

# NYU Los Angeles

## IDSEM-UG 9650 LA1,

### Film, Race & Representation

### Fall 2019

#### Instructor Information

- Dr. Rachel Raimist

#### Course Information

- IDSEM-UG 9650 LA1
- Film, Race & Representation
- Class meets: Thursdays, 3-6 PM at NYU-LA, 145 Fairfax Avenue, Suite 405

Course Description: This course examines filmic representations of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and ideology specifically in films about coming of age in Los Angeles. Our aim will be to understand dominant and subversive storytelling techniques in films that focus on racialized subjects, sexual identity and class privilege in the US. The goal is to illuminate how meanings of race are constructed and can be read through filmic aspects, such as narrative, style, aesthetics, and mise-en-scène. We will focus on contemporary films by African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American filmmakers paying particular attention to matters of film authorship, narrative and rhetorical strategy, and technologies of cinema. Our analysis will illuminate how operations of power function filmically to produce both conventional and transgressive gazes. Students will have the opportunity to visit script archives and film and TV archives to research filmmakers who emerged from the “LA Rebellion,” as well as consider how and why cinematic traditions have been birthed in Los Angeles.

#### Course Overview and Goals

This course will help develop critical and theoretical tools for the analysis of race, representation and the meaning of filmic texts, particularly centering cultural productions by filmmakers of color.

#### Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Articulate a history of race, representation and stereotypes in contemporary US films
- Demonstrate an understanding and proficiency in using film grammar and terminology and through the application of filmic language, critically analyze visual texts
- Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical frameworks for analysis of filmic texts
- Develop and pitch original film and television content using professional pitch materials

# Course Requirements

## Class Participation

Students are expected to come to class prepared with discussion questions, detailed notes on the required reading, examples of important scenes from screenings and image grabs that demonstrate the key concepts. Students will share their responses, develop critical questions and facilitate discussions of close reading, analysis of filmic texts and engaged critical inquiry.

## Assignment 1: Weekly Reading/Screening Reflection (Due each class)

In preparation for weekly class meetings, students will take detailed notes of the assigned readings, noting key passages, identifying key terms and concepts and passages that can be compared, contrasted and applied to close reading of filmic texts. This work will also include a visual journal of plot points, striking dialogue, character notes and visual materials such as screenshots, screengrabs, images notable moments of viewed media. This weekly work will both function of a track of the weekly concepts but also as research to help navigate the development an original film, web series or television show pitch (see assignments 3 & 4), that is reflective of the topics, areas of critique, concern and gaps in the current texts and narratives by filmmakers about underrepresented communities. *This research and note tracking may be shared as a google doc or a copy can be turned in each week at the end of our class period.*

## Assignment 2: Research Field Trip to the WGA Library (Due 11/14)

Visit the Writers Guild Foundation (WGA) Foundation Library to conduct research about the cultural productions of writers of color for film and television. While in the library ask the librarian for access to show bibles, development materials and scripts by writers such as Shonda Rimes, Lena Waithe, Mara Brock Akil, Kenya Barris and others. Consider how race is visible or invisible in the development materials and in the script. Is race written in or decided at the casting phase? How does this echo, contradict or complicate the ideas about casting, colorblind casting and the limitations of race as written in the scripts of feature films and the pitch materials such as show bibles and in the episodic scripts of television shows? Take detailed notes, perhaps compare to aired episodes, marketing materials or available resources. Synthesize your findings and prepare your research for a short, 10-minute presentation that will be delivered in class.

## Assignment 3: Original Feature Film/Web Series/TV Show Pitch (due 12/19)

Each student will develop an original feature film, web series or television show idea that helps to counter “mainstream” representations, adds a new narrative or representation to the marketplace or is a new take on an old idea. In a 15-minute scripted or unscripted pitch, a pitch deck needs to include: logline, synopsis, the background/world/setting, the main characters and desired casting choices, the aesthetics/look and explanation of why this show is needed.

## Assignment 4: Final Paper – The Praxis of the Pitch (due 12/20)

A paper of 5-6 pages explaining the context and framework for the original film, web series or television show pitch presented in class. This project and paper must be informed by semester-long original research on a topic, filmmaker or theme traced through work by particular filmmaker, an issue discussed in the course or a comparative analysis based on research and close reading. The paper must include at least three scholarly sources to support your theoretical or larger claims of what gap this narrative story fills, why this representation is needed or counters stereotypes or fills in industry gaps. This paper presents the research and analysis conducted and outlines the context and framework of your show pitch presentations.

## Assigned Readings

Readings are curated theoretical texts, industry study reports, articles and press links that are available in the weekly folders, posted in the course site on NYU Classes webpage.

## Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class Participation, Engagement & Discussion	20%
Assignment 1: Weekly Reflections / Class Prep	30%
Assignment 2: WGA Library Research Reflection	10%
Assignment 3: Film or TV Show Pitch Presentation	20%
Assignment 4: Final Paper (5-6 pages)	20%

## View Grades

Grades will be available in the gradebook on NYU Classes course website.

## Course Schedule

*Please note this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor!*

DATE	TOPIC	READING / SCREENING (due following week)	ASSIGNMENT DUE (due following week)
WEEK 1:	Introduction to the course:	Required Reading:	Visit NYU Classes for

DATE	TOPIC	READING / SCREENING (due following week)	ASSIGNMENT DUE (due following week)
9/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Modes of film analysis</li> <li>·Film Grammar</li> <li>·Visual Language</li> <li>·Theoretical frameworks</li> </ul> <p>Clip viewing in class to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· “two hander” / shot x shot</li> <li>·classical “Hollywood” style</li> <li>·auteur approaches to style</li> </ul> <p>Goal setting for the semester Creating and sharing google doc the purpose of tracking our work as research for our original TV pitches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Film Authorship Terms of Estrangement”</li> <li>-Racial Formations”</li> <li>-Almost All Aliens”</li> <li>-Historical Sociology of Race</li> </ul> <p>Suggested review: <i>Grammar of the Shot</i> (pdf)</p> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Through A Lens Darkly</i> (Streaming on NYU Kanopy)</p>	<p>pdf of reading and links</p> <p>Review AFI Top 100</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- note what you’ve seen</li> <li>- which have poc leads?</li> <li>- any directed by poc?</li> </ul> <p>Create Google Doc for notes shared with Dr. R.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Notes on the AFI 100 list</li> <li>- Discussion questions</li> <li>- Reading key quotes</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 2:</b> 9/12	<p><b>Topics of discussion:</b></p> <p>AFI 100: what makes a film great?</p> <p>Theoretical Frameworks and the the social constructions of race</p> <p>Hollywood history and racialized stereotypes on ideology</p> <p>Contestations of Authorship &amp; Auteur Theory of Filmmaking</p> <p>Discussion of <i>Through A Lens Darkly</i></p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Love &amp; Theft, Minstrelsy</li> <li>- Stereotyping and Signifying</li> <li>- Racializing the Other</li> <li>- Contesting Regime</li> <li>- In Our Glory, Photography</li> </ul> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Daughters of the Dust</i> (Dir: Julie Dash, 1991) (Streaming on Netflix)</p> <p>Reminder: add notes/images to your google document!</p>	<p>Visit the NYU Classes links: Learn about the LA Rebellion of the 1970s: Watch clips: Burnett(links)</p> <p>Suggested visits for archival research: UCLA Archive - see materials of LA Rebellion and/or Pickford Library Archive &amp; Academy Archive</p>
<b>WEEK 3:</b> 9/19	<p><b>Topics of discussion:</b></p> <p>LA Rebellion - why then? Connections of history &amp; cinema</p> <p>Key scenes/images of <i>Daughters</i></p> <p>Context for <i>Boyz N The Hood</i> Growing up LA screening:</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From Boyz To Men</li> <li>- Contemporary African American Cinema Ch 1,3,8</li> <li>- Casting call - <i>Straight Outta</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Boyz N The Hood</i> (Dir: John Singleton, 1991)</p>	<p>If time permits: watch another John Singleton film: <i>Baby Boy</i>, <i>Higher Learning...</i> or <i>Straight Outta Compton</i> (Dir: F Gary Gray, 2015) (Streaming on Netflix)</p>
<b>WEEK 4:</b> 9/26	<p><b>Topics of discussion:</b></p> <p>Representations/gender in the hood:</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women in Af-Am Cinema Intro, Chapters 1 &amp; 2</li> </ul>	<p>Note your favorite scenes Screenshot your favorite images/moments (doc)</p>

