The focus of this course will be to analyze the ways in which ethnic identity is represented in American film since the early twentieth century, and to gauge the effects of those representations. Although this course focuses on the traditional interlocked representations of African-Americans and European-Americans in classic American films, we will also analyze the representation of other ethnic groups so that we may construct a narrative of race in American film, gleaned from a variety of perspectives.

The course is divided into three sections:

Part One, American History and the Original Interracial Family Romance, covers the antebellum and Reconstruction-era images of blacks and whites that provide the foundation for some of the most enduring stereotypes about race in American film.

Part Two, the American Interracial Romance, the Civil Rights Version, follows the earlier racial stereotypes through the civil rights-era films of the 1950s and 1960s and identifies new images.

Part Three, the Interracial Immigrant Romance, focuses on the images of non-white immigrants in American film and the relationship of these images to the earlier racial paradigm.

Course Outcomes:

Students will learn to distinguish between film representation and historical reality; will learn the relationship between film theory and film images; will learn how to analyze films as literary and historical narratives; will acquire specialized vocabulary to discuss and analyze film; will improve writing and critical thinking skills; will sharpen public speaking skills through an oral presentation to the class.

Course Requirements:

1) You shall be required to take four examinations. Exams One and Two together will comprise your midterm examination, and will cover Part One of the course. Exams Three and Four together will comprise your final examination, and will cover Parts Two and Three of the course. The exam format will consist of roughly six-to-seven questions requiring detailed and concise answers on a specific reading or film. The questions frequently involve comparative analysis of two or more items. Your
responses must be in full sentences and grammatically correct; points will be taken off for poor grammar. In the case of exceptionally poor grammar, you will receive no points at all. **If you miss any of the required exams without a documentable excuse you automatically fail the course.**

2) Each student shall give an oral presentation to the class on some aspect of the course materials, some of which may require outside research. The presentation **must** be written beforehand and uploaded to SafeAssign prior to presentation. (A sign-up sheet will be available the first and second days of class.) **If you miss your presentation without a documentable excuse you automatically fail the course.**

3) Each student is responsible for summarizing an assigned reading or scene from a film, whether or not s/he is called upon to do so. If you cannot summarize your assigned reading or scene when called upon or if you are not present to do so, **ten points will be deducted from your final grade average.**

4) From time to time, without notice, pop quizzes will be given on material recently covered. These will not take much longer than ten minutes of class time and will consist of, at most, one or two questions. A grade of A or B+ on each pop quiz will result in 2 extra points added to the student’s final grade; a grade of B will result in 1 extra point; a grade of C+ or C will result in no extra points. One point will be **deducted** from the student’s final score for a grade of D or F. Students who are absent for a pop quiz will automatically receive an F for it unless they have a documentable excuse for their absence.

5) Proper note-taking is a critical component in writing a good exam; therefore, we will periodically review our notes for the course and discuss ways in which to take better notes. Students will be asked at various points during the class to read out their notes on a preceding lecture. If you are absent for a class, you are still responsible for the notes on that class. Remember: The purpose of note-taking is not merely so that you can recall information, but, more importantly, so that you can recall key points of analysis on that information. Therefore, your notes may record not only my ideas, but also the conflicting opinions within the class on that subject. Typically I reserve the last five minutes of class time for note-taking.

6) Generally I offer an essay-format extra credit option at some point during the semester. If you wish to take advantage of the extra credit essay option you must notify me in advance. I post the essay questions on Blackboard; you must upload your essay to SafeAssign, the anti-plagiarism detection software.

**Grading Rubric and Policy**

I use an alternate grading system so that I have more latitude in issuing grades. Under this system, exams are marked on a scale of 100 points: under 40 is a Fail. 40-49 is a D. 50-59 is a C. 60 – 63 is a C+. 64 - 74 is a B. 75 to 79 is a B+. 80 and over is A. While on your exams and papers I will note whether a paper is an A+ (90 and above), or that your paper is in the B-/C+ territory, the grade that will be recorded is the one that corresponds to the actual percentage grade (for example, a 64 may be a B-, but on your final grade score I will record it as a B, etc.)

**Midterm Exam (combined): 40 percent of total grade**
Exam Three: 25 percent of total grade
Final Exam: 35 percent of total grade
Participation: Superior rating—3 points to final average. Average rating—no points.
Presentation: Superior rating—3 points to final average. Average rating—no points.
Pop quiz(zes): A or B+ average—2 points added to final average.

PLEASE NOTE: you may receive extra points for a superior presentation OR for superior participation, but not for both.

All exams and papers are evaluated in three key areas: content, grammar, and logic. Content is the most important of the three areas (a student may fail an exam or paper for lack of content, for example, even with good grammar and logic) but one cannot attain a grade of C or higher without at least marginally competent grammar and logic. To attain a grade of A an exam/quiz/essay must attain a superior rating in all three areas. In other words, it must rank as excellent on all three counts, free of grammatical mistakes, with a seamless logical flow from one idea to the next, and with some original interpretation.

B+ is given for an above-average analysis which shows some level of excellence in content and logic with very good or excellent grammar, but has some minor flaws in grammar and logic.

A grade of B is achieved by above average analysis in content with competent grammar and logic.

A grade of C+ is achieved if the analysis is better than average—more than half of what should be there—but with less than competent use of grammar and logic.

A grade of C is achieved if the analysis is middling—roughly half of what should be there—with less than competent use of grammar and logic.

