

Dr. Todd Boyd

CTCS 464: *The Gangster and American Culture*

SCA 108/Thursdays 1:00-5:50/Fall 2015

With the release of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* in 1972 the gangster genre in Hollywood took on a new cultural significance. Though the gangster film has a long history in Hollywood, the remaking of the genre as a venue for post 1960s commentary on cultural identity, history, and the American Dream elevated this genre in ways both popular and political. Over time the gangster would displace the cowboy as one of America's favorite fictional characters, becoming an especially important and symbolic figure across the cultural landscape in the process.

This course is interested in analyzing what we might refer to as the "modern American gangster," from the 1970s through the present, in cinema, television, and other forms of popular culture such as hip hop. In addition to Coppola's epics—*The Godfather* (1972), *The Godfather Part II* (1974)—the course will also study the work of filmmakers Martin Scorsese—*Mean Streets* (1973), *Casino* (1995)— and Quentin Tarantino—*Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Jackie Brown* (1997). Further this course will investigate the role of the gangster during the Blaxploitation era of the 1970s—*Super Fly* (1972), *The Mack* (1973)—in addition to analyzing the celebrated "hip hop classic" *Scarface* from the 1980s. Finally this course will focus on more recent representations of the gangster on a series of popular, critically acclaimed cable television programs such as *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Breaking Bad*.

Screenings:

8/27 *The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola (1972)

9/3 *Super Fly*, Gordon Parks, Jr. (1972)

9/10 *The Mack*, Micheal Campus (1973)

9/17 *Mean Streets*, Martin Scorsese, (1973)

9/24 *The Godfather Part II*, Francis Ford Coppola (1974)

10/1 *The Sopranos*, David Chase (1999-2007)

10/8 *Scarface*, Brian DePalma (1983)

10/15 *The Wire*, David Simon (2002-2008)

10/22 *Casino*, Martin Scorsese (1995)

10/29 *Breaking Bad*, Vince Gilligan (2008-2013)

11/5 *Pulp Fiction*, Quentin Tarantino (1994)

11/12 *A Most Violent Year*, J.C. Chandor (2014)

11/19 *Jackie Brown*, Quentin Tarantino (1997)

11/26 Thanksgiving Break

12/3 No Screening (Final Class Lecture)