

Multicultural America in History & Film
A Six-Credit Learning Community Integrating
History of Minorities in America (HIS 278) and Film Studies (ENG 277)
MWF, 10:00-11:50, T-133, Spring 2005

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I. Welcome to the learning community (LC) on the history and film of multicultural America. This LC is, in part, an in-depth survey of the history of the major ethnic and racial minorities in the United States. The history of the United States has, in many ways, been the history of the coming-together of many different racial and ethnic groups (indeed, the motto of the United States - “E pluribus Unum” – means “Out of many, One”). Those racial and ethnic groups have in the past often been written out of the main “story” of the United States, or cast as bit players in the drama of America’s rise from humble, colonial origins to the status of world power. It is clear, however, that the racial and ethnic minorities were not merely bit players, but central, key actors in that story. Indeed, the history of this country CANNOT be understood without a clear understanding of the roles played by racial and ethnic minorities.

The stories of racial and ethnic minorities are the focus of this LC – stories told by historians and stories told by filmmakers. The films were selected to complement the historical stories; in other words, while studying aspects of multicultural American history, we will study, analyze, and discuss films about multicultural American experience. In the process, we will study the ways filmmakers tell stories; learn the major techniques filmmakers use to focus and manipulate our gaze, feelings, and thoughts; and engage in interpretive strategies for becoming active (rather than passive) viewers. Through films we will enrich our understanding of history, and through history we will enrich our understanding of films.

The goals of the course are as follow:

- (1) To help students understand the history of the major racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.
- (2) To help students think deeply about who we are as “Americans,” and what we mean by that term.
- (3) To examine the socially constructed nature of **race** and **ethnicity**, and learn how the changing meaning of those terms has affected the lives of all Americans.
- (4) To begin to develop an understanding of what minority status has meant in American history.
- (5) To increase students’ appreciation of film as a medium for better multicultural understanding.
- (6) To acquire the art of actively watching films, which includes the critical thinking skills of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.
- (7) To engage students in team analyses of film clips and in writing about films for seminar discussions.
- (8) To increase students’ abilities to see the “**big picture**” by engaging in interdisciplinary studies.

II. Enjoy working together in a community of fellow learners. Together students and faculty will share their understandings of the readings, films, lecture materials, and class experiences – which means that we are all responsible for coming to class well-prepared and for engaging in each day’s events.

III. Expectations: Attendance! Active listening and participation! Curiosity and respect and willingness to learn from peers! Teamwork! Our emphases are on both *learning* and *community*.

IV. Six-credits in the social sciences, humanities, ethnic studies, and interdisciplinary studies!
Good student-scholars will spend on average 12 to 15 hours per week on out-of-class preparation.

Texts: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Little, Brown, 1993)
Timothy Corrigan & Patricia White, *The Film Experience* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004)
Additional short readings will be assigned periodically. These will be distributed in class or available on the web.

Films:

Spike Jonze, <i>Adaptation</i> (2002)	112 minutes, out-of-class
Julie Dash, <i>Daughters of the Dust</i> (1991)	113 minutes, out-of-class
John Ford, <i>Fort Apache</i> (1948)	123 minutes, out-of-class
Edward Zwick's <i>Glory</i> (1989)	122 minutes, out-of-class
Alfonso Arau, <i>Like Water for Chocolate</i> (1992)	113 minutes, out-of-class
Wayne Wang, <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> (1993)	135 minutes, out-of-class
Chris Eyre, <i>Smoke Signals</i> (1998)	89 minutes, in-class
Joan Silver, <i>Hester Street</i> (1975)	89 minutes, in-class
Herbert Biderman, <i>Salt of the Earth</i> (1954)	94 minutes, out-of-class
Akira Kurosawa's <i>Rashomon</i> (1950)	90 minutes, in-class
Richard Pearce's <i>The Long Walk Home</i> (1990)	97 minutes, in-class
Spike Lee, <i>Do the Right Thing</i> (1989)	120 minutes, out-of-class

and excerpts from documentaries: *Eyes on the Prize* and/or *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*

UWC Proficiencies: Students will increase their ability to read and listen with comprehension and critical perception (this includes “reading” films); analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas; write clearly, precisely, and in a well organized manner; respond to creative expression with knowledge and sensitivity; and work collaboratively as part of a team.

>>If, because of a disability, you have special requirements for taking notes or writing exams or reading texts or speaking to a group or working in a team, please let us know as soon as possible<<

Requirements:

Seminars and Seminar Papers (30%). Seven times during the semester, we will break into two seminar groups to discuss issues raised in your papers. The purpose of the seminars is to collaboratively explore ideas and deepen our understanding. Guidelines for each paper will be provided at least five days before a seminar. You must submit your paper in person during the seminar. **No late papers** will be accepted without a good reason and prior arrangement. We will drop your lowest seminar paper score.

Two Clip Analysis Presentations (20%). In small teams you will make two presentations: one will provide a critical “reading” of a clip using relevant film language; the other will provide cultural background and/or historical context. Each clip should be no more than 5-minutes, and each presentation should last no more than 20 minutes. More specific guidelines are forthcoming.

Three Tests (30%), multiple choice and essay.

