

Spring 1-15-2012

ENG 4904-001: Studies in Film Contemporary Cinema of North & South America, 1980-2011

Robin Murray
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2012



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Murray, Robin, "ENG 4904-001: Studies in Film Contemporary Cinema of North & South America, 1980-2011" (2012). *Spring 2012*.
111.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2012/111

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2012 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2012 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

4904-001

Spring 2012 English 4904, Studies in Film
Contemporary Cinema of North & South America-1980-2011

Instructor: Robin L. Murray
Email: rlmurray@ciu.edu
Phone: 581-6985 / 549-0199

Course Schedule: W, 4:30-6:30; R 3:30-6 (w/lab)
Office Hours: TWR, 1:30-3:30 and by appnt.
Wiki: <http://filmsofamericas.wikispaces.com/>

“Independent films are where you really get to cut your teeth and have some fun and do the things that mainstream Hollywood doesn't want to do.” (Anthony Anderson)

Course Description:

This course will explore contemporary independent documentary and fictional film of the Americas as both art and artifact. The course begins, then, from the premise that all film, especially independent film, is a product of its cultural, historical, and aesthetic contexts, including region, culture, movement, and history, as well as the director's vision and the film's genre. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with the development of contemporary film and film criticism in the Americas and will identify links between the industries of Canada, the United States, and Latin America. (Group 5)

Course Objectives:

Students will:

1. Evaluate films of the Americas as art form and cultural artifact
2. Analyze and synthesize theories of film form and visual style in relation to contemporary film
3. Identify and analyze contemporary film as both narrative and non-narrative in mode
4. Identify, critique and apply film theories and historical contexts to contemporary films
5. Write analytically and effectively about contemporary film of the Americas and related concepts

Course Texts:

Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art, An Introduction*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2010. Print.

Cinema of Canada. Hephaestus Books, 2011. Print.

Elena, Alberto and Lopez, Marina Diaz. *The Cinema of Latin America*. London: Wallflower Press, 2006.

King, Geoff. *Indiewood, USA: Where Hollywood Meets Independent Cinema*. London/New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009. Print.

Course Packet

Course Policies and Requirements: In order to succeed in this course, you must effectively complete each of the following:

1. Once a week you will complete an **entrance card** answering a question about the film(s) screened and/or text read for that class. More later.
2. You will also be expected to keep a **film log**, with notes on each film screened in class (you may use on your midterm and final). Make sure you read the material for each class. In-class writing and quizzes will occur sporadically, as well.
3. You will also write **two papers**, one due at midterm and one due by the final class session:
 - The first paper will give you the opportunity to expand one of your responses and critically analyze one of the films on the course calendar in 5-7 pages.
 - The second paper will allow you to look beyond films screened for class to examine a particular director and her/his cultural/historical context in 8-10 pages.
 - You will also provide a Wiki page for your director and at least two representative films.

Paper prompts will be provided.

4. In groups you will also give a 15-20 minute presentation in which you take a specific critical approach to a period of Latin American or Canadian filmmaking. You will be expected to hand in your presentation in written form along with all other materials used. A group presentation prompt will be provided.
5. You will take a **midterm exam** and **final exam**, which will allow you to synthesize information gained from the text books, films, and their cultural and historical contexts.

In addition to the above requirements, students enrolled in the course for graduate credit will extend one of their papers to approximately 15 pages. These students will be asked to submit a prospectus for the paper, as will all other students, but should also include a bibliography with their prospectus.

Note: No late work will be accepted unless I have approved extensions before the date the work is due.

Grades: Grades for this course will be determined as follows

- Entrance Cards 15%
- Paper 1 15%
- Paper 2 15%
- Wiki Page 05%
- Film Log 10%
- Group Presentation 15%
- Midterm 15%
- Final Exam 10%

Other Policies:

1. **Plagiarism Statement:** “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--`the inappropriate imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of `F’ for the course.”
2. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
3. Please also note that this course is Writing Intensive, so a paper completed for the course can be turned in to your electronic writing portfolio—some time during the actual course of the class.
4. Ambitious students can also seek help from the Writing Center. Call for an appointment (581-5920) or visit ((CH3110) at any point in the writing process, from brainstorming, planning and drafting, to final editing. Bring your assignment sheet and any written work and/or sources with you. The Writing Center is open Monday-Thursday, 9-3 and 6-9, and Friday from 9-1.
5. You must complete all major assignments to complete this course.
6. Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should provide each of their English department professors with the yellow form, “Application for English department Approval to Student Teach.” These are available on a rack outside the office of Dr. Donna Binns (CH 3851).

