First Year Seminar 172

CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA

Fall Term 2005

Tuesdays/Thursdays 1-3pm, Pettengill 329

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Most Americans have “seen” Africa only through non-African eyes, coming to “know” about African society through such characters as Tarzan and such genres as the “jungle melodrama” or the “nature show.” In this seminar, films from the North Atlantic are juxtaposed with ethnographic and art films made by Africans in order to examine how to “read” various cinematic texts. Related written texts help to answer central questions about the politics of representation: What are the differences in how African societies are depicted; why are particular issues and points of view privileged?

The special two-hour-twice-a-week meeting time has been arranged to facilitate in-depth seminar discussions, to allow for the interspersed screening of film clips, and, last but by no means least, to make possible various in-class exercises.

As with all First Year Seminars, FYS 172 is not only about helping you adjust to college life, it is foremost about building your critical thinking skills. Another major purpose of these seminars is to help new students write clear, concise—yet original—prose. To both of these ends, you have a constant stream of writing assignments of various stripes, including in-class exercises as well as take-home tasks. Every week you will be either writing or revising a short essay or a longer paper. Part of your revision process will involve peer-review, to be discussed in detail in coming weeks. Note that you will not pass this course if you miss ANY peer review sessions or neglect to hand in a minimum of two drafts for each of the assigned essays. You will find editing and revising skills essential for successful college writing.

Although the bulk of the “texts” for this course are the films themselves, you have regular reading assignments as well. Two books (Kawin’s How Movies Work and Pieterse’s White on Black) and one XanEdu card are available at the bookstore. You will find some optional background material on reserve. Since each seminar group is unique, this syllabus is subject to possible revision. I award extra credit for attendance at relevant events outside of class—inform me of your exploits via email descriptions.

15% = participation* (this is a seminar, hence participation is crucial to your learning process)
20% = first drafts of essays and papers (4 x 5% = 20%)
30% = final drafts of three shorter (2-3 page) essays (3 x 10% = 30%)
15% = final draft of your longer (5-8 page) research paper
10% = timely completion of all preliminary steps towards your research paper (details TBA)
10% = oral presentations (2x5%)

*high participation grades come with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent class participation, revealing thorough preparation and engagement. This means contributing your own ideas as well as providing constructive responses to others’ oral and written comments. B-level work means that your participation is of high quality, but not consistent, or you share your own ideas frequently, but may not pay much attention to others’ comments. You would receive C-level points if your participation were thoughtful but infrequent, or regular but perfunctory, yet still revealed a satisfactory level of preparation and competence when offered. Few points would accrue if your participation were rare and/or revealed poor or careless preparation.
CINEMATIC PORTRAITS OF AFRICA, SCREENING AND READING PROGRAM

F 9/2 Orientation and Introduction

Tu 9/6 “Reading” Film
Screening: clips from recent popular movies
Video: The Cutting Edge on reserve
Citizen Kane; Vertigo; Clockwork Orange are all optional
Reading: “Intersection of Gazes” handout to be summarized
How Movies Work, Part I, Chapter 1
White on Black, Part I, Chapters 1 & 2

Th 9/8 Wildlife, Wild Death
Writing: Bring in your summary; I will hand out topics for essay #1
Screening: clips from vintage popular movies
Video: Africa Speaks and Tarzan the Ape Man on reserve
Reading: How Movies Work Part I, Chapter 2
White on Black Part I, Chapters 4 & 7
“Lights…Camera…Africa” and “Heart of Darkness” XanEdu

Tu 9/13 European Representations, continued
Visitor: Rick Wile (Writing Workshop) “Understanding Assignments”
Writing: work on first essay
Video: watch Congo on reserve
Reading: How Movies Work Part I, Chapter 3 “The Narrative Film”;
All of Chapter 4; Part II, Chapter 2 “Composition”; Chapter 5
“Shot Relations” and “The Moving Camera.”