DATE	TOPIC	READING / SCREENING (due following week)	ASSIGNMENT DUE (due following week)
	<p>Masculinity, manhood and what happens to women characters</p> <p>Discussion of <i>Boyz N The Hood</i></p> <p>Dilemmas of casting call language</p>	<p>- Eating the Other - Oppositional Gaze</p> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Love and Basketball</i> (Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2000)</p>	<p>&amp; compare to readings</p> <p>If time permits: watch more GP-B: <i>Beyond the Lights</i> or <i>Shots Fired</i> (Amazon Prime &amp; Hulu)</p>
<p><b>WEEK 5:</b> 10/3</p>	<p><b>Topics of discussion:</b></p> <p>Discussion of work of GPB &amp; her film school rejection story</p> <p>Power and the gaze hooks' oppositional gaze theory</p> <p>Representation of gender, gender Noles and norms and key issues</p> <p>Context of Justin Lin and <i>BLT</i></p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <p>- New Hollywood Racelessness, Beltran - Emperor's New Clothes - Anneberg: Inequality in 1,100 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals</p> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Better Luck Tomorrow</i> (Dir: Justin Lin, 2002)</p>	<p>If time permits: watch another Justin Lin film: <i>Fast &amp; Furious</i> or <i>Star Trek</i> or paintball ep</p> <p>123 "Modern Warfare" of TV show <i>Community</i> directed by Justin Lin (Netflix, Amazon &amp; links)</p> <p>Don't forget to take notes In your google document!</p>
<p><b>WEEK 6:</b> 10/10</p>	<p><b>Topics of discussion:</b></p> <p>Raceless and Asian-American representation in Lin's work</p> <p>Beltran concepts of racelessness</p> <p>Context of Patricia Cardoso Josefina Lopez (writer) &amp; Casa 101</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <p>- Annenberg Latinos in Film - Link: Why Do Asian-Americans Remain Largely Unseen in Film and TV? - Mosquita Y Mari Study Guide and links</p> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Real Women Have Curves</i> (Dir: Patricia Cardoso, 2012)</p>	<p>If time permits, watch: <i>Mosquita y Mari</i> (Dir: Aurora Guerrero, 2012) (Kanopy &amp; Amazon)</p>
<p><b>WEEK 7:</b> 10/17</p>	<p><b>Topics of Discussion:</b></p> <p>What does the Annenberg data on representation tell us about race and values in Hollywood?</p> <p>The Bechdel Test &amp; The DuVernay test and how audiences intervene.</p> <p>Discussion of Asian-American Cinema and Latina Cinema and shifts in representational practices</p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p> <p>- Annenberg Report of Gender Short Film Barriers - Annenberg Inclusion in Directors Chair (2019) - Weblinks on Mu'min</p> <p><b>Required Screening:</b> <i>Gook</i> (Dir: Justin Chon, 2017) (Streaming on Netflix)</p>	<p><b>Required Screening:</b> Watch PBS web series: <i>We Gon' Be Alright</i> ep 2 (Linked in NYU classes)</p> <p><b>Prepare questions</b> for writer/director Mu'min - add ?s to google doc Linked in NYU classes</p>
<p><b>WEEK 8:</b></p>	<p><b>GUEST SPEAKER SESSION:</b></p>	<p><b>Required Reading:</b></p>	<p><b>Required Screening:</b></p>

DATE	TOPIC	READING / SCREENING (due following week)	ASSIGNMENT DUE (due following week)
10/24	Growing up LA screening: <i>Jinn</i> (Dir: Nijla Mu'min, 2018) & Discussion w/director Nijila Mumin (to be confirmed)	- Where Have all the Black Shows Gone - Television & Politics of Diff - Branding Blackness on US Cable Television	<i>Color Adjustment</i> (Dir: Marlon Riggs, 1991) (Streaming on Kanopy) & Plan your WGA research: Who/what to read?
<b>WEEK 9:</b> 10/31	<b>WGA Research Field Trip:</b> Close Readings of scripts & TV show bibles by writers of color	<b>Visit the WGA Library</b> Locate a script by a writer of color. Write analysis of script.  <b>Required Reading:</b> Horror Noire excerpt (pdf)  <b>Required Screening:</b> Short films of Xavier Burgin (linked in NYU classes)	<b>WGA Research Project</b> begins – due on 11/14 & <b>Prepare questions</b> for writer/director Burgin
<b>WEEK 10:</b> 11/7	<b>GUEST SPEAKER SESSION:</b> Screening: <i>Horror Noire</i> (2019) & Discussion w/director Xavier Burgin	<b>Required Reading:</b> - Color-blind casting book - Shonda Rimes Grey's bible	<b>Prepare presentation on findings at WGA library:</b> - who is archived - lessons frm show bible - notes from scripts - illuminations frm reading
<b>WEEK 11:</b> 11/14	Presentation of WGA research & Discussion of guest speakers	Review links of Annenberg study of film & representation - what is here? - what has been revisited? - where are the gaps?	<b>Prepare questions</b> for filmmaker Amy Adrion - add ?s in google doc
<b>WEEK 12:</b> 11/21	<b>GUEST SPEAKER SESSION:</b> Screening: <i>Half the Picture</i> & Discussion w/director Amy Adrion (to be confirmed)	[no reading assigned]	[no assignment]
<b>WEEK 13:</b> 11/28	Fall Holiday	[no reading assigned]	Watch Native American Films (pick film via links)
<b>WEEK 14:</b> 12/5	<b>Topics of Discussion &amp; clips of Small to Bigger screen stories:</b> <i>Awkward Black Girl</i> to <i>Insecure</i> (HBO) example, <i>Giants</i> web series to TV example, & work of Melina Matsoukas	<b>Required Reading:</b> <i>Master of None</i> script: "Thanksgiving" episode  & Links to articles: -Casting in <i>Queen</i> &	Prepare your pitch of an original film, web series or television show  Presentation of pitch