A grade of D represents subpar content—if less than half of the necessary content is present. A grade of D may also represent excessively poor use of grammar and logic, to the point of near-incomprehension.

A grade of F is given if there is no content or almost none. An F is also achieved by extremely poor grammar—to the point of incomprehensibility—and lack of logic. Finally, an F can be given for a late or missed paper or missed exam.

Electronics Policy

Electronic media is a welcome tool to aid learning in the modern classroom. However, used irresponsibly it can also be detrimental to learning when students lose the ability to focus on lectures or distract other students with it. Use of electronic media is therefore a student privilege, not a right, and may be revoked by the instructor under certain conditions. During
class time certain electronic media—laptop computers and tablets, not cell phones—may be used only for the following purposes:

1) to read required course texts (E-books or texts posted on Blackboard)
2) to type notes on lectures and classroom discussions
3) for all in-class exams, provided the student has first downloaded Respondus

Electronic media may NOT be used to browse the internet, answer email, check social media, or for any use that is not directly related to the course. If any student is found to be in violation of the electronics policy—as witnessed by the instructor, the graduate assistant, or as reported by fellow classmates—that student will be banned from using any electronic media for the remainder of the course. If the student continues to use electronic media despite the ban, his or her final grade will be reduced a full letter grade at the conclusion. In extreme cases I reserve the right to ban the student from the classroom altogether. The student will be notified in writing if s/he has lost the privilege of using electronic media. Cell phones must be turned off during class time or set to “vibrate”.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, for which a student may receive a range of punishments, including failing the course, a permanent record on his or her final transcript, suspension or even expulsion from the University. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s definition of plagiarism by reviewing the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, here: [http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism](http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism).

Some plagiarism is unintentional. Therefore, for the purposes of this class no secondary sources should be used, either through direction quotation or substantial paraphrase, in any student presentation, exam or essay without prior permission of the instructor. If you have been given permission to use secondary sources in your submitted work, please follow the appropriate methods of attribution.

If I suspect any student of plagiarism I will bring it to his/her attention and report it to the administration. We faculty have a professional obligation to report all instances of plagiarism in our classes. Failure to do so promotes inequity among the student body, given that honest students have not had the advantage of using external sources in preparing their work.

Please read the attached Academic Integrity Policy, and sign and return the attached Rutgers Integrity Pledge.

Disability Services and Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your
campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. For more information please contact Kate Torres at (973)353-5375 or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting odsnewark@rutgers.edu.

Course Materials


Required Readings:


PART ONE: American History and the Original Interracial Family Romance

Wed. 01/18: Introduction. Sign up for presentations.

Mon. 01/23: Discussion of *Ethnic Notions*. Key words: antebellum South
Wed. 01/25: Discussion, selected scene screenings, of Birth of A Nation. Key words: Reconstruction, Ku Klux Klan

Mon. 01/30: Discussion, Birth Of A Nation cont’d. Read “100 Years Later, What’s the Legacy of ‘Birth of a Nation’?” Key Word: 15th Amendment

Wed. 02/01: Discussion, selected scenes screenings, of Gone With The Wind. Key words: Southern Belle, Mammy, Steel Magnolia

Mon. 02/06: Gone With The Wind cont’d. Read "Gone With The Wind and Hollywood's Racial Politics". Key words: white trash, darky, carpetbagger

Mon. 02/06: Discussion, select scene screening of Imitation of Life. Key words: Leading lady/man, segregation (Jim Crow).

Wed. 02/08: Read “The Melodramas of the Late 1950s.” Key words: melodrama, civil rights era.

Mon. 02/13: Comparative discussion of Imitation, Gone With the Wind.

Wed. 02/15: midterm exam review.

Mon. 02/20: MIDTERM EXAMINATION ON PART ONE

Wed. 02/22: MIDTERM EXAMINATION ON PART ONE CONT’D

PART TWO: The American Interracial Romance, The Civil Rights Version

Mon. 02/27: Discussion, select scene screening of Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?

Wed. 03/01: Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner, cont’d. Read “Caribbean All-Stars”. Key words: integration, assimilation.

Mon. 03/06: Discussion, select scene screening of The Help.

Wed. 03/08: The Help, cont’d. Read “An Open Statement to the Fans of The Help” and “Love, Money, and Other People’s Children”.

Mon. 03/13: SPRING BREAK

Wed. 03/15: SPRING BREAK

Mon. 03/20: Comparative discussion of Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? and The Help.

Wed. 03/22: exam 3 review/catch-up.
Mon. 03/27: **EXAM THREE.**

PART THREE: The Interracial/Inter-Ethnic Immigrant Romance

Wed. 03/29: Discussion, select scene screening of *West Side Story*. Key word: U.S. territory.

Mon. 04/03: *West Side Story* cont’d. Read "A Puerto Rican Reading of `America". Key word: blue collar ethnics.

Wed. 04/05: Discussion, select scene screening of *The Wedding Banquet*.


Wed. 04/12: Discussion, select scene screening of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.


Wed. 04/19: Comparative discussion of *West Side Story, The Wedding Banquet, and My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

Mon. 04/24: catch-up day.

Wed. 04/26: Individual meetings with Dr. Edmondson, 320 Conklin.

Mon. 05/01: final exam review.

**MONDAY MAY 8: FINAL EXAM 3-6 PM IN CLASS.**