it rings) whether because you’ve decided to text message, check scores, show a friend a picture or listen to messages, you will be marked absence for the day.

3. Computer usage within class is strictly forbidden except in specific circumstances (disability accommodation) and with permission from instructor. In other words, no laptop/iPad/tablet to take notes in class. Please take notes by hand. Those with disabilities for whom hand note taking is difficult or impossible, please alert me in writing at the beginning of the course and feel free to use electronic aids.

Netiquette

I expect you to observe the following proprieties in your email messages, as you would with any professional colleague:

- Emails must have a specific salutation: “Dear Dr. Leonard/,” “Dear Professor Leonard/,” or “Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening Professor Leonard/” are all appropriate.” “Hi,” “Hey,” “Mr. Leonard” or no salutation is an incorrect and inappropriate way to begin an email to me.
- Emails must be sent from your WSU account, unless an emergency requires you to use an alternate account. If you send from an alternate account, please follow up with me if you do not hear from me within 24 hours.
- Emails must close with a signature (“Sincerely,” “Thank you,” etc.)
- Emails should be grammatically correct, clear, and concise.
- Emails should not be sent to request info you can get elsewhere with minimal effort (i.e., my office hours, office location, phone number, due dates, location of the library, etc. All these are listed either on tumblr or the syllabus. I may or may not respond to such emails.)
- Assume that your response will come within 24 hours; if it hasn’t come by then, do feel free to remind me of your message.
- If you have a complaint or concern about something, you should always come to see me about it in person. Email is not an appropriate forum for anything important enough to be dealt with in an extended conversation, or for a discussion in which email, because it can’t convey tone, might allow for misinterpretation.
- Please don’t email me to ask if I will be in office hours. Unless I have specifically stated in class that I won’t be there, I will always be available during office hours on a drop-in basis or by appointment.

Course Expectations

Despite the size of the class, it is my hope that this class is a lively educational space defined by interaction, discussions, and critical thinking. It is important to produce a classroom that is open, respectful, and trusting. Following the above rules will contribute to a

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1 Taken from syllabus of Dr. Shanté Paradigm Smalls (earlier portions taken as well), http://hiphopgendersexuality2012.tumblr.com/syllabus
productive educational environment; of equal importance will be the respect shown for
the
class, its members, and the ideas discussed therein. As such, it is crucial that we adhere
to
certain guidelines.

1. Be respectful of others, in terms of engaging and listening to lectures, peer
   comments, and other course materials.
2. Reflect on social location and work to understand alternative arguments, analysis,
   and narratives, as well as anger.
3. Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other
   institutionalized forms of oppression exist.
4. Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexist,
   heterosexism, etc. is that we are all systematically taught misinformation
   about
   our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members
   of
   privileged and oppressed groups.
5. Read in an engaged way, recognizing the ideology and politics imbedded in
   every text. Make notes in the margins – “dialogue” with the text, using
   exclamation points, questions or issue complete statements, questions or critiques.
   Ask yourself: what is significant in this piece, what elicits anger/sadness/laughter,
   but go beyond emotional responses to be prepared to make specific statements
   about the reading!
6. Be aware of your own subject position, ideologies, privileges and prejudices.
   Recognize your own relationship to institutions of power and structures of
   domination. This can help you make specific connections to the reading, class
   discussions and other forms of feedback. Rather than proclaiming, “This article
   sucks,” or “You are wrong,” you can get more specific about the basis and origins
   of your reaction. For example, rather then engaging in a discussion about
   homosexuality with statements of disgust and contempt, it might be better to state:
   “From my position as a white male, who was raised with the teachings of the
   Bible, I find homosexuality a bit troubling, especially in the context of the
   arguments made by ________ on page ____.”
7. Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about your own “group”
   and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group
   cooperation and group gain. Read and listen with recognition of other people’s
   subject position and ideologies. LISTEN TO OTHERS!
8. Reflect on our choice of language in and outside of class, striving to rid our
   vocabulary of racist, sexist, homophobic words, phrases. Recognize that your
   choice of words reflect your own ideological position and may bother others
   (think about how others may react to your words – not just content, but the way
   we chose to express those thoughts)
9. Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class may
   wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside the classroom, they
   can preface their remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the
   remarks. Also, think about your language (including body language), posture, etc.
   contributes to safe/empowering or disempowering/unsafe learning environment.
10. **Take Risks:** I want this class to be a space where everyone should feel comfortable enough to disagree with each other. This needs to be safe space so reflect on the ways you engage others with your own pronouncements and how you react (with words, body language) to their statements – react privilege and positionality.

11. **Read and dialogue in a politically engaged way.** Racial Dynamics, for our purposes here, reflects power, and relationship to systems/sources of power. Power dynamics are contextual (situational) and relational. You may have power in some spaces and lack it in others, all depending on social location. Ask yourself these questions while reading and discussing within the classroom space: Is the analysis leaving anyone relevant out? For what reasons? Where is this analysis coming from? Whose knowledge base is being explored or forwarded?

12. **Speak with evidence** and “facts” on your side. Despite the popular pronouncements that there are no wrong answers, there are incomplete, problematic, superficial, surfaced, and unsubstantiated answers. Reflect on your own answers and the basis of your conclusions.

13. **Go beyond an either/or dichotomy. Incorporate a both/and approach** rather than an “either/or.”

14. **Recognize the knowledge base of your peers.** Its ok – recommended and great, in fact – to respond to a counterpoint with “hey, I’ve never thought of it that way,” or “well, you do make a good point – I’ll have to think about that for a while.” Discussion in this class isn’t about proving, embarrassing, showing off, winning, losing, convincing, holding one’s argument to the bitter end – its about dialogue, debate and self-reflections.