DATE	TOPIC	READING / SCREENING (due following week)	ASSIGNMENT DUE (due following week)
	Lecture on preparing TV pitches	<i>Slim</i> -Lena Waithe	decks - due on 12/19
<b>WEEK 15:</b> 12/12	<b>CLASS FIELD TRIP / SPECIAL SCREENING:</b> <i>Queen &amp; Slim</i> (Dir: Melina Matsoukas, 2019) *out of class at Grove or other venue	[no reading assigned]	Prepare pitch Presentation - due 12/19
<b>WEEK 16:</b> 12/19	Film & TV Pitch Presentations & Final Discussion	15-minute pitch: One-sheet & pitch deck	Final Paper is due 12/20 via email by 11:59p PST

## Course Materials

### Required Reading

- Pdf readings available for download in NYU classes course website
- Reading and viewing inks in NYU classes course website

### Required Screening Platforms

- Access to digital streaming platforms: Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu & others
- Kanopy streaming via NYU library – log in with your Net ID and password

### Resources

- Access your course materials: [NYU Classes](https://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- Databases, journal articles, and more: [Bobst Library](https://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- Assistance with strengthening your writing: [NYU Writing Center](https://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- Obtain 24/7 technology assistance: [IT Help Desk](https://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

## Classroom Etiquette

We are committed to providing an atmosphere of learning that is representative of a variety of perspectives. In this class, you will have the opportunity to express and experience cultural diversity as we focus on issues related to marginalized positions in society, including but not limited to race, class, gender and sexuality. We will be watching and discussing sometimes provocative material that deals with issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia. The films do not necessarily represent our beliefs or values, but are rather texts that we will be analyzing and discussing for larger meaning and social implications. We will have the opportunity to express and experience cultural diversity as we focus on sensitive issues in media texts that we analyze as well as produce as filmmakers. Respect in our classroom and in our discussions of highly sensitive material is key to an engaged and productive class. If you have sensitivities to particular imagery or are triggered by on-screen violence, please notify the instructor in

advance. There aren't necessarily alternate texts to view but accommodations may be made to avoid material that is triggering for an individual student.

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance and Tardiness**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsh penalties including failure.

### **Religious Observance**

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.

Students must notify their professor and the NYU Los Angeles Program Director in writing via email at least 7 days before being absent for this purpose.

### **Late Assignment**

Late assignments will only be accepted with a written doctor's note or proof of some extenuating circumstances. Deductions for late work is at the discretion of the instructor.

### **Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU LA. NYU LA policies are in accordance with New York University's plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and

including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU's various schools and colleges.

## **NOTE ON PLAGIARISM**

Since I consider plagiarism to be the most egregious and prevalent form of academic dishonesty, I carefully check *every* student paper/assignment for ideas/sentences/paragraphs that are copied from sources without proper attribution. Often students cut and paste such material from websites, which means I can find evidence of cheating fairly easily, but I will also go to the library to check books, articles, and encyclopedia entries in order to locate the original source. If I find that you have plagiarized, you will most likely fail the assignment and possibly fail the course. Don't risk your grade because you are feeling uninspired, lazy or overwhelmed.

## **Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity**

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, "...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities." At NYU LA we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavors.

## **Provisions to Students with Disabilities**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Instructor Bio: Rachel Raimist is a television director, producer, and scholar. She recently directed episodes of QUEEN SUGAR and GREENLEAF for the Oprah Winfrey Network. Her previous work includes numerous documentary and narrative films, music videos, and live event projects. Raimist spent 10 years as a professor of media production at the University of Alabama, where she developed an immersive summer program in LA and served as Co-Director of the UA Creative Campus. She is a member of the Crunk Feminist Collective as well as the Directors Guild of America, where she participates in the Women's Steering Committee and the Latino Steering Committee. Raimist holds a Ph.D. in Feminist Studies and an M.A. in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Minnesota, an M.F.A. in Film Directing from UCLA, and a B.A. in Film Production/Directing from UCLA. Contact Dr. Raimist at: [rachel.raimist@nyu.edu](mailto:rachel.raimist@nyu.edu) and @docraimist or visit [Rachel Makes Movies Webpage](#)