

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

HUM 3321

**Multicultural Film and
Twentieth Century Culture**

Sections 1 and 2

Fall 2001

THE STUDY GUIDE

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Welcome

Welcome to *HUM 3321*. In the film *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), Christof, the creator and overseer of the fictional television world that Truman inhabits, is asked a question by an interviewer: “Why do you feel that Truman’s never come close to discovering the true nature of his world?” Christof’s response is telling: “We accept the reality of the world with which we’re presented” (Niccol 79).

One of the main thrusts of this course (*Humanities 3321: Multicultural Dimensions of Film and Twentieth-Century Culture*) is to attempt to see past the world that we are presented to the structures that shape and inform that very view. Although hoping to see some sort of objective reality is certainly out of the question, we hope that by exploring the issues of this course we will at least have a glimpse of things we may not have considered before. Of course, this may require a questioning of things we have never before questioned. It may mean a destabilization of several categories we once thought secure, such as race, class, gender and sexuality. Traveling on paths for the first time can bring a bit of discomfort, but may also yield the greatest unforeseen vistas.

The course has been set up in three sections. The first section is called “Culture and Ideology in Film.” This is the “tool” section of the course that lays the groundwork for what will follow. We’ll talk about the difference between “reality” and the image. We’ll discuss stereotypes: what they are and how they function. We’ll learn some film history and see how the movies have constructed a spectator that is assumed to be white, male, and middle class. We’ll notice how film language creates an interaction between spectator and filmmaker. Section one ends with a discussion of ideology and its effects upon the subject.

Section two takes the tools we learned in section one and applies them to categories that have been constructed by ideology. Specifically, we’ll look at race, class, gender and sexuality—categories that ideology has presented as being essential, rigid, and unchangeable, when actually, we will notice their nature as being constructed, fluid, and always in flux. We will also examine how these categories are constructed in relation to genre, ranging from action/adventure films, noir, romance, comedy and horror, to name a few. We’ll see how it isn’t a matter of identifying “good images” and “bad images” in film, but more a matter of recognizing that film gives the subject the only categories he or she has to understand him or herself and the world, and then asks the subject to perform the mandatory scripts that go along with those categories.

Here are a few general observations regarding themes that are characteristic of several Hollywood genres. While the Hollywood love story leans towards issues of class, the horror film often deals with the problem of race, film noir pushes issues of femininity and sexuality, and the action/adventure film constructs a specific kind of masculinity, all of these issues are present in all of the films. In this section, we don’t have to separate these categories, but we can see how they interest with each other at the same time as they are being masked in ideology. We’ll end this section with an independent film, perhaps confronting the question of whether independent

film, perhaps confronting the question of whether independent film is truly a rupture from classical Hollywood cinema, or merely an exploration of its boundaries.

Part III of the course serves as a more specific test case, focusing on the horror genre and in specific, one continually changing staple of the horror genre: the story of Frankenstein's monster. By the tracing the evolution of this contemporary cinematic myth, the evolving Frankenstein narrative, we bring all the conceptual tools, themes and analyses of film form to examine what has been fictionally and historically constituted as "monstrous." The term "monstrous," has its roots in two words: "*monstrare*," meaning to "demonstrate" or "point to," and "*monere*," meaning to "warn" against. Thus, as we move from the icon-producing 1931 Whale rendition of *Frankenstein*, through the British Hammer renditions of the 60s to more contemporary versions, such as Branagh's 1994 *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, we ask the following questions: 1.) What is "monstrous" in relation to constructions of technology? (What is "natural" versus what is "artificial")? 2.) What is "monstrous" in relation to gender and sexuality? (What is normal "masculinity" versus monstrous "masculinity"? What is "normal" femininity vs. monstrous "femininity"? Are monsters hypermasculinized or hyperfeminized, or homosexual/lesbian/bisexual, or devoid of sexuality altogether?) 3.) What is "monstrous" in relation to race (How is the "foreigner" constructed in relation to the "normal" characters)? 4.) What is "monstrous" in relation to class? (Does class matter in determining who lives or dies in the Frankenstein narrative? Does class matter in determining who does the experimentation and who gets experimented on in Frankenstein films?) 5.) What do these evolving Frankenstein films tell us about the intersectionalities of gender, sexuality, race and class in relation to the historical construction of what is "monstrous"? 6.) Are there film techniques that signal the recognition of the "monstrous" in these films?

