

CTCS 412: Gender, Sexuality, and Independent Cinema

Division of Cinema & Media Studies Spring 2016 UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

What is Independent cinema? What are its subjects and narrative pleasures? “Gender, Sexuality, and Independent Cinema” looks at the new Independent film in the U.S. context, as it both interacts with and branches out from Hollywood, arthouse, and international cinema. Through studying the “Indy” movement, the class explores how cinematic stories affect our understanding of the complicated processes of desire and identity formation. Narrative study provides a framework for the course and its examination of identity, power, representation, and social politics in the Independent film.

Register today, non-majors welcome!

Tuesdays, 6:00-10:00 PM

SCI 207

Spring 2016, 4 Units

Professor James Boyda

Questions?

Visit the Cinema and Media Studies Office in
SCA 320

Phone: (213) 740-3334

Email: mediastudies@cinema.usc.edu



USC School
of Cinematic Arts

THE BRYAN SINGER DIVISION OF CINEMA & MEDIA STUDIES

Gender, Sexuality, and Independent Cinema

CTCS 412 | Spring 2016

Tuesdays, 6pm–10pm, SCI 207

Dr. James Boyda • Email. Boyda@usc.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment via Email, Tuesdays 1pm—3pm

Course Description: *Exactly what is Independent cinema? And what are its subjects and narrative pleasures?* “Gender, Sexuality, and Independent Cinema” examines the new Independent film in the U.S. context, as it both relates to and branches out from Hollywood, art house, and international cinemas. Through a study of the Indie movement, the class explores how cinematic stories affect our understanding of the complicated processes of desire and identity formation. Narrative study provides a framework for the course’s examination of identity, power, representation, and social politics in the Independent film.

The goals of this class are:

1. To consider the often difficult to distinguish term “Independent cinema” as it relates to Hollywood, art house, and International cinemas and associated filmmaking practices.
2. To consider how new Independent cinema both incorporates and provides alternatives to forms of commercial Hollywood storytelling.
3. To consider how Independent cinema provides room for a diverse range of cultural representations, identities, and stories “outside” of Hollywood.

Course Requires (Grades and Assignments)

In-Class Presentation: 25%

Midterm Exam (TBA): 25%

Final Project: 40%

Class Participation and Attendance: 10%

Penalty for Late Assignments:

Assignments are to be turned in (or presented) on the date they are due. Do not turn papers or presentation materials into the Critical Studies office. Do not email your paper or materials. Late assignments will only be accepted in cases of *documented* emergency or illness. Late assignments without documentation will receive a deduction in grade as follows:

- 1 day to 1 week late: One full letter grade
- 1 week to 2 weeks late: Two full letter grades
- 2 weeks to 3 weeks late: Three full letter grades
- Over 3 weeks late: Paper receives an “F”

Excessive lateness does not excuse you from completing an assignment. Failure to complete all assigned work will result in an “F” for the course.

Attendance and Class Participation

- You are expected to attend every class meeting on time and be prepared to participate in the work scheduled for that class. If you are absent more than 1 time, your final grade drops by one step (for example from an “A” to an “A-”), and it drops another step for each absence after that. No matter how good your excuse is for being absent, any unexcused absence counts, and you are always accountable for any work due, even on a day that you are absent from class. You must make a formal petition to the TA for any absence that you believe should reasonably be excused. A formal petition must include official USC or otherwise verifiable documentation of your reason for being absent. The TA must receive this petition within a week of your absence(s). No exceptions to this requirement will be made.
- Being on time means being *in* the classroom at the time the class is scheduled to begin.
- Good class participation involves contributing to the ongoing discussion of the class in an informed and responsible manner, being attentive to that conversation, and being respectful of the participants in it.

Email Policy and Course Updates

- Either I or the course TA will attempt to respond to your emails within a reasonable timeframe (24 hours). If you have questions regarding the course, assignments, or the syllabus, please direct those questions to the TA. Questions about course ideas and materials can be addressed to the professor.
- Please be mindful that last minute emails (especially those received on the day of class) will not necessarily be responded to. In the case of absence, it is your responsibility to notify the TA via email *and* bring acceptable documentation the following week. An email alone does not suffice in terms of receiving an excused absence.
- Please note that *all* assignments and due dates are both posted on Blackboard and available in the syllabus. We reserve the right to make changes/updates to the course as necessary, and students are responsible for being aware of these changes. All changes will be announced in class.

Note on Outside Research:

Any outside research or knowledge incorporated into paper assignments must be cited using a standard academic format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) and must be accompanied by a works cited. Failure to provide proper citations for any outside materials may result in an “F” for the assignment and possibly be investigated for plagiarism. Any research completed to fulfill an “outside research” requirement must come from legitimate academic sources. If you are unclear about what constitutes an academic source, consult your TA. WIKIPEDIA AND OTHER USER-GENERATED WEB CONTENT ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC SOURCES.

Academic Integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless an instructor allows otherwise, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus contains a Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions for violating this code are located in Appendix A, both can be found at <http://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty, students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for review. The review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Keep in mind that PLAGIARISM (WHETHER DONE INTENTIONALLY OR NOT) WILL BE REPORTED, WILL MOST LIKELY RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE COURSE, AND COULD LEAD TO DISMISSAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY. If you have any questions about academic integrity, plagiarism, or if you have any questions or doubts about how to properly cite a source, see your Teaching Assistant, drop by the Writing Center (Taper Hall 310), or consult the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards Guide: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf>.