English 4904, Studies in Film Tentative Calendar

January

1980s Film, History, and Culture in the Americas

- 11/12 Introduction to the course. Film Form and Style review. Excerpts from Chapters 1-8, *Film Art*. U.S. Independent film of the 1980s: clips from *Stranger Than Paradise* (Jarmusch, 1984), *She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1986), and *Near Dark* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987)
Film Screening: *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980)
Assignment: Read chapter 12, *Film Art* and sections of *Cinema of Canada* for next week and prepare for entrance card (EC).
- 18/19 Film History overview (from U.S. to world and other Americas). Canadian Independent Films of the 1980s: clips from *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1983), *Strange Brew* (1983), (Denys Arcand, 1986), and *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* (Patricia Rozene, 1987) **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *Decline of the American Empire* (1987)
Assignment: Read introduction and one of the film chapters in *The Cinema of Latin America* and one of the packet reading from Bordwell and Thompson and prepare for EC.
- 25/26 Latin American Film History. Latin American films from the 1980s: clips from *Time For Revenge* (Adolfo Aristarain, 1981), *The Lion's Den* (Franciso J. Lombardi, 1988), *Plaff* (Cuba, Juan Carlos Tabio, 2988), and *(The Clandestine Nation* (Jorge Sanjines 1989) **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *The Official Story* (Luis Puenzo, 1985)
Assignment: Read introduction to *Indiewood, USA* and packet reading from *American Independent Film* for next week and prepare for EC.

February

1990s Film, History, and Culture in the Americas

- 1/ 2 U.S. Indiewood Films of the 1990s: clips from *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1991), *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), *Welcome to the Dollhouse* (Todd Solondz, 1996), *Eve's Bayou* (Kasi Lemmons, 1997) **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990)
Assignment: Read course packet articles on 1990s Canadian cinema for next week and prepare for entrance card.
- 8/9 Canadian Films of the 1990s: clips from *Pump up the Volume* (Allan Moyle, 1990), *Black Robe* (Sandy Wilson, 1991), *Crash* (1996, David Cronenberg), and *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, 1997)
Film Screening: *Fire* (Deepa Mehta, 1996) **Entrance Card.**
Assignment: Read "The Beginning and the End" and "Foreign Land" in *Cinema of Latin America* for next week and prepare for EC
- 15/16 Latin American Films of the 1990s: clips from *Like Water for Chocolate* (Mexico, Alfonso Arau, 1992), *Strawberry and Chocolate* (Cuba, Tomas Gutierrez and Carlos Tabio, 1993), *The Beginning and the End* (Mexico, Arturo Ripstein, 1993), and *Foreign Land* (Brazil, Walter Salles and Daniella Thomas, 1996)
Film Screening: *Cronos* (Guillermo del Toro, 1993) **Entrance Card.**
Assignment: Read chapter 11, *Film Art* and chapter 4, *Indiewood USA*. **Complete draft of paper I for next week.**
- 22/23 **Peer review and conferencing, Paper I.** Wrap up the 1990s. *American Beauty* (U.S., Sam Mendes, 1999), *Three Kings* (U.S., David O. Russell, 1999), Spike Lee, *Central Station* (Brazil, 1998), and *Red Violin* (Canada, Francois Girard, 1998). Midterm Overview.
Film Screening: *Four Little Girls* (Spike Lee, 1997)
Assignment: Revise Paper I and read chapter 1, *Indiewood USA* and course packet selections. Film Log due after midterm.

2000s Film, History, and Culture in the Americas

- 29/1 **Paper I due.** Introduction to 2000s film in the U.S. **Midterm. Film Log due after midterm.**
Film Screening: *Love and Basketball* (Gina Prince-Blythewood, 2000)
Assignment: Read sections from *Cinema of Canada* and selections from course packet for next week and prepare for EC.

March

- 7/8 Canadian Films of the 2000s: clips from *The Fast Runner* (Zacharias Kunuck, 2001), *Brand Upon the Brain!* (Guy Maddin, 2006), *Heaven on Earth* (Deepa Mehta, 2008), *Chloe* (Atom Egoyan, 2009), *Barney's Version* (Richard J. Lewis, 2010). Paper II assigned. **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *Away from Her* (Sarah Polley, 2006)
Assignment: Read chapters 23 and 24, *Cinema of Latin America* for next week
And prepare for EC.
- 12-16 (Spring Break)
- 21/22 Latin American Films of the 2000s: clips from *Amores Perros* (Mexico, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritta, 2000), *Live-In Maid* (Argentina, Jorge Gaggero, 2004), *Silent Light* (Mexico, Carlos Reygadas, 2007), *Lake Tahoe* (Mexico, Fernando Eimbvcke, 2008), and *The Maid* (Chile, Sebastian Silva, 2009). **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *The Swamp* (Argentina, Lucrecia Martel, 2001)
Assignment: Read chapter 2, *Indiewood, USA* and find and read an essay on one of next week's films and prepare for EC.
- 28/29 Themes in Film: Art and Artists in Contemporary Film: clips from *The Saddest Music in the World* (Canada, Guy Maddin, 2003), *Tony Manero* (Chile, Pablo Larrain, 2008), *Milk of Sorrow* (Peru, Claudia Llosa, 2009), *Funny People* (U.S. Judd Apatow, 2009), and *The Help* (U.S. Tate Taylor, 2011). **Entrance Card.**
Film Screening: *Everybody's Dying Here* (Mexico, Ali Gardoki, 2002)
Assignment: Read chapter 10, *Film Art* and chapter 3, *Indiewood, USA* for next week and prepare for EC.

