



Alexandrov's "Circus" (1936)

LTWL 172 — Special Topics in Literature: Race and Ethnicity Through the Lens of "Cold War" Cinema (4)
 Prof. Amelia Glaser (amglaser@ucsd.edu)

Syllabus subject to revision.

This course examines race and ethnicity in American and Soviet film during the Cold War (roughly 1917-1991). We shall discuss key phenomena such as Black Leninism, Soviet portrayals of American racism, and American portrayal of Russian antisemitism. This comparative approach to 20th Century film will help us to discuss key concerns in contemporary American society, including the perpetuation of an unequal power system. In addition to viewing and discussing a feature-length film each week, we will discuss short readings on race and politics, and students will write weekly posts on how the cinema of the past contributes to our understanding of contemporary race politics. Each student will also give one 5-minute presentation on a secondary source, chosen from the recommended readings. Students may choose between writing a final paper on a comparative topic, and making a short original film (5-10 minutes) about a current issue of social concern. An optional Russian-language section will be available to students of Russian.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I	<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignments and In-class clips</u>
	Mon.	<p>Introduction: Imagining the "Other" at the dawn of cinema In class: Clips from Lumiere Brothers (1894-5), from "Fish factory in Astrakhan" (1906), Curtis, <i>In the Land of the Head Hunters</i> (1914) Discussion topics: Early filmmakers' use of camera techniques to document ethnic groups. The myth of an unbiased camera</p>
	Wed.	<p>Reading assignment. Film analysis guide, parts 1-6: http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/ Lecture clips: Drankov, "Stenka Razin" (1908), Griffith, <i>Birth of a Nation</i> (1915), Micheaux, <i>Birth of a Race</i> (1918) Lecture topics: How to analyze a shot? How are camera angles used to present race and ethnicity in particular lights? How did early filmmakers like Drankov combine fiction with history to build visual stories of nationhood?</p>
	Fri.	<p>Film assignment. Micheaux, <i>Body and Soul</i> (1925) Discussion topics: Griffith's biased portrayal of reconstruction in America, and Micheaux's rejection of this.</p> <p>Week 1 short-essay prompt: Early filmmakers used the camera to document multiple cultures. This involved the perpetuation of myths. Discuss Griffith's portrayal of African Americans in <i>Birth of a Nation</i>. Choose a sequence of 4-5 shots in the film to describe how Griffith is using film techniques to perpetuate his biases about race in America. Alternate film prompt: Excerpt a clip from <i>Birth of a Nation</i> that contains 4-5 shots. Add a voice over that walks us through these clips, discussing how the sequence presents race in post-reconstruction America.</p>

Recommended readings (available on JStor unless otherwise specified):

Anna Siomopoulos, "The Birth of a Black Cinema: Race, Reception, and Oscar Micheaux's 'Within Our Gates'" (*The Moving Image*, V. 6, N. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 111-118)

Jeffrey B. Martin, "Film Out of Theatre: D. W. Griffith, 'Birth of a Nation' and the Melodrama 'The Clansman'" (*Literature/Film Quarterly*, V. 18, N. 2, 1990, pp. 87-95)

Cloé Drieu, "Revolutionary Exoticism and the Colonial Imaginary: Cinema and Entertainment (1924-27)" (*Cinema, Nation, and Empire in Uzbekistan, 1919-1937*, Indiana U. Press, 2018, pp. 54-82)

Birgit Beumers, Mark Lipovetsky, "The Performance of Life: Documentary Theater and Film" (*The Russian Review*, V. 69, N. 4, October 2010, pp. 615-637)

Patrick Williams, "Black looks/black light: Med Hondo's Lumière Noire" (*Journal of African Cultural Studies*, V. 21, No. 1, June 2009, pp. 33-42)