**Cheating**

DON'T DO IT! What constitutes cheating: Turning in any work that is not yours and yours completely, which includes using a “cheat sheet,” copying the answers from a peer, copying and pasting from a website, copying a friend's work, etc. If someone else said it, wrote it, thought it, etc. give them credit – DON'T STEAL THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF OTHERS. Your failure to follow these basic instructions, to respect the classroom, to take the easy route, to be in the business of pretending to learn, think, analyze, and otherwise be a student, is not acceptable in any regard. What this means is that if you cheat, you will receive a “0” for that assignment and you will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Any decision to violate the sanctity and purpose of the classroom leaves me with little choice in this regard. If you are unfamiliar with WSU policy regarding cheating and confused as to what constitutes cheating (plagiarism), please consult the Standards for Student Conduct found here: [http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=109](http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=109)

**Students with Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in these classes, please visit the [Access Center](http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=109). All accommodations
MUST be approved through the Access Center (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

Emergency Notification System:
WSU has made an emergency notification system available for faculty, students and staff. Please register at myWSU with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes on RONet. Please refer to the University emergency management website http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies as well WSU ALERT http://alert.wsu.edu for information on WSU’s communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification for emergencies. The entire WSU safety plan can be found at http://safetyplan.wsu.edu.

Primary Learning Outcomes
1. Articulate a clear working definition of African American film (or the difficulty of creating such a definition), while understanding the difficulty of defining such a genre; under the contradictions and limitations of any one definition
2. Understand the ways in which space and experience are constituted within African American film
3. Recognize film production and consumption as a contested space of meaning, whether along racial, gendered, national, class, ideological, political and sexual axis (or their interconnections)
4. Understand the dialectical relationship between race/gender-based ideologies, film production, capitalism and other forms of popular culture
5. Ability to think through continuities of systems of oppression; understand systems of power and domination within and beyond the context of African American film production and consumption
6. Identify the ways in which blackness is imagined through African American film production; understand the ways in which films reify and/challenge dominant voices, narratives, and theories of racialized difference
7. Recognize and understand the ways in which race, masculinity, femininity, “the other,” America, white supremacy, resistance, cultural products and capitalism affect one another
8. Recognize and understand the ways in which race, blackness, masculinity, femininity, Africanness, America, white supremacy, resistance, etc. are dealt with within African American film
9. Ability to analyze and deconstruct the racial and gendered meanings within various African American films

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2 From T & L 589 syllabus of Dr. Paula Groves Price
Key Terms

Binary Thinking: A system of thought that divides concepts into two oppositional categories, whereupon meaning for one is derived from meaning of the other; for example, white/black, man/woman, West/East, civilized/uncivilized, saint/sinner, reason/emotion, and normal/deviant

Capitalism: an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production. Capitalism is typically characterized by extreme distributions of wealth and large divisions between the rich and the poor.

Colorblindness: a racial ideology that gained prominence during the post-civil rights era that argues that using racial language perpetuates racism

Commodification: in capitalist political economies, land, products, services, and ideas are assigned economic values and are bought and sold in marketplaces as commodities

Controlling Images: The terms representations and stereotypes describe this socio-cultural phenomenon: representations need not be stereotypical and stereotypes need not function as controlling images, yet as hegemony works to form consent dominant representations govern and direct common sense ideas and dominant discourses. Controlling images are closely tied to power relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality.

Discourse: A set of ideas and practices that, when taken together, organize both a way society defines certain truths about itself and the way it puts together social power

Globalization: The increasing concentration of capital in the hands of relatively small number of transnational corporations. Two effects of globalization are greater influence on the world economy than that of nation states, and a global distribution of wealth and poverty that privileges Western European, North American, and other advanced industrial nations

Hegemony: A form of social organization that uses ideology to create taken-for-granted ideas that are used to justify oppression. Hegemonic conditions absorb and depoliticize oppressed groups’ dissent and encourage individuals and groups to police one another and suppress each other’s dissent.

Ideology: a body of ideas reflecting the interests of a particular social group. Racism, sexism, xenophobia, and heterosexism all have ideologies that support social inequality. Ideologies are never static and always have internal contradictions.

The following terms are taken from the works of Patricia Hill Collins, Michael Omi, Cornel West, Howard Winant, Peggy McIntosh, Robert Blauner
Intersectionality: analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, and age from mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape African American experiences and, in turn, are shaped by African Americans.

Oppression: An unjust situation in which, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity constitute major forms of oppression.

Paradigm: an interpretive framework used to explain social phenomena.

Political economy: the way of organizing power relations and the economic system. Capitalism has a distinctive political economy characterized by larger differences in wealth between social classes and major differences in power where wealthy people have more power than poor people.

Racism: a fundamental characteristic of social projects which create or reproduce structures of domination based on essentialist categories based on essentialist categories); a system of unequal power and privilege in which humans are divided into groups or ‘race’ with social rewards unevenly distributed to groups based on their racial classification. In the United States, racial segregation constitutes a fundamental principle of how racism is organized.

Racial Formation: a Sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed. A process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized

Racial Project: a racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular lines

Social Oppression: dynamic process by which one segment of society achieves power and privilege through the control and exploitation of other groups, which are literally oppressed, that is, burdened and pushed down into the lower levels of the social order

White Privilege: an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visa, clothes, tools and blank checks.

White Supremacy: the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white European dominance over ‘nonwhite’ populations ... making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily if not
exclusively characteristic and ancestry. White supremacy refers to “color bars,” racial segregation, and restriction of meaningful citizenship.