



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

COMM 203-001 (2761)—Topics in Cinema History/African American Film & TV.

LAKE SHORE CAMPUS

CUDAHY LIBRARY, ROOM 318, SPRING 2023



Instructor: Pemon Rami (Mr. Rami), (prami@luc.edu)

Class meetings: Wed 4:15 pm to 6:45 pm LSC, Cudahy Library # 318

Office/student hours: By appointment only, either online using Zoom or in-person

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines the evolution of African American Cinema and TV including aesthetic, societal impact, and evolution from 1910 to 1989. The perspective from which we will approach these topics is its historical context of production, subject, creative crew and their impact. The students will screen films and documentaries and read the textbook *Black American Cinema* by Manthia Diawara. The books *50 most influential Black Film* by S. Torriano with Venise T. Berry, *Black Power TV* by Devorah Heitner, and *When Blackness was Golden Conversations from the front line* by Pemon Rami as well as a series of accompanying articles will be available in Sakai. Students will engage in class discussions and short, reflective written or oral assignments about the viewings and readings. The final assignment is a group project based on the creation of a short film script based on an outline and will be delivered as a combination of an in-class group presentation and a group paper.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

After the course students will be able to:

- Identify a broad overview of the development of African American cinema as technology, as an art form, and political tool as way of viewing the world.
- Recognize the importance of close reading and analysis of dialogue, settings, characters and music for evaluating media/cinematic texts [CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS]
- Demonstrate written critical skills in analyzing various cinematic artifacts [WRITING CRITICISM SKILLS]
- orally present insightful criticism in small group setting [PRESENTATION SKILLS]
- Demonstrate the ability to meet deadlines [TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS]

STUDENTS' ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES: Apart from class attendance and participation, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor if they have questions about course content or assignments/deadlines. In a three credit hours lecture class such as this one, students should expect to work a minimum of **five hours a week** which includes class attendance and watching the films, readings, and homework assignments. This estimate is to help you become aware of the level of effort expected; turning in a sloppy work that took few minutes to complete will be obvious. Please keep track of time spent working for the class and if it is more time than this estimation mentioned above, contact me so we can talk about it. Three unexcused absences from class, may lead to you be dropped or attendance grade will be lowered. If you are late more than 30 minutes on any class day, it will be counted as an absence.

INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES: I strive to create a learning environment for the students that supports a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and thoughts, and honors our unique identities (including race, gender, sexuality, class, 3 religions, ability ...). We start with a land acknowledgement, that is by naming Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Odawa, as well as Menominee, Miami, and Ho-Chunk nations upon whose land the university stands. The names, including ours, and their pronunciations, as well as the set of pronouns we use to present ourselves are important; if they are different from those on your Loyola records, please let me know. I am here to help guide you through the course materials and address any questions/concerns you might have. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences in- and outside the class, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will respond to your requests in a timely manner (within 24 hours when possible) and will provide constructive feedback on them (this also includes the assignments). I am still (like many of us) in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said/posted in class by classmate or instructor that made you feel unsafe, please contact me. I will be available to meet with you either online or in person by appointment.

| | |
|--|------------|
| Participation--Attendance + short, weekly assignments | 50 points |
| Written Assignment (5-page paper) - due week six February 21: Write a paper and the paper based on Black American Cinema and the information shared in Class. | 50 points |
| Group project (in-class presentation and group activity) The students will be divided into groups and assigned dialogue and characters to create a short film script. Working in small group the students will focus on creating the story world for the characters. | 150 points |

GRADING ASSIGNMENTS: Unless instructed, do not email assignments (all assignments to be graded must be submitted either in hard copy or in Sakai). I grade on points, which means each assignment carries a certain number of points, and your final grade is the result of your accumulated number of points. To receive a D letter grade for the Course you will need to have 162 points out of 250 total points possible (that is 65% of the total points). The assignment rubrics will be provided in class for each specific assignment. Please observe the **24/7 grading policy**—wait 24 hours after receiving the grade to talk to me about it but talk to me about the grade within seven days if you have a question. After one week has passed, I will not discuss the grade for that assignment.