- Week II**
- Mon. **Discussion topic. Revolution and Imperialism**
In class clips: Ivan Ivano-Vano, "China in Flames" (1925 animation), Flaherty, *Nanook of the North*, (1925)
- Wed. **Reading assignment.** Edward Said, "Introduction" to *Orientalism* (1978, ereserve)
Lecture clips: Vertov, "Three Songs about Lenin" (1934), Denham, *King Kong* (1933)
Lecture topic: Pudovkin, Vertov, and filming the anti-imperialist revolution
- Fri. **Film assignment.** Pudovkin, *Storm over Asia* (1928)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCE5447sjQY>
- Week 2 Short Essay Prompt:** The late 1920s and early 1930s was a time of experimentation with sound and special effects in film. Pudovkin, in *Storm over Asia*, experiment with these new technologies to create a film that was action-packed. How does this film also tell a story about race, integration, and the outsider? **Alternative assignment:** Create a 2 minute sound recording near your dorm or house that gives a sense of the environment and the cultures living there.

Recommended readings:

- Gina Marchetti, "Storms over Asia: Mongolia, Montage Aesthetics, and Jia Zhangke's *The World*" (*Citing China: Politics, Postmodernism, and World Cinema*, U. Hawaii Press, 2018, pp. 26-51)
- Alice Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies" (*Camera Obscura* 49, V. 17, N. 1, 2002, pp. 1-71) muse.jhu.edu
- Valerie Frazier, "King Kong's Reign Continues: 'King Kong' as a Sign of Shifting Racial Politics" (*CLA Journal*, V. 51, N. 2, Dec. 2007, pp. 186-205)
- Anne T. Ciecko, "Transnational Action: John Woo, Hong Kong, Hollywood" (*Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, U. Hawaii Press, 1997, pp. 221-238)
- Andrea Hairston, "Lord of the Monsters: Minstrelsy Redux: King Kong, Hip Hop, and the Brutal Black Buck" (*Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, V. 18, N. 2, 2007, pp. 187-199)
- Yurii Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism" (*Slavic Review*, V. 53, N. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 414-452)

- Week III**
- Mon. **Discussion topic. Assimilation and the American melting pot**
In class clips: Granovsky, "Before the Law," "Jewish luck" (1925)
- Wed. **Reading assignment.** Horace Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot"
<http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/kallen.htm>
Lecture. Jews in America between ethnicity and religion.
- Fri. **Film assignment.** Crosland, *The Jazz Singer* (1927)
In class clips: Korsh and Shapiro "Seekers of Happiness" (1936)
- Week 3 prompt:** In Micheaux's *Body and Soul*, a criminal passes as a reverend. In Crosland's "The Jazz Singer," the son of a rabbi performs in blackface on Broadway. How does performance figure into the formation of racial identities in America? What does it say about a film's plotline?

Recommended readings:

- Ramona Tougas, "Langston Hughes and Performing Transnational Presence: 'Scottsboro Limited' and 'Harvest'" (*Comparative Drama*, V. 49, N. 3, Fall 2015, pp. 259-287)
- Michael Rogin, "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice" (*Critical Inquiry*, V. 18, N. 3, Spring, 1992, pp. 417-453)

- Steven S. Lee, "From Avant-Garde to Authentic: Revisiting Langston Hughes's 'Moscow Movie'" (*The Ethnic Avant-Gare: Writers, Artists, and the Magic Pilgrimage to the Soviet Union*, Columbia U.P., 2015, pp. 119-148)
- Langston Hughes, "Moscow Bound in Black and White: March 1932-February 1933" (*Letters from Langston*, UC Press, 2016, pp. 48-108)
- David Chioni Moore, "Colored Dispatches from the Uzbek Border: Langston Hughes' Relevance, 1933-2002" (*Callaloo*, V. 25, N. 4, Autumn, 2002, pp. 1114-1135)
- Louise Patterson, Bourne St. Clair, "Louise Patterson on Langston Hughes" (*The Langston Hughes Review*, V. 15, N. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 39-51)
- Jeffrey Knapp, "'Sacred Songs Popular Prices': Secularization in *The Jazz Singer*" (*Critical Inquiry*, V. 34, N. 2, Winter 2008, pp. 313-335)
- Charles Musser, "Why did Negroes Love Al Jolson and *The Jazz Singer*?: Melodrama, Blackface and Cosmopolitan Theatrical Culture" (*Film History*, V. 23, N. 2, 2011, pp. 196-222)