In the past, several Multicultural Film classes have been taught from an approach of dominant vs. other. For example, a film may be chosen to represent race simply because it happened to be made by a "Hispanic" director. Although this is helpful for expanding the film cannon, it isn't useful for examining how race has been ideologically constructed as a category. This course seeks to do the latter. It hopes to have us recognize some structures that function in culture as a way of sorting people, yet remain, primarily, invisible. Thus, this course is more than just a film class; it employs notions of cultural theory in an attempt to illuminate the system in which we live. At the conclusion of this course, it is our hope that you will be able to make the comment that we often hear from past students: "I now watch film in an entirely new way."

--David C. Simmons and Dr. Caroline (Kay) Picart

Consult the Web resources at least once a week throughout the semester. The URL for the course Web site is:

<http://english3.fsu.edu/~kpicart/humfilm>. You will also be required to check Blackboard once a week and post threaded conversations. The URL for the course Blackboard is: **<http://campus.fsu.edu>**.

Access the Help file on the course Web site for answers to your technical questions. If you can't find the answer there, post your question to the Technical Discussion Group in the Discussion area on the course Web site. A classmate or the technical support contact will answer your question or direct you to someone who can.

In addition to this study guide, your course resources include two textbooks:

Jason Grant McKahan, Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart, Gregory J. Thompson and Kathryn Field, *Multicultural Dimensions of Film: A Reader*. 7th Ed. NY: McGraw-Hill, 2001. ISBN: 0-07-251446-9

About This Study Guide

This study guide is a resource to be used throughout the semester. It contains a week-by-week synopsis of assignments and activities, and is to be used in conjunction with, but not in lieu of, your other course materials and resources. Consult this study guide before beginning assignments and activities, and preparing for exams. Some of the information on the course Web site appears in this guide, but **this guide should not be used as a substitute for logging on to the Web site as required.**

This study guide includes shortened versions of the weekly activities. Use them to gain an overview of the activities and to schedule your course work. (The full description of the weekly activity can be found only on the course Web site.) In addition, printed versions of weekly discussion questions, written assignments, and essay questions for tests are included in this study guide. These print versions are intended to provide you with handy access, but they should be checked against the (updated) versions on the course Web site.

Each course resource provides critical information on the course content and assignments that are not duplicated elsewhere.

This study guide is organized into weekly units corresponding to the semester course calendar. It also includes an Appendix that describes course resources in greater detail and contains the course syllabus. Each weekly unit consists of eight possible sections. The sections included for each week are described below.

Objectives

The objectives are the skills to be achieved through completing the course work for that week. Refer to this list before and after each of your study sessions, and check off each skill or objective after you have achieved it.

Aims

These questions should be used to focus your reading. As you read, find or develop an answer to each question, and consider your reading complete only when you have grasped a complete and accurate answer to each question. Do not begin any of the assignments for the week until you are confident in the substance of your answers.

Readings

Most of the reading assignments will come from the text, *Multicultural Dimensions of Film: A Reader* and *The Cinematic Rebirths of Frankenstein*. Additional readings for essays come from supplemental books. Refer to your course calendar on the course Web site for a complete list of reading assignments.

Lectures

There will be several weekly lectures, as there would be in a live, instructor-led course. The first lecture, "Introduction" will provide an overview of the unit. Subsequent lectures, will address more specific topics. Lecture notes are available at the course Web site. Refer to these notes when responding to

online discussion questions, completing weekly exercises, and preparing for the research paper.

Assignments

Required Screenings. Students must view each film by the day of the scheduled screening. They will be shown at the Student Life Theatre on Mondays at 5:30, 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted on the schedule. Alternatively, you may also view the movies in video format through the Student Government Movie Channel (Refer to the Blackboard shell accompanying this course. To do that, go to <http://campus.fsu.edu> and log into HUM 3321 sections 1 or 2, using your mailer or garnet accounts and passwords).

