

Dr. Todd Boyd
1970s America (CTCS 510)

Fall 2010

Wednesdays 1:00-3:50 pm (SCA 216)

Screening 4:00-5:50pm (SCA 110)

Dr. Boyd's office hours:

Wednesdays 11:45 am-12:30pm and Thursdays 12:15-1:30pm.

Appointments for office hours must be made in advance through the Critical Studies Office located in SCA 320 (Critical Studies contact: criticalstudies@cinema.usc.edu or 213.740.3334)

Teaching Assistant: Stephanie Hoover (smhoover@usc.edu)

Course Description:

The 1970s looms as one of the most misunderstood decades in recent American history. Often dismissed as "The Me Decade" or worse, historical memory has tended to undervalue this era largely due to its placement between the ubiquitous images of a more radical 1960s and the dawn of a new conservatism linked with Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. This course looks to reconsider the 1970s and regards the decade as a significant historical period where a cultural foundation was laid that continues to influence contemporary society.

As the first decade to follow on the heels of various social/political movements like civil rights, feminism, the counterculture, and the movement to end the Vietnam War, among others, the 1970s served an important transitional role in helping to reposition America as the nation began to shift from an industrial economy to a society based on technology, information, and service. The corresponding social and economic shifts were most evident in areas of culture and politics.

This course looks to assess these social, cultural, and political shifts in an effort to rectify previous misunderstandings about the era and to offer a working definition of the decade as it pertains to contemporary American identity. In this regard, the course will rely on

multiple examples from film, television, and music, as well as politics, along with an analysis of other social and cultural events from the era to assist in defining and explaining such a confounding, though utterly significant decade. Topics of discussion will revolve around events such as the Manson murders, the kidnapping of heiress Patty Hearst, Jim Jones and the tragedy of the People's Temple, the Roman Polanski case, Vietnam, Watergate, the "New Hollywood," and "Blaxploitation," among other examples. The course is also interested in the way that "the '70s" began experiencing a cultural rebirth in the 1990s through cultural venues such as hip hop and the work of filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino.

Required Texts:

Acham, Christine. *Revolution Televised: Prime Time and the Struggle for Black Power*. London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Berkowitz, Edward, D. *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Biskand, Peter. *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock 'n' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

Boyd, Todd. *The Notorious Ph.D.'s Guide to the Super Fly '70s: A Connoisseur's Journey Through the Fabulous Flix, Hip Sounds, and Cool Vibes that Defined a Decade*. New York: Harlem Moon, 2007.

Hine, Thomas. *The Great Funk: Falling Apart and Coming Together (on a Shag Rug) in the Seventies*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

Jenkins, Philip. *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press USA, 2006.

Killen, Andreas. *1973 Nervous Breakdown: Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2006.

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. New York: Scribner, 2008.

Zogland, Richard. *Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America*.

Course Requirements

1. Film presentation:

You will select one of the in-class screenings to present on. Your presentation should discuss the film and its relationship to the themes of the class, using appropriate clips when necessary to illustrate your points. This presentation should avoid plot summary and instead focus on putting the film in an appropriate context, using critical analysis with an eye towards connecting the film to larger historical, social, cultural, and political issues. Your presentation should also prompt class discussion on the issues at hand. You will also turn in a written breakdown of the film in question, which will highlight the issues that your presentation will bring up, along with making connections to other texts and the arguments that are being forwarded about the topic at hand.

2. Reading presentation:

You will select one of the assigned readings to present on. Your presentation should discuss the book from a critical standpoint and apply the ideas to the themes and issues of the class. Your presentation should prompt class discussion on the topic and its related issues. You will also turn in a written breakdown of the text in question, which will highlight the issues that your presentation will bring up, along with making connections to other texts and the arguments that are being forwarded about the topic at hand.

3. Seminar paper (20-25 pages):

You will choose a topic relative to the themes and issues of the class. You will meet with Dr. Boyd during office hours to discuss the ideas for your paper and have your topic approved. Your meeting with Dr. Boyd should be no later than November 10 so as to give you ample time to work on the paper.

Paper due December 8

4. Attendance and participation:

As this is a graduate seminar, your regular attendance and participation in the course is assumed and expected.

Week One: August 25

Screening: *Guerilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst* (Robert Stone, 2004)
and *Charles Manson: Journey into Evil* (Bill Harris, 1995)

Reading: *1973 Nervous Breakdown*

Week Two: September 1

Screening: *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple* (Stanley Nelson, 2006)

Reading: *1973 Nervous Breakdown*

Week Three: September 8

Screening: *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired* (Marina Zenovich, 2008)

Reading: *1973 Nervous Breakdown* and *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*

Week Four: September 15

Screening: *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)

Reading: *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*

Presentation: *1973 Nervous Breakdown*

Week Five: September 22

Screening: *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)

Reading: *Nixonland*

Presentations: *The Godfather* and *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*

Week Six: September 29

Screening: *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)

Reading: *Nixonland*

Presentation: *Taxi Driver*

Week Seven: October 6

Screening: *Super Fly* (Gordon Parks, Jr., 1972)

Reading: *Nixonland* and *The Notorious Ph.D.'s Guide*

Presentation: *Apocalypse Now*

Week Eight: October 13

Screening: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Ivan Dixon, 1973)

Reading: *Revolution Televised*

Presentations: *Nixonland* and *Super Fly*

Week Nine: October 20

Screening: *Wattstax* (Mel Stuart, 1973)

Reading: *Decade of Nightmares*

Presentations: *Revolution Televised* and *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*

Week Ten: October 27

Screening: *Inside Deep Throat* (Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, 2005)

Reading: *Decade of Nightmares*

Presentation: *Wattstax*

Week Eleven: November 3

Screening: *Nixon* (Oliver Stone, 1995)

Reading: *Something Happened*

Presentations: *Decade of Nightmares* and *Inside Deep Throat*

Week Twelve: November 10

Screening: *Dead Presidents* (Albert and Allen Hughes, 1995)

Reading: *Something Happened*

Presentation: *Nixon*

Week Thirteen: November 17

Screening: *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1997)

Reading: *The Great Funk*

Presentation: *Something Happened and Dead Presidents*

Week Fourteen: November 24

Screening: *Jackie Brown* (Quentin Tarantino, 1997)

Reading: *The Great Funk*

Presentations: *When We Were Kings*

Week Fifteen: December 1

Screening: *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 1997)

Reading: *Comedy at the Edge: How Stand-up in the 1970s Changed America*

Presentation: *The Great Funk* and *Jackie Brown*

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 8