Disability Services:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the lead TA as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 302 and is open from 8:30am—5:00pm, Monday to Friday, Tel. (213) 740-0776.

Course Exam, Project and Paper Retention Policy:

It is the responsibility of all students in Critical Studies courses to retrieve all papers, projects, assignments, and/or exams within one academic year of completion of a course. These records may be essential in resolving grade disputes and incompletes as well as assist in verifying that course requirements have been met. The Critical Studies Division will dispose of all records from the previous academic year in May of the current academic year. No exceptions. Please be in contact with your TAs about collecting these documents while you are taking the course.

***Syllabus subject to change as needed to improve the course.*

CTCS 412

Syllabus for Spring 2016

Week 1 | January 12th

Topic: Setting the (Independent) Stage

Read: Kelly Bulkeley, "Dreaming and the Cinema of David Lynch"

Watch: *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986)

Week 2 | January 19th

Topic: The Independent Turning Point

Read: Alisa Perren, "sex, lies, and marketing: Miramax and the Development of the Quality Indie Blockbuster"

Alice Templeton, "The Confessing Animal in *sex, lies, and videotape*"

Watch: *sex, lies, and videotape* (Steven Soderberg, 1989)

Week 3 | January 26th

Topic: The Infinite Text

Read: Robert Bayliss, "What Don Quixote Means (Today)"

Jose Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"

Watch: *After Hours* (Martin Scorsese, 1985) and *Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1991)

Week 4 | February 2nd

Topic: Foreign Features

Read: Vinay Swamy, "Politicizing the Sexual, Sexualizing the Political: The Crossing of Political and Sexual Orientations in Stephen Frears's and Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette*"

Watch: *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985)

Week 5 | February 9th

Topic: Revising Genres

Read: Jason Tougaw, "We're Still Vulnerable: Todd Haynes's *Safe* in 2011"

Watch: *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1994)

Week 6 | February 16th

Topic: Surviving Adolescence

Read: Alice Cross, "Surviving Adolescence with Dignity: An Interview with Todd Solonz"

Tizzy Asher, "Girls, Sexuality, and Popular Culture"

Watch: *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (Todd Solonz, 1995)

Week 7 | February 23rd

Topic: Going Global (Cinema)

Read: Shelly Kraicer, "Tracking the Elusive Wong Kar-wai"

Martha P. Nochimson, "Beautiful Resistance: The Early Films of Wong Kar-wai"

Watch: *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-wai, 1997)

Week 8 | March 1st

Mid-Term Exam • Narrative Analysis

Read: Edward Gallafent, "Tradition and Modernity in *Reservoir Dogs*"

Watch: *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1989)

Read: Jose Quiroga, *Law of Desire* (Excerpts)

Watch: *Law of Desire* (Pedro Almodovar, 1987)

Week 9 | March 8th

Topic: Race and Authorship

Read: Matt Richardson, "Our Stories Have Never Been Told: Preliminary Thoughts on Black Lesbian Cultural Production as Historiography in *The Watermelon Woman*"

Watch: *The Watermelon Woman* (Cheryl Dunye, 1996)

Spring Recess (No Class): March 14th – 20th

Week 10 | March 22nd

Topic: Feelings of Alienation and Desire

Read: Peter Harcourt, "Imaginary Images: An Examination of Atom Egoyan's Films"

Watch: *Exotica* (Atom Egoyan, 1994) and *Speaking Parts* (Atom Egoyan, 1989)

Week 11 | March 29th

Topic: Trauma and the Unconscious

Read: Tom O'Connor, "Trauma and Becoming-Art in Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* and Asia Argento's *The Heart Is Deceitful above All Things*"

Watch: *Mysterious Skin* (Greg Araki, 2005)

Week 12 | April 5th

Topic: Coming-of-Age: Social Lives, Social Stories

Read: Emily Cuming, "Private Lives, Social Housing: Female Coming-of-Age Stories on the British Council Estate"

Watch: *Fish Tank* (Andrea Arnold, 2009)

Week 13 | April 12th

Topic: The Future of Independent Cinema

Read: D.K. Holm, “The Future of Independent Cinema”

Mekado Murphy, “Sean Baker Talks *Tangerine*, and Making a Movie with an iPhone”

Watch: *Tangerine* (Sean S. Baker and Chris Bergoch, 2015)

Week 14 | April 19th

Presentations (Group I)

Week 15 | April 26th

Presentations (Group II)

Screening List

After Hours (Martin Scorsese, 1985)

Blue Velvet (David Lynch, 1986)

Exotica (Atom Egoyan, 1994) and/or *Speaking Parts* (1989)

Happy Together (Wong Kar-wai, 1997)

House of Yes (Mark Waters, 1997) and/or *Clockwatchers* (Jill Sprecher, 1997)

Fish Tank (Andrea Arnold, 2009)

Law of Desire (Pedro Almodovar, 1987)

Mysterious Skin (Gregg Araki, 2005)

My Beautiful Laundrette (Stephen Frears, 1985)

Reservoir Dogs (Quentin Tarantino, 1989)

sex, lies, and videotape (Steven Soderberg, 1989)

Slacker (Richard Linklater, 1991)

Tangerine (Sean S. Baker and Chris Bergoch, 2015)

Watermelon Woman (Cheryl Dunye, 1996)

Welcome to the Dollhouse (Todd Solonz, 1995)