

Politics of Film (POL 475)

Spring 1999
 Chaminade Campus, Henry 221
 Tuesday 2:30-4:00pm
 pusateri@hawaii.edu

Instructor: Gina Pusateri
 956-8563 (w)

Our relationships, political alliances and social decisions rest, in part, upon the politics of otherness. That is, our assumptions about ourselves and about others are based on particular social and cultural narratives of which we may or may not be conscious. In this course we will examine the relative negotiability of "othering" and its relationship to "the gaze" as it works in the genre of feature as well as documentary film. Through a broad range of films, we will explore a multiplicity of constructs of otherness, paying special attention to such variables as gender, race, nationality, class and sexual orientation, among others. A list of required readings follows each of the films to be screened. These will equip us to dissect the films with an eye towards the political implications of the othering practices of the narrative and cinematic techniques employed by the director.

Course Requirements:

Required Text: E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking For the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze*. (Routledge: NY, 1997).

Papers: There will be two paper assignments of approximately 5 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. Paper topics will be announced in class.

Film Reviews: Two film reviews will be due by the end of the semester. You may review any of the films in our class, making an effort not to repeat the work you do in your papers. These are to be approximately 2 pages in length, typed, and proofread carefully.

Presentation: You will be responsible for presenting a reading of your choice. A sign-up sheet will be made available on the second day of class. Your assignment is to introduce and briefly summarize what you consider to be the main points of the reading. (About 10-15 minutes). You should raise some questions about the particular reading and begin a class discussion about it. You may be working with other students on this project, so be prepared to meet with them ahead of time and work out a plan.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will be taken daily. Your grade will be dependent in part upon the quality of your classroom discussion. Being well-prepared and having thought about the material prior to class, being a good listener, keeping an open mind and being respectful of other people's diverse ideas and beliefs are some aspects of good participation.

Grading:

- 25% Paper 1
- 35% Paper 2
- 10% Film Review 1
- 10% Film Review 2
- 20% Attendance and Participation

Syllabus

Boundary Crossers: The Politics of Bodies and Desires

- 1/12 view: *Chasing Amy*
 read: Kaplan, Preface and ch. 1: "Travel, Traveling Identities and the Look"
- 1/19 view: *The Crying Game*
 read: Kaplan, ch. 2: "Theories of Nation and Hollywood in the Contexts of Gender and Race"
 bell hooks, "Seduction and Betrayal: *The Crying Game* Meets *The Bodyguard*"

The Imperial Gaze: When Does the Subject become the Object?

- 1/26 view: *King Kong*
 read: Kaplan, ch. 3, "Hollywood, Science and Cinema: The Imperial and Male Gaze in Classic Film"
- 2/2 view: *On Cannibalism*
 read: Kaplan, ch. 4, "Darkness Within: Or, The Dark Continent of Film Noir"
- 2/9 view: *Man Bites Dog*
 read: Kaplan, ch. 5, "Travelling White Theorists: The Case of China"

Producing Race: The Brothers Lee

- 2/16 view: *Slaying the Dragon*
 read: Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text"
 recommended viewing: *Enter the Dragon*
- 2/23 view: *Clockers*
 read: bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" from *Black Looks: Race and Representation*
- view: Mississippi Masala
 read: Kaplan, ch. 6: "Can One Know the Other?": *The Ambivalence of Postcolonialism in Chocolat, Warrior Marks, and Mississippi Masala*
- 3/2 view: *Outbreak*
 Stuart Hall, *Race, the Floating Signifier*
 read: Paul de Man, "Semiotics and Rhetoric"

Conjure Women: The Gaze of Independent Women Directors

- 3/9 view: *Daughters of the Dust*
 read: Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?"

- 3/16 view: *Faces of Women*
read: Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, "Trinh T. Minh-Ha: 'An Empowering Notion of Difference'" from *Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora: Decolonizing the Gaze, Locating Subjectivity*

Spring Break

- 3/30 view: Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Reassemblage*
read: Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *The Moon Waxes Red*
Kaplan, ch. 7: "Speaking Nearby": Trinh T. Minh-Ha's *Reassemblage* and *Shoot for Contents*"
- 4/6 view: *Antonia's Line*
read: Kaplan, ch. 8: "'Healing Imperialized Eyes': Independent Women Filmmakers and the Look"
Edward Said, "The Text, The World, The Critic"
Susan Miller and Greg Rode, "The Movie You See, The Movie You Don't" from *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*
- 4/13 view: *Warrior Marks*
read: Kaplan, Ch. 9, "Body Politics: Menopause, Mastectomy and Cosmetic Surgery Films by Rainer, Tom and Onwurah"

Politics for the Future: The Other Becomes Us

- 4/20 view: *Bladerunner*
read: Kaplan, *Afterward*: "Reversing the Gaze, 'Yes: But is Racial Inter-subjective Looking Possible?'"
- 4/27 Course review; Final paper due