Week IV

- Mon. **Discussion topic:** Performing identity in the interwar period
In class clips: Lubitsch, "Ninotchka" (1939), Chaplin, *Modern Times* (1936), Shpis and Milman, "The return of Nathan Bekker" (1933)
- Wed. **Reading assignment.** Langston Hughes, "Moscow Movie"
Lecture topic: Black Americans on the Soviet screen
Lecture clips. Ivan Ivano-Vano, "Blek end uait" (1932), Demikovsky, *Black Russians: The Red Experience* (2013)
- Fri. **Film assignment.** Alexandrov, *Circus* (1936)
In-class clips: Todorovsky, "Stilyagi" (2008)

Week 4 prompt: Why did Langston Hughes' film project in Moscow fail? What were the elements of race and America that the Soviet Union misses, according to Hughes? To what extent are the points Alexandrov makes about American race in *Circus* historically valid?

Recommended readings:

- Maya Balakirsky Katz, "Black and White: Race in Soviet Animation" (*Drawing the Iron Curtain: Jews and the Golden Age of Soviet Animation*, Rutgers U.P., 2016, pp. 56-74)
- Meredith L. Roman, "African American Architects of Soviet Antiracism and the Challenge of Black and White" (*Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928-1937*, U. Nebraska Press, 2012, pp. 125-154)
- Christina Kiaer, "A Comintern Aesthetics of Anti-racism in the Animated Short Film *Blek end uait*" (*Comintern Aesthetics, Canvas*)
- Denise Youngblood, "The *innostanshchina* in Soviet Cinema" (**Canvas**).

Week V

- Mon. **Discussion topic.** Documenting the other
In-class clips: Kuleshov, *Mr. West* (1925), *The Siberians* (1940)
- Wed. **Reading assignment.** Mayakovsky, excerpts from *My Discovery of America*
Lecture topic. Eisenstein in Mexico, Mayakovsky in New York
Lecture clips. Eisenstein, "Battleship Potemkin", "October," "Ivan the Terrible"
- Fri. **Film assignment.** Eisenstein, Alexandrov, "Que Viva Mexico" (1931-1979)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjDNmSJBgNk>
In-class clips: Kosheverova and Shapiro, *Cinderella* (1947), Leonard, *Sepia Cinderella* (1947)

Week 5 Prompt: How does the “Cinderella” story lend itself to a story about race? What is the implicit moral of the story? **Alternative film prompt:** Shoot your own trailer for a Cinderella film that engages with an element of the US social structure. (3 minutes maximum).

Recommended readings:

- Charles Forsdick, Christian Hogsbjerg, “Sergei Eisenstein and the Haitian Revolution: ‘The Confrontation Between Black and White Explodes Into Red’” (*History Workshop Journal*, N. 78, Autumn 2014, pp. 157-185)
- The Editors of Experimental Film, “Manifesto on ‘Que Viva Mexico’ (USA, 1933)” (*Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, UC Press, 2014, pp. 38-40)
- Sarah Ann Wells, “Parallel Modernities?: The First Reception of Soviet Cinema in Latin America” (*Cosmopolitan Film Cultures in Latin America, 1896-1960*, Indiana U.P., 2017, pp. 151-175)
- Ellen Scott, “More than a ‘Passing’ Sophistication: Dress, Film Regulation, and the Color Line in 1930s American Films,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, V. 41, N. 1/ 2 Spring/Summer 2012, pp. 60-86)

Week VI

Mon. **Midterm exam**

Wed. **Reading assignment.** From Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (2011)
Lecture topic. *Salt of the Earth* and labor strikes in post WWII America

Fri. **Film assignment.** Biberman, *Salt of the Earth* (1954)
In class clips. Petrie, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961)

Week 6 Prompt: Biberman, in *Salt of the Earth*, tells a story about labor strikes, which is intimately connected to race and culture in the US. Can one separate race and culture from economic conditions in the United States? Why or why not?

