

The Peopling of New York: Race and Ethnicity in 'New York' Media
Honors 9, Honors Hall

Instructor: Ellen Scott (Assistant Professor of Media History)

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Instructional Technology Fellow: Soniya Munshi, email: soniyamunshi@gmail.com,

office hours: Friday, 9-3PM, Honors Hall, Room 20 (i.e. Student Lounge)

Course Description:

This course will use media (films, radio shows, and television shows) to elucidate various (im)migrant experiences in New York City and to grant volume to voices from the margins. The theme of this course will be how different ethnic and racial groups have formed and fashioned their identities around this unique metropolis. Rather than assessing media texts for their historical accuracy, we will explore media representations for their complex relations to several relevant historical contexts, including the moment of their production and the moment they seek to represent, and the moment various New York audiences received them—and for their artistic and poetic rendering of the experiences of New York's people. The course is structured with one central goal in mind: to foster a clearer understanding of New York by virtue of understanding its people, their patterns of (im)migration, various types of internal movement. Along the way, the course will provide students with the basic tools for interpreting and understanding cinematic and televisual representation and its relationship to identity. The course will also introduce students to qualitative methodologies, providing in particular a chance for them to implement and practice qualitative techniques in their final project.

Instructors: Though I will be the primary instructor for the class, additional help, especially with your final projects, will be provided by our skilled Instructional Technology Fellow (ITF), Soniya Munshi.

Assignments/Grading:

Paper 1: This paper will require you to do an analysis of a film or television show that takes New York, either indirectly or directly, as its subject. A more detailed assignment will be circulated closer to the due date. This paper will be due on February 17th. (20%)

Class participation/Blog: You will log on to WordPress in order to blog weekly. In order to receive full credit, you must blog by Thursday at 5PM. Your blog is an opportunity for you to reflect upon the readings and films for the week and requires you to make relevant connections between the readings and the films we are watching. (20%)

Research Paper: Your final paper will combine original historical research with analysis of a film taking New York as its subject. You will use terms and concepts from the readings to enrich your analysis. A detailed assignment will follow. May 4th will be the due date. (30%)

Web site/Oral history project: Your final project will require you to create your own visual or aural record of a person or place that you are arguing is significant to the landscape or history of New York. The assignment is relatively broad and my hope is that you will proceed with creativity and will be inspired by the films we have seen in class—but will also challenge existing representations with your own emerging vision/version of New York. You will be required to complete an online IRB permission “test” in order to proceed with the project. I will provide resources (i.e. readings) to help you in conducting this qualitative research. Cameras and also perhaps audio equipment can be made available on request. These recordings will become a part of an outward facing website and should be designed to address a mass audience. More details will follow. The due date for the final project will be the date assigned by the registrar for the final exam. (30%)

Required texts and trips for the Class:

There are no required textbooks for the class. All readings will be accessible via the web, either through the library’s e-book collection, through downloadable pdfs files that I will provide for you on the WordPress blog, or via weblink. However, there will be some cost associated with the course. On a number of weeks, you will be required to access the video material on the web, renting films through Amazon video. The cost of each rental is \$2.99 and the total cost for the course could be as high as \$25.00. Please plan accordingly. In some instances films may also be available at the Queens College library but I am recommending web viewing to decrease demand and to smooth accessibility.

In addition we will be making two trips for the class: a walking tour (TBA); and a trip to New York City’s Paley Center for Broadcasting, where we will view rare archival media showcasing the city of New York. The trip to the Paley center is designed to give you a sense of media history and its methods—and the walking tour will enrich your sense of the history of New York’s places, high and low, infamous and famous, vernacular and official.

Weekly Assignments:

WEEK 1: JANUARY 27TH: *Narrative Beginnings, Modern Arrivals: Modernity, New York and the Cinema*
In-class Films: *The Jazz Singer* (1928) (clips),

WEEK 2: FEBRUARY 3RD: *Alternative Narratives of Arrival: Slavery and “Freedom” in New York*

- Watch at home for February 3rd: *Hester Street* (1975) (Amazon) *Ellis Island* (1981), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN349AptQJE> , <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oS9wOlkSzQk>

Watch in Class: *Brother from Another Planet* (1984) (finish at home—Amazon, Library owns)

- Readings:
 - Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK*, New Haven: Yale University Press: 2000, Chapter 1. (available via library web site)
 - Caryl Phillips, *Crossing the River*, (1 page)
 - Michael Rogin, *Black Face, White Noise* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, selections.