TOTAL=250 POINTS

A(EXCELLENT)=237-250

A-minus=230-236

B+=221-229

B (GOOD)=215-220

B-minus=207-214

C+=200-206

C (AVERAGE)=192-199

C-minus=185-191

D+=177-184

D (FAIR)=163-176

F (POOR)=below 163

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

(The following class plan is by the week; possible changes to the syllabus will be announced both in class and in Sakai)

Week **ONE:** January 17:

Introduction to class/Syllabus

Lecture: Film and Theatre in Chicago

PowerPoint: *Race films and beyond (P)*

Week **TWO:** January 24:

READ: Black American Cinema Chapter 1 “Black Aesthetics”

Black Aesthetics (class lecture and PowerPoint presentation)

Week **THREE:** January 31:

Film: *Body and Soul* (1925) Oscar Micheaux (d)

Link https://youtu.be/SaThKLITpK4?si=6t_6lHX5JGVxYrQl

READ: BLACK AMERICAN CINEMA Chapter 2 Twoness in style of Oscar Micheaux

Week **FOUR:** February 7:

Netflix Documentary: *Is it Black enough for you?* (2022) Elvis Mitchell (d)

Lecture and Discussion

Week **FIVE:** February 14:

FILM: *Nothing but a man* (1964) Michael Roemer (d)

Link <https://youtu.be/naV9hrF5sIo?si=GPFHiEbulbTFgcKr>

Read: 50 Most influential Black Films CH 5 Nothing but a man. (Sakai)



Bird of the Iron Feather – First Black Soap Opera (WTTW/PBS) 1970

Week **SIX:** February 21:

Lecture: Bird of the Iron Feather (1970) Harold Okoro Johnson and Roy Ingram (d)

FILM: In class: *His Story or Mine* (1973) Harold Okoro Johnson (d)

READ: article Remembering a public TV drama that delved into lives of black Chicagoans.

Link <https://current.org/2016/06/remembering-a-public-tv-drama-that-delved-into-lives-of-black-chicagoans/>

Week **Seven:** February 28:

READ: BLACK AMERICAN CINEMA Chapter 5 The Black writer in Hollywood (Circa 1930)
“Film and Literature as a liberator”

FILM: *The Spook Who Sat by The Door* (1973) Ivan Dixon (d)

Link <https://youtu.be/MXw7zsye1HQ?si=cAEAFY2vpYGbdA0t>

MARCH 4-9: SPRING BREAK—ENJOY!

Week **Eight:** March 13:

FILM: *Hollywood Shuffle* (1973) Robert Townsend (d)

Read Black American Cinema Chapter 7 The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers

Week **Nine:** March 20:

FILM: *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) Julie Dash (d)

Link <https://youtu.be/1KetOT3zWwc?si=ayOGLrikXTUw373k>

READ: Black American Cinema Chapter 8 “Reading the signs, Empowering the Eye Daughters of the Dust and the Black independent Cinema Movement”

Week **TEN** of April 3:
GROUP PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

Week **Eleven**: April 17:
FILM: *Get on the Bus* (1996) Spike Lee (d)
READ: BLACK AMERICAN CINEMA CH 13 Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance

Week **Twelve**: April 24:
FILM: *She's Got to Have It* (1986) Spike Lee (d)
READ: BLACK AMERICAN CINEMA CH 9&10 Spike Lee at the Movies and the commerce of culture
5-page paper due.

Week **Thirteen**: May 1:
FILM: In class *The Door* 2013 Ava DuVernay (d)
FILM: In class *19 and a Day* (2010) Masequa Myers (d)
READ: BLACK AMERICAN CINEMA Chapter 12 Looking for Modernism

Week **FOURTEEN** of May 8:
GROUP PRESENTATIONS