Recommended readings:

- James J. Lorence, “The Suppression of ‘Salt of the Earth’ in Midwest America: The Underside of Cold War Culture in Detroit and Chicago” (*Film History*, V. 10, N. 3, 1998, pp. 346-358)
- Benjamin Balthasar, “Cold War Re-Visions: Representation and Resistance in the Unseen Salt of the Earth” (*American Quarterly*, V. 60, N. 2, Jun., 2008, pp. 347-371)
- Bernard F. Dick, “Herbert Biberman: The Salt That Lost Its Savor,” *Radical Innocence: A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten* (U.P. of Kentucky, 1989, pp. 70-81)
- Zachary Ingle, “‘White Fear’ and the Studio System: A reevaluation of Hansberry’s Original Screenplay of ‘A Raisin in the Sun’” (*Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2009, pp. 184-193)
- Celeste A. Fisher, “Reclaiming the Past or Assimilationist Rebellion?: Transforming the Self in Contemporary American Cinema” (*Africans and the Politics of Popular Culture*, U. Rochester Press, 2009 pp. 167-184)

Week VII

Mon. **Discussion topic.** Between fiction and documentary. Final project discussion.

Wed. **Reading assignment.** Lydia Cabrera, “Afro-Cuban Tales” (excerpts)
Lecture topic: Cuba in the Russian imagination
Lecture clips: Kalatozov, “The Cranes are flying” (1957)
 Gorbатов, “The Unvanquished” (1945)

Fri. May 19 **Film assignment.** Kalatozov, “Soy Cuba” (1963) (film reserves)
In-class clips. Kurosawa, *Dersu Uzala* (1975), Motyl “White Sun of the Desert” (1969)

Week 7 prompt: Choose one shot in “I am Cuba,” and analyze it, revealing what this shot is arguing about social conditions in Cuba. **Alternative film prompt:** Kalatozov, in “Soy Cuba,” famously creates one very long shot to give a sense of a crowd gathering, and showing the demographic of that crowd. Create a 1 minute film that uses a similar technique to capture the spirit of culture in your neighborhood. You may choose to include a voice over or add music or another sound backdrop.

Recommended:

- Masha Salazkina, “Mosco-Rome-Havana: A Film-Theory Road Map” in *October* (Canvas)
- Amit Thakkar, “Who is Cuba? Dispersed Protagonism and Heteroglossia in *Soy Cuba/I Am Cuba*” in *Framework* (Canvas)
- Andrea O’Reilly Herrera, “The ‘Consciousness of Exile’: Memory and the Vicarious Imagination in Cuban-American Literature and Art” (*Journal of West Indian Literature*, V. 8, N. 1, October 1998, pp. 82-98)
- Maria Caridad Cumena, “Through the Eyes of Foreign Filmmakers: Contradictions and Paradigms of Cuban Cinema after the Revolution” (*Cuba in a Global Context*, U.P. Florida, 2014, pp. 243-256)
- Alaina Lemon, “The Matter of Race” (*Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019, pp. 59-76)
- Lynda Hoffman-Jeep, “Creating Ethnography: Zora neale Hurston and Lydia Cabrera” (*African American Review*, V. 39, N. 3, Fall 2005, pp. 337-353)

Week VIII

- Mon. May 22 **Discussion.** From Civil Rights to Blaxploitation
In class clips. *Foxy Brown* (1974), Rogell, *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (2011)
- Wed. May 24 **Reading assignment.** Kimberle Crenshaw, “Race to the Bottom” (Baffler, 2017)
<https://thebaffler.com/salvos/race-to-bottom-crenshaw>
Lecture. Angela Davis, *Coffy*, the image of a Black American female revolutionary
Lecture clips. Rogell, *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (2011)
- Fri. May 26 **Film assignment.** Hill, *Coffy* (1973)

Week 8 prompt: Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term “Intersectionality” in the 1980s. In the article we read this week, she discusses the complexities of race in contemporary America. How do the questions of race, class, and gender come together in Hill’s *Coffy*?