Along with viewing the assigned film each week, there are two types of assignments for this course: discussion questions and essay assignments. Your performance on these assignments will be graded. Individual assignments are based on the material covered in the week's readings. A complete copy of each weekly assignment can be found on the course Blackboard. More information about assignments is in the course syllabus, which can be found in the Appendix to this study guide, on the course Web site and on the BB shell.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments should be submitted electronically no later than midnight on Monday of the week in which the assignment is due. You are, however, encouraged to submit all assignments during the weekend prior to the due dates. *Late essay assignments lose one letter grade per day (or ten percent of the numerical grade).*

Threaded Conversations. Each week there will be a discussion question or topic posted on the HUM 3321 course Blackboard. You and your classmates will engage in a weekly online discussion that focuses on the question or topic. Active participation in the online discussions is an important part of the course; your participation in the weekly discussion will contribute 50% of your final grade.

The following is a suggested approach to these discussions:

- ◆ Log on to the HUM 3321 course Blackboard at <http://campus.fsu.edu> read the discussion question, choose **Discussion** from the navigation bar, or click **Group Discussion** on the course calendar. Look under **Class Discussion** to find the discussion question for the week.
- ◆ Develop a response to the question that integrates, or reflects on, the material covered in the current week's lectures and the current week's readings. Post your initial response by Monday midnight of the following week.
- ◆ Keep the discussion going by responding to your classmates' statements. Choose responses that are of most interest to you, and reply

to the points that were raised. Your post must consist of at least 200 words.

- ◆ Use good Web etiquette when engaging in the threaded discussion. Avoid using all capitals, which makes it appear that you are shouting. Refrain from “flaming,” which is expressing a strongly held opinion without tact or regard for others. Ask yourself whether you would be comfortable if someone else besides the intended receiver were to read it. Treat others with respect by making messages clear and succinct.

Essay Assignments: You will complete one research paper during the term. The paper will be approximately five to seven pages, double-spaced in length. Your paper will be based on two films seen in class in relation to at least two of the required and/or optional readings for each film. A draft of your paper will be due during the sixth week of class and will be worth 15 percent of your grade. The final version of your paper (with your first draft and revisions) will be due during the tenth week of class and will be worth 35 percent of your grade.

Part I

Culture and Ideology in Film

Part I: Culture and Ideology in Film

Week 1: Introduction and Overview

Key questions and theories regarding cultural constructions of race, class, gender and sexuality in popular Hollywood cinema are presented in Weeks 1 through 3 of this study guide. From weeks 4-10, Part II focuses on these categories in relation to various genres.

Lectures and readings this week will introduce you to the course and key concepts.

Objectives

After completing the activities for Week 1, you should be able to do the following:

- Navigate your way around both the course Web site and Blackboard.
- Access the lectures on the course Web site.
- Post your first threaded conversation onto Blackboard.

Aims

1. Begin to identify the relationship between movies and the society who constructs and views cinema.
2. Discuss how images conceptualize and shape our own categories and personal philosophies in perceiving the world.
3. Strive to understand such concepts as “stereotypes” and “moral codes” in relation to culture and political power.

Readings

Read Simmons, “Ideology and Multicultural Film”

Read Lippman, “Stereotypes,” “Codes and their Enemies”

Lectures

Read the online lecture:

Introduction

Activities

Your first assignment in the course will be learning how to navigate the course Web site and Blackboard. All assignments, grades and other information will be accessed through this system.

1. Ensure that your FSU e-mail account is working. If you do not have an e-mail account, register on the Web at <http://register.acns.fsu.edu/>
2. Complete the exercise by answering the questions below. To access the course Web site, go to <http://english4.fsu.edu/humfilm/> The Web site will feature the course syllabus, staff information, and other help tools. To access Blackboard, go to <http://campus.fsu.edu/> and sign

in using your FSU e-mail login name and password. Log onto course HUM 3321. Blackboard will be used to post your threaded conversations. This exercise is intended to help you become familiar with the course systems.