April

- 4/5 Contemporary Documentary Film: clips from *Bus 174* (Brazil, Jose Padiha, 2002), *Grizzly Man* (U.S. Werner Herzog, 2005), *Anvil! The Story of Anvil* (Canada, Sacha Gervasi, 2008), *Waste Land* (Brazil, Lucy Walker, 2010), and *A Force of Nature* (U.S. Barbara Kopple, 2011) (Group I and II presentations)
Film Screening: *My Winnipeg* (Canada, Guy Maddin, 2007) **Entrance Card.**
Read chapter 3, *Indiewood, USA* and chapter 9, *Film Art* for next week and Prepare for EC.
- 11/12 Contemporary Genre Film: clips from *Brick* (U.S. Rian Johnson, 2005), *Cold Souls* (U.S., Sophie Barthes, 2009), *Incendies* (Canada, Denis Villeneuve, 2010), and *Meek's Cutoff* (U.S. Kelly Reichart, 2011) (Group III presentation) **Response due.**
Film Screening: *Paraguayan Hammock* (Paraguay, Paz Encina, 2006)
Assignment: Read chapter 5, *Indiewood, USA* and complete Paper II Draft.
- 18/19 **Paper II Draft due for peer review and conferences.** The Best of Contemporary Film of the Americas: clips from *Los Muertos* (Argentina, Lisandro Alonso, 2004), *You and Me and Everyone We Know* (U.S., Miranda July, 2005), *Ballast* (U.S., Lance Hammer, 2008), *The Headless Woman* (Argentina, Lucrecia Martel, 2008), *Sugar* (U.S., Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden, 2008), and *Hobo With a Shotgun* (Canada, Jason Eisener, 2011).
Film Screening: *All That She Wants* (Canada, Denis Cote, 2008)
Assignment: Complete Paper II and Wiki Page (Film Log)
- 25/26 **Paper II and Wiki Page due.** Present Wiki Pages. Final Exam Overview **Final Exam is W or R, 5:15-7:15 (Film Log due after final)**

Film Screenings: Wednesdays in Spring 2012

January 11, 2012: *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*. Dir. Connie Field. Clarity Films, 1980 (USA)

January 18, 2012: *The Decline of the American Empire*. Dir. Denys Arcand. Cineplex-Odeon, 1986. (Canada).

January 25, 2012: *The Official Story*. Dir. Luis Puenzo. Historias, Cinemania, 1985. (Argentina)

February 1, 2012: *Paris is Burning*. Dir. Jenny Livingston. Miramax, 1990. (USA)

February 8, 2012: *Fire*. Dir. Deepa Mehta. Trial by Fire Films, 1996. (Canada)

February 15, 2012: *Cronos*. Dir. Guillermo del Toro. CNCAIMC, 1993. (Mexico)

February 22, 2012: *4 Little Girls*. Dir. Spike Lee. Forty Acres and a Mule, 1997. (USA)

February 29, 2012: *Love and Basketball*. Dir. Gina Prince-Blythewood. Forty Acres and a Mule, 2000. (USA).

March 7, 2012: *Away from Her*. Dir. Sarah Polley. The Film Farm, 2006. (Canada)

March 21, 2012: *The Swamp*. Dir. Lucrecia Martel. 4k Films, 2001. (Argentina)

March 28, 2012: *Everybody's Dying Here*. Dir. Ali Gardoki. At my house productions, 2002. (Mexico).

April 4, 2012: *My Winnipeg*. Dir. Guy Maddin. Buffalo Gal Pictures, 2007. (Canada).

April 11, 2012: *Paraguayan Hammock*. Dir. Paz Encina. Black Forest Films, 2006 (Paraguay).

April 18, 2012: *All that She Wants*. Dir. Denis Cote. Nihilproductions, 2008. (Canada)

April 25, 2012: Film to be Announced (student choice).