Recommended readings:

- Calum Waddell, “The Blaxploitation Female” (*The Style of Sleaze: The American Exploitation Film, 1959-1977*, Edinburgh U.P., 2018, pp. 174-184)
- Wheeler Winston Dixon, Jack Hill, “Filmmaking ‘for the fun of it’” (*Film Criticism*, V. 29, N. 3, 2005, pp. 46-59)
- Marquita R. Smith, “*Afro Thunder!*: Sexual Politics & Gender Inequity in the Liberation Struggles of the Black Militant Woman” (*Politics and Performativity*) (Canvas)
- Stephane Dunne, “Sexing the Supermama: Racial and Gender Power in *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*” (*Baad Bitches and Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films*, U. Ill Press, 2008, pp. 107-132)
- Eithne Quinn, “Color-Blind Corporatism: The Black Film Wave and White Revival” (*A Piece of the Action*, Columbia U.P., 2020, pp. 167-206)
- Rossen Djagalov, “The Tashkent Film Festival (1968-1988) as a Contact Zone” (*From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds*, McGill-Queen’s U.P., 2020, pp. 137-172)
- Arsenev, *Dersu the Trapper* (1975) Excerpts. Canvas.

- Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Lines in the Snow: Imagining the Russo-Japanese Frontier" (*Pacific Affairs*, V. 72, N. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 57-77)
- Maxim Matusevich, "Soviet Antiracism and Its Discontents: The Cold War Years" (*Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, Indiana U.P., 2020, pp. 229-250)
- Masha Salazkina, "Introduction: Film Theory in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization" (*Framework*, V. 56, N. 2, Fall 2015, pp. 325-349)

Week IX

- Mon. May 29 **Discussion.** Remembering the Old Country
In class clips. "Fiddler on the Roof (1971), Askoldov, "Commissar" (1967)
- Wed. May 31 **Reading assignment:** Karen Brodken, "Introduction" to *How Jews Became White Folks*
Lecture: Black-Jewish relations in America, from the Party to the post-War
- Fri. June 2 **Film assignment.** Silver, "Hester Street" (1975)
- Week 9 prompt:** How does Eastern Europe figure into the American understanding of Jewish identity in the postwar films "Hester Street," and "Fiddler on the Roof"?

Recommended readings:

- Victoria Khiterer, "Jews in Soviet Cinema: the Film *Commissar* by Aleksandr Askol'dov" (*Shofar*, V. 33, N. 1, Fall 2014, pp. 1-29)
- Glen Jeansonne, David Lührssen, "The Cold War (1947-1991), including the Korean War (1950-1953) and the Vietnam War (1955-1975)" (*War on the Silver Screen: Shaping America's Perception of History*, U. Nebraska Press, 2014, pp. 82-142)
- Jerome Christensen, "Spike Lee, Corporate Populist" (*Critical Inquiry*, V. 17, N. 3, Spring 1991, pp. 582-595)
- Dan Flory, "Spike Lee and the Sympathetic Racist" (*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, V. 64, N. 1, Winter 2006, pp. 67-79)
- Jonathan Scott Lee, "Spike Lee's 'Malcolm X' as Transformational Object" (*American Imago*, V. 52, N. 2, Summer 1995, pp. 155-167)
- Colette Lindroth, "Spike Lee and the American Tradition" (*Literature/Film Quarterly*, V. 24, N. 1, 1996, pp. 26-31)
- Dennis Bingham "Spike Lee's Malcolm X: Appropriation or Assimilation?" (*Whose Lives Are They Anyway?*, Rutgers U.P., 2010, pp. 169-190)