Attendance (20%). To be part of a community, you must be in it; therefore we will take attendance on a regular basis.

<u>Grading Scale:</u>	93-100 A	88-89 B+	80-82 B-	73-77 C	68-69 D+
	90- 92 A-	83-87 B	78-79 C+	70-72 C-	63-67 D

Film Showings. We will arrange for film showings outside of class – times to be decided by the class.

Tentative Calendar of Events: Multicultural America in History & Film

[Note: do reading/viewing ahead of time for the class in the schedule below.]

- 1 Jan 24 Course Orientation; Three Creation Stories [and maybe a film clip]
Jan 26 Race, Ethnicity and American History – Takaki, Chpt 1 - Clip Analysis Team formation
Jan 28 Preparing Viewers and Views – FE, Intro & Chpt 1 (1-18, 21-27, 30-39); MID due
 - 2 Jan 31 Discussion of Spike Jonze’s *Adaptation*; Jane & Dan Model a clip analysis presentation.
Feb 2 Precontact & Early Indian Life – Takaki, Chpt 2
Feb 4 Exploring a Material World: Mise-en-Scene – FE, Chpt 2 (42-60, 64-74); Paper/Seminar 1
 - 3 Feb 7 Establishing Slavery – Takaki, Chpt 3
Feb 9 Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* (read FE 253-55); Clip Analyses 1.1
Feb 11 Seeing through the Image: Cinematography – FE, Chpt 3 (75-81, 84-90)
Decline, Dependence, and Removal – Takaki, Intro to Part 2 & Chpt 4
 - 4 Feb 14 John Ford’s *Fort Apache*; Clip Analyses 1.2
Feb 16 Cinematography – FE, Chapter 3 (91-103, 107-108); Paper/Seminar 2
Feb 18 Slavery and Its Discontents – Takaki, Chpt 5 [Jane at Evergreen]
 - 5 Feb 21 Edward Zwick’s *Glory*; Clip Analyses 1.3
Feb 23 The Beginning of a Great Flood – Takaki, Chpt 6
Feb 25 Test 1; post-test discussion
 - 6 Feb 28 Relating Images: Editing – FE, Chpt 4 (110-121, 125-139, 144)
Mar 2 Foreigners in Their Native Land – Takaki, Chpt 7
Mar 4 Alfonso Arau’s *Like Water for Chocolate*; Clip Analyses 1.4
 - 7 Mar 7 Editing – FE, Chpt 4 (145-157, 162-164); Paper/Seminar 3
Mar 9 Strangers from Beyond the Western Shore – Takaki, Chpt 8
Mar 11 Wayne Wang’s *The Joy Luck Club*; Clip Analyses 1.5 [Dan at UW Senate]
 - 8 Mar 14 Renewal and Resistance – Takaki, Intro to Part 3 & Chpt 9
Mar 16 Chris Eyre’s *Smoke Signals* – in-class viewing
Mar 18 Clip Analyses 1.6; Paper/Seminar 4
- March 21-25 Spring Break**
- 9 Mar 28 Not All Migrants Went to New York – Takaki, Chpt 10
Mar 30 From the Shtetl to Hester Street – Takaki, Chpt 11
Apr 1 Joan Silver’s *Hester Street* – in-class viewing [Dan in SF; Jane may be at dept. meeting]
 - 10 Apr 4 Clip Analyses 2.1; Paper/Seminar 5
Apr 6 Telling Stories about Time: Narrative Films – FE, Chpt 6 (214-251)
Apr 8 Test 2 [Dan & Jane at OPID conference in Madison]
 - 11 Apr 11 Making Chicano America – Takaki, Chpt 12
Apr 13 Herbert Biderman’s *Salt of the Earth* (read FE 411-413); Clip Analyses 2.2
Apr 15 Rituals, Conventions, Archetypes, Formulas: Movie Genres – FE, Chpt 8 (288-93, 296-312)
[Dan may be at Dept. meeting]

- 12 Apr 18 Movie Genres – FE, Chpt 8 (315-320); Freedom and Migration – Takaki, Chpt 13
Apr 20 Fighting as One People: World War II – Takaki, Intro to Part 4 & Chpt 14 (373-399)
Apr 22 Akira Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* (read FE 497-501) – in-class viewing
- 13 Apr 25 Clip Analyses 2.3; Paper/Seminar 6
Apr 27 America’s Dilemmas: Post-WW II and Cold War – Takaki, Chpt 14 (399-428)
[Apr 28 Undergraduate Research & Performance Conference – consider presenting!]
Apr 29 Richard Pearce’s *The Long Walk Home* – in-class viewing [Dan at UW Senate]
- 14 May 2 Civil Rights Movement; Clip Analyses 2.4
May 4 Documentary and Experimental Films – FE, Chpt 7 (257-263, 266-271, 274-281, 284-287);
Excerpts from *Eyes on the Prize* and/or *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*
May 6 Clip Analyses 2.5; Paper/Seminar 7
- 15 May 9 Spike Lee, *Do the Right Thing* (read FE 61-64); Clip Analyses 2.6
May 11 Wrap-Up; MID due.
- May 13 Test 3 (Final Exam), 10:30-12:30