- ◆ How would you contact the course instructor by e-mail and by telephone?
- ◆ Where would you seek help for technical (e.g., Internet) problems that you might experience? (See the Help section or Online Support of Blackboard.)
- ◆ How would you locate and obtain FSU library resources either through the Internet or in person?
- ◆ How would you access lecture notes over the Web?
- ◆ How would you access and post to the HUM 3321 Blackboard Discussion Board?
- ◆ How would you access the Announcements section?
- ◆ How do you read what your fellow students have posted to the Discussion Board?
- ◆ How would you check your grades?
- ◆ What are Florida State University's Honor Code Policies? (See "Honor Code Policies" section of course Web site.)
- ◆ On the course Web site, what database is listed under the Resources section?

Assignments

Threaded conversations (posted to the Discussion Board) will be due every Monday at 12 a.m. Due to Labor Day, the first conversation must be posted by Tuesday, September 4, 2001.

Lectures and readings this week will focus on Film Language/Technique in *Citizen Kane* and *Shadow of a Doubt*.

Objectives

After completing the activities for Week 2, you should be able to do the following:

- ◆ Understand the various concepts of film language.

Aims

1. Identify the dominance of Hollywood cinema in relation to other world cinemas.
2. Explore the film language of Hollywood cinema in *Citizen Kane*, drawing relationships between form and content.

Readings

Read Belton, “Classical Hollywood Style”

Read Bordwell, Thompson, “Style in *Citizen Kane*”

Read the online lecture:

Lectures

Film Language/Technique

Assignments

Threaded Discussions due Monday night by 12:00AM

Assigned Film: *Citizen Kane*

Week 3: Ideology

Lectures and readings this week will focus on ideology in *The Truman Show* and *Matrix*.

Objectives

After completing the activities for Week 3, you should be able to do the following:

- ◆ Understand Marx's and Althusser's concepts and their application to the film.

Aims

1. Identify cinema as a state institution that interpellates spectators as subjects.
2. Identify key terms related to ideology.

Readings

Read Austin, "Marxist Criticism"

Read Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Read Kavanaugh (optional)

Lectures

Read the online lecture:

"Yes, Virginia, You Can Be A Marxist," Or "The Moose Meets His Doom in the Althusserian Squirrel's Nest"

Assignments

Threaded Discussions due Monday night by 12:00AM

Assigned Film: *The Truman Show*

Part II: Intersectionalities and Various Approaches to Film Criticism

Week 4: Ideology and Race

This section deals with a study of film genres and the ideologies of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Lectures and readings this week will focus on ideology and race in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *Imitation of Life*.

Objectives

After completing the activities for Week 4, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the concepts of race and racism.
- Be aware of classical Hollywood cinema's often invisible or 'natural' depictions of race.

Aims

1. To be able to look critically at the issues of racism and how they are constructed in our own culture through representation.
2. To understand the racial formation and race in relation to both macro and micro structures.
3. To demonstrate how Hollywood cinema is centered around "whiteness"

Readings

Read Omi and Winant, "Racial Formation"
Read McIntosh, Peggy, "White Privilege"
Read Dyer, *White*, Chapter VI (optional)
Read Snead, "Spectatorship . . ." (optional)
Read Hooks, "Oppositional Gaze" (optional)

Lectures

Read the online lecture:

Racial Formation

Assignments

Threaded Discussions due Monday night by 12:00AM

Assigned Film: *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*

Week 5: Psychoanalysis and Gender

Lectures and readings this week will focus on psychoanalysis and gender in *Marnie* and *Psycho*.

Objectives

After completing the activities for Week 5, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the concepts of Freud and Lacan in Houston's article as well as the concepts in Mulvey's article.

Aims

1. Apply theories of ideology to gender theory to show how cinema interpellates spectators as gendered subjects.
2. Observe the two sources of visual pleasure in cinema according to Mulvey.
3. Critique the racial and heterosexual assumptions in gaze theory

Readings

Read Houston, "Psychoanalytic Criticism"
Read Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Read Freud, "On Fetishism" (optional)
Read Merck, "Psychoanalysis and Subjectivity" (optional)
Read McKahan, "Rethinking the Gaze" (optional)

Lectures

Read the online lecture:
Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' and *Vertigo*

Assignments

Threaded Discussions due Monday night by 12:00AM

Assigned Film: *Marnie*