Th 9/15 Peer Review of Paper #1
Visitor: Joyce Seligman (Writing Workshop) “Peer Review”
Writing: preliminary draft of first essay due today (bring 4 copies)

Tu 9/20 Re-Thinking Colonial Practice
Writing: revise your draft of paper #1
Video: Chocolat and The Kitchen Toto on reserve
Reading: White on Black Part I, Chapter 5; Part III, Chapters 14 & 15
How Movies Work Part II, Chapter 6 & 7

Th 9/22 Acquiring a Voice: Introduction to African Feature Film
Writing: Final draft of Paper #1 is due today
Screening: Wend Kuuni (God’s Gift)
Reading: Arab and African Film Making read Part III, Chapter 9
and skim-read Part I, Chapters 1 & 2 (this is a handout)
Diawara’s “Oral Literature and African Film” XanEdu

Tu 9/27 Acquiring a Voice, continued
Writing: I will provide topics for second paper today
Video: Yeelen
Reading: Arab & African Film… handout, Part III, Chapters 10 & 11
Gentile’s “In the Midst of Secrets”; “May the Circle be Unbroken” and “Metaphors we Live By” and “Concept of Time” all in XanEdu

Th 9/29 Peer Review of Paper #2
Writing: preliminary draft of second essay due today (4 copies)
Tu 10/4  Filmmaking in Africa
Visitor:  Susan Pelletier (Writing Workshop) “Critical Reading”
Writing:  revise paper #2
Video:  Camp de Thiaroye and Piece d’Identite (I.D.) on reserve

Th 10/6  African Modernities: Movies and Popular Culture
Writing:  final draft of essay #2 due today
Screening:  clips TBA
Video:  Faat Kine and Thunderbolt
Reading:  explore the “Other Africas” website via XanEdu

Tu 10/11  Individual Consultations with Professor Eames
Writing:  we embark on research paper #3

YOUR TOPIC IS DUE TO PROFESSOR EAMES ON WEDNESDAY THE 12TH BY NOON

Th 10/13  Library Information Session with Laura Juraska at B I Lab in Ladd Library

Tu 10/18  Documentary Film—Introduction
Writing:  annotated bibliography due for paper #3
Screening:  Osun: Her Worship, Her Powers
Video:  Both Versions of Peck’s Lumumba
Reading:  How Movies Work Part I, Chapter 3 “The Nonfiction Film”

Enjoy your break!

Tu 10/25  Documentary Film: Technique and Voice
Writing:  working thesis statement and major points of your argument
Screening:  clips TBA
Video:  
Reading:  

Th 10/27  Individual Consultations with Professor Eames

Tu 11/1  Peer Review of Paper #3
Writing:  first draft of paper #3 is due today (4 copies) plus an after-the-fact outline and a paragraph about what will be needed to finalize your paper.

Th 11/3  Issues in Documentary Film Making—Technique and Voice
Writing:  revise paper #3
Screening:  Becoming a Woman in Okrika
Video:  Monday’s Girls on reserve
Tu 11/8  Review and Catch Up
   Writing: your final drafts of paper #3 are due today

Th 11/10 Documentary Films—Trinh’s Reassemblage
   Writing: I hand out topics for paper #4 today
   Video: Reassemblage on reserve
   Reading: “Outside In”, “Mechanical Eye” & “Trinh Observed” XanEdu.

Tu 11/15 Documentary in the “Global Village”
   Video: watch two of the following:
      Taxi to Timbuktu; Afro@digital; In and Out of Africa;
      Divine Carcasse, or T-Shirt Travels all on reserve

Th 11/17 Challenging Boundaries—Bye-Bye Africa
   Writing: work on paper #4
   Video: watch Bye-Bye Africa on reserve

Enjoy your Thanksgiving recess!

Tu 11/29 Peer Review Session, Paper #4
   Writing: bring four copies of your preliminary draft of paper #4 to class

Th 12/1 Conclusion/Review
   Writing: Final draft of paper #4 due today

Some Websites of Note:

The Bates Writing Workshop’s website: http://abacus.bates.edu/acad/acad_support/ww/
Colby/Bates/Bowdoin Plagiarism Resource website: http://leeds.bates.edu/cbb/