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 10TH: America:

- Watch at Home: *West Side Story* (1961) (Amazon rental)
- Reading:
 - William V. Flores, "Citizens vs. Citizenry: Undocumented Immigrants and Latino Cultural Citizenship"
 - *West Side Story*: A Puerto-Rican reading of 'America'" (available via weblink) <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC39folder/westSideStory.html>
 - Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993, selections.
 - Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1683* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003 chapter 3.

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 17TH: Afterimages of Home: PAPER 1 DUE!

- Watch at home: *The Pawnbroker* (1964) (Library owns)
- Readings:
 - Pamela Grace, "City of Nightmares: The New York City of Sidney Lumet" in *The City that Never Sleeps* (available via weblink-CUNY website)
 - Joshua Hirsch, "The Pawnbroker and the Post-Traumatic Flashback" in *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust* 85-110.
 - Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997, "Urban Landscape History, chapter 2 and 3.
 - Richard Dyer, "White" in Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *Critical Visions in Film Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings* New York: Bedford St. Martins, 2011, 800-821.

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 24TH: Finding Bed Stuy: *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

- Watch at home: *Do the Right Thing* (1989) (Amazon Rental, Library owns)
- Readings:
 - Victoria Johnson "Polyphony and Cultural Expression: Interpreting Musical Traditions in *Do The Right Thing*" in Mark Reid, ed. *Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing*, New York: Cambridge Press, 1997, 50-73
 - Catherine Pouzoulet, "The Cinema of Spike Lee: Images of a Mosaic City" in Mark Reid, ed. *Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing*, New York: Cambridge Press, 1997, 30-49.
 - Ella Shohat "Ethnicities in Relation" in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema* Lester Friedman, ed Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993, 215-250
 - Ellen Percy Kraly and Ines Miyares, "Immigration to New York: Policy, Population, and Patterns" in Nancy Foner, ed. *New Immigrants in New York* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, 33-79, excerpts.
 - One additional reading TBA

WEEK 6: MARCH 2ND: Gentrifying Brooklyn?: *The Landlord*

- Watch at Home: *The Landlord* (1970) (Source TBA)
- Reading:
 - Richard Schaffer and Neil Smith “Gentrification in Harlem?”
 - Christopher Sieving, *Soul Searching: Black-Themed Cinema from the March on Washington to the Rise of Blaxploitation* Middletown: Wesleyan Press, 2011, Chapter 5, selections.
 - Nick Dawson, *Being Hal Ashby*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, selections
 - One additional reading TBA

WEEK 7: MARCH 9TH: Ethnic Noir: *Christ in Concrete* (1949)–

- Watch: *Christ in Concrete* (1949) (Library owns)
- Reading:
 - William Wheeler Dixon, “Night World: New York as Noir Universe” in *The City that Never Sleeps*
 - Thom Andersen “Red Hollywood,” excerpt
 - Charles Maland “Film Gris: Crime Critique and Cold War Culture, 1951” *Film Criticism* 26:3 (2002), 1-30.
 - Recommended Robert Porfirio, “No Way Out: Existential Motifs in the Film Noir” in Alain Silver, ed. *The Film Noir Reader* New York: Limelight Editions, 1996, 77-93

WEEK 8: MARCH 16TH: THE GANGSTER/HOOD PARADIGM ETHNIC MASCULINITIES IN NEW YORK:

- Watch at Home: *Goodfellas* (1990) (Amazon and Library owns)
- Reading:
 - David Roediger, “Whiteness and Ethnicity in the History of ‘white ethnics’ in America”
 - Paula Massood, “From Mean Streets to *The Gangs of New York*: Ethnicity and Urban Space in the Films of Martin Scorsese” in *The City that Never Sleeps* (available via weblink)
 - One additional reading TBA

WEEK 9: MARCH 23RD: WOODY ALLEN’S NEW YORK:

- Watch at Home: *Radio Days* (1987) (Source TBA)
- Reading:
 - Lester Friedman and David Desser, *American Jewish Filmmakers* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993, chapter 2.
 - Richard Blake, *Street Smart: The New York of Lumet, Allen, Scorsese, and Lee* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005, selections.