Week X

- Mon. June 5 **Discussion.** Race and protest in the 21st century
In class clips. Baron-Cohen, *Borat* (2006), Music video "Ia ogon'" (2006)
- Wed. June 7 **Reading.** Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon, "George Floyd, 'Brat 2' and Russian Depictions of African Americans"
Lecture topic. From Revolution to police brutality: race and global politics in the 21st century
Lecture clips. Balabanov, *Brother* (1997), Balabanov, *Brother 2* (2000)
- Fri. June 9 **Film assignment.** Boots Riley, "Sorry to Bother You" (2018)
- Week 10 prompt:** Boots Riley's "Sorry to Bother You" portrays the grotesque intersection between race, power, and money in the 21st century global economy. How does familiarity with revolutionary film help us to understand Riley's commentary?

Recommended readings:

- Was Soviet Internationalism Anti-Racist?: Toward a History of Foreign Others in the USSR" (*Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, McGill-Queen's U.P., 2019,

pp. 284-311)

Anthony Anemone, "About Killers, Freaks, and Real Men: The vigilante Hero of Aleksei Balabanov's Films" (*Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema*, Indiana U.P., 2008, 127-141)

Nancy Condee, "Mikhalkov: European but not Western?" (Canvas)

Yana Hashamova, "Aleksei Balabanov's Russian Hero: Fantasies of Wounded National Pride" (*SEEJ*, V. 51, N. 2, Sumer, 2007, pp. 295-311)

Susan Larsen, "National Identity, Cultural Authority, and the Post-Soviet Blockbuster: Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov" (*Slavic Review*, V. 62, N. 3, Autumn, 2003, pp. 491-511)

Steven Lee, "Borat, Multiculturalism, Mnogonatsional'nost" (*Slavic Review*, V. 67, N. 1, Spring 2008), pp. 19-34

Requirements:

Participation, 10%: comments in class and on others' discussion posts

Presentation, 5%: sign up to present questions on one recommended reading during a Friday panel. You may also choose an approved outside reading from Jstor.org. For your presentation, you should answer the following questions: 1. What is the author's central argument? 2. What examples does the author bring in to make this point? 3. How does this article contribute to our understanding of race in during the Cold War? 4. Is there anything you wish you could ask the author?

Midterm exam, 10%: 2 essay questions and 5 short answers (online, 50 min.)

Final paper, 30%: 2500 words, well-formatted, with a bibliography, using either the Chicago or MLA citation method. Prompts will be distributed during week 8. Final papers are due by noon on Tuesday of Finals Week via Turnitin.

Alternative Final project: Students who are interested in creating a film (5-8 minutes) about a current issue related to race and identity as it reflects on American society may do so. The film can be a documentary, or may be an adaptation of a fiction story. The topic and plan for your film must be approved ahead of time. You may not include weapons or sexual violence in your film. This project should include a written introduction of 500-800 words, placing it into the context of the course. We will make your films available for the class to view.

Final paper outline, 5%: due on Wednesday of Week 9 at noon. This should include a 150-word introduction (thesis statement and road map), as well as a classical outline detailing the paper's structure and topics to be covered. **Alternative film project:** Please submit your script at this time.

Final exam, 10%: in-class, 2 essay questions and 10 identifications

Weekly discussion prompt, 30% (3% each): Weekly short essays of 100-150 words should be posted to the discussion board every Friday by 10am. Each short essay should respond to the prompt in the syllabus. Occasional optional film-prompts will give you the opportunity to express your views in the form of a short film (please post a link to a site where we can view it), or try your hand at a film technique we have discussed. These must be submitted by Friday at 5pm each week.

Canvas:

Be sure to regularly check Canvas for your classmates' updates to the discussion board, further information about assignments, and recommended readings.

Laptop policy:

Laptops and portable devices may not be used by students during class. Please bring a pen and paper to take notes.

Plagiarism Policy:

All students must adhere to the UCSD policies on plagiarism and academic integrity: <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/locations/sshl/guides/preventing-plagiarism/ucsd-policies.html>

Reading and films:

All course reading can be found at reserves.ucsd.edu or online at a specified site.