WEEK 10: MARCH 30TH: *New York as Ethnic Utopia*:

- Watch at Home: *Sesame Street* (1969-present), *Welcome Back Kotter* (1975-1979) (Library owns, Amazon has some: stay tuned for specific episode announcement)
- Reading:
 - Robert Stam, "Bakhtin and Racial and Ethnic Representation" in *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, Lester Friedman, ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993, 251-275
 - Jeffrey S. Rush "Who's in on the Joke: Parody as Hybridized Narrative Discourse"
 - TBA

WEEK 11: APRIL 20: VISIT TO THE PALEY CENTER: GENDER AND THE ETHNIC FAMILY:

Watch at Home: *All in the Family* (1968-1979) (Library owns), *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985) (Amazon), episodes TBA.

- Reading:
 - George Lipsitz "Meaning of Memory"
 - Vidmar and Rokeach "Archie Bunker's Bigotry"
 - Additional reading TBA.
- Watch at Paley Center: *The Goldbergs* (1929-1956), additional screening materials TBA.

WEEK 12: APRIL 27TH: THE UN-PEOPLING OF NEW YORK: DISAPPEARING AND DYING YOUNG IN NEW YORK

- Watch IN CLASS: *The Torture of Mothers* (1980) and *The Awful Truth* "Theme Night"
- Readings:
 - Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005, selections.
 - Angela Davis, "Race and Criminalization" in *The House that Race Built*, Waneemah Lubiano, ed. New York: Vintage Press, 1997, 264-279.
 - Clyde Taylor, "New U.S. Black Cinema" *Jumpcut* no. 28, April 1983, pp. 46-48, 41.

WEEK 13: RESEARCH PAPER DUE!!! MAY 4: COMMUNITY BROADCASTING:

- Watch/Listen at Home: "Inside Bedford Stuyvesant" (available through course website link) (we will watch *Palante, Siempre, Palante* in class)
- Reading:
 - Devorah Heitner, "The Good Side of the Ghetto: The Case of Inside Bedford Stuyvesant," *Velvet Light Trap*, October 2008.
 - Recommended: Rachel Rivera, "Hip-Hop, Puerto Ricans and Ethnoracial Identity in New York" in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York* Agustin Lao-Montes and Arlene Davila, eds. New York: Columbia Press, 2001, 235-261.

WEEK 14: MAY 11: SEXUAL MIGRATIONS:

- Watch at Home: *Saving Face* (2004) (Library owns, Amazon)
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- Judith Butler, "Gender as Performance" in Peter Osborne, ed. *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals* New York: Routledge, 1996, 108-125.
- George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, New York: Basic Books, 1994, Introduction.▲
- Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, selections.

COURSE POLICY:

Late Work: I WILL PENALIZE LATE WORK BY MARKING IT DOWN ONE GRADE PER DAY.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and will be taken every class period at the beginning of class. Your attendance will be quantified into your class participation grade. Leaving class early or coming more than 10 minutes late without advance permission of the instructor will result in a zero grade for class participation. **Two or more latenesses will count as an absence.**

Cel Phones and Laptops: The use of cel phones, Blackberries or other digital communication devices during class is not allowed. CEL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS. IF YOUR CEL PHONE RINGS YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE AND NOT RETURN. IF YOU TEXT IN CLASS YOU WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE AND NOT RETURN. Laptops may be used in class for note-taking and for further exploration of material being discussed in class via established and credible internet sources. Any use of laptops for communication (i.e. email, facebook or other such purposes) will result in a deduction from your class participation grade and your losing the privilege of using a laptop in class in the future. Any unauthorized, unexcused use of cel phones or other digital devices during class will result in a zero grade for attendance for that day.

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