Occidental College ARTH 250
American Indians in Film
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05 AM to 11:30 AM
Booth 204
Fall 2014

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Course Description: This course critically examines the portrayal of American Indians in film, including art films, cinema, documentaries and works by Native filmmakers. Topics addressed include: auto ethnographic film, the short, reflexivity, the portrayal of Native women, the urban experience, indigenous aesthetics, contemporary storytelling, silence, parody, re-appropriation and conventional representations (also known as stereotypes). You will be introduced to Native filmmakers Arlene Bowman, Chris Eyre, Georgina Lightning, Patty Loew, Shelley Niro and the Inuit film company Isuma Productions. Case studies include: the Navajo Nation (Diné), American Indian veterans, the boarding school experience and the emerging Native film industry. The construction of conventional American Indian representations will be critically analyzed and alternative-imaging strategies explored.

Learning Outcomes: Students will learn to identify select visual referents, tools and materials specific to Native North American contexts, while also acquiring an appreciation of tribal diversity, sovereignty and contemporaneous identity. Critical thinking, visual literacy, and creative use of multidisciplinary sources will be enhanced through course writing exercises via the web (Class Forum), original research (Research Paper) and reflective Film Review Response Papers. The course will strengthen student skills in writing, speaking and reading critically and effectively in peer group and independent projects.

Teaching Philosophy and Strategies: I strive to create a participatory learning setting in which students model for their peers a spirit of intellectual inquiry and where current knowledge is constantly examined and expanded,
based on new knowledge. Active learning is sought, meaning honest self-reflection, questioning and real-world application grounded in careful reading and examination of the required texts, web references and films.

Please note that the course addresses painful and sensitive issues of racism, sexism and genocide. In order for the course to be successful, students will be expected to exercise a high degree of intellectual and emotional maturity, respect for others and tolerance for diverse opinions. Civil discourse skills are required.

Students wishing to explore more fully the issues of cultural competency and building inclusive environments may find resources with Occidental’s Office of Intercultural Affairs. Contact: http://www.oxy.edu/intercultural-affairs, phone (323) 259-2522, location 1501 Campus Road.

Students seeking support for processing painful issues raised may call, email or visit the Emmons Student Wellness Center (323) 259-2657, oxywell@oxy.edu. A 24/7 hotline is available for students to gain immediate counseling and resources – (323) 341-4141.

Assessment: Three Class Forums (5% each or 15%) Three Film Review Papers (15% each or 45%); Midterm (15%), Final Research Paper (20% final submission, 5% proposal or 25%). Guidelines for all assignments are available online. There is no final exam for this course.

Each student will be expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions. Two or more absences will be grounds for subtracting points from your overall average. As a rule, I do not accept late work. In the rare and extenuating instance in which I may accept late work, the paper will be marked down accordingly. Extra credit is not offered.

Course resources: All course readings and materials are available on the Moodle homepage. Access to viewing the films required for this course is made available for streaming via the Occidental Moodle page. The link for all films not available freely on the web is here: http://mediasite.oxy.edu:80/Video/Catalog/catalogs/arth250.
If students wish to watch the films as a group outside of class, they may self-organize this screening by checking the film out at the library and acquiring a viewing room. Please note that some films in your syllabus (especially the shorts) are available on the web.

All streaming problems should be reported to helpdesk@oxy.edu.

Access to RESERVES is restricted to students in this course. Students may not copy, share, distribute or otherwise allow or facilitate any unauthorized access to the content or the passwords issued. Individuals who violate this provision will be subject to disciplinary action under the Occidental Academic Misconduct guidelines.

Research Paper Style: I am not wedded to any specific style guideline (Chicago, MLA or APA) as long as students are consistent in their usage. Style guidelines may be accessed here: 

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.htm
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/

Film Review Response papers do not require a formal bibliography, although you should indicate the author’s name and title of work referenced. Final research papers do require citations of sources and a bibliography.

Academic Ethics: Please review Occidental College’s Statement on Academic Ethics found in the Student Handbook and here: https://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-ethics. RE: “Academic misconduct occurs when a student misrepresents others' work as her/his own or otherwise behaves so as to unfairly advantage her/himself or another student academically.”

Digital Etiquette: My classroom laptop and electronic device usage policy is that technology is OK as long as you are actively engaged with the course materials and do not distract your fellow classmates. I reserve the right to ban electronics if classroom respect is jeopardized by over-usage or abuse of laptop privileges.
While I do not prohibit laptop or iPad use in the classroom, I expect that when I am lecturing, presenting a PowerPoint or using a film clip, that students are engaged with me and each other in this exercise, not surfing the web, texting or communicating on Facebook. I may often ask that students turn off or put away their electronics when we are engaging together in group discussions.

Classroom time is an occasion to think together about a particular problem or text. Because we need to be able to engage with each other, it matters how you treat other people and how you focus.

I am aware that students with differently-abled learning styles may have accommodations that require the use of a laptop, tape-recorder, or other technological tool for note taking. These students must also, however, follow the guidelines set above for respectful use of their computer.

**Electronic communication policy:** Although I typically respond to student emails within a 24 hour period, students shouldn’t expect to get a response from an email query for 48 hours. This standard response time is only operable during the weekdays and before 9 PM. If you have an emergency that needs immediate attention, label the subject line - emergency issue.

Emails should open with a salutation (Nancy, Professor Mithlo) and the body of the message should convey the student’s full name and class title. To make email communication more productive, I encourage you to be specific about your inquiry or request and to keep the communication thread brief. I encourage students to take advantage of office hours for longer communication needs. Because my classes may be scheduled back to back, I am not always available for one on one in person communication directly before or after class.

**Student Services:** Students who are differently abled have certain rights and responsibilities, as do their professors. Please review the college’s guidelines here: https://www.oxy.edu/disability-services/rights-responsibilities/students.

If you are eligible for services or have questions, please contact the Accessibility office on campus, phone: (323)
Students who are requesting accommodations should present me with their documentation of need within the first two weeks of class.

The Center for Academic Excellence offers faculty writing specialists and student writing advisors. Please visit their website here: [https://www.oxy.edu/center-academic-excellence/three-guidelines-10-tips](https://www.oxy.edu/center-academic-excellence/three-guidelines-10-tips). Phone: (323) 259-2545, Location: Academic Commons, Ground Floor.

**Technical Questions?**
Contact the Information Technology Help desk: helpdesk@oxy.edu, or call 323-259-2880.

**Web resources:**
- Agua Caliente Native Film Festival: [http://www.accmuseum.org/2014-Native-FilmFest](http://www.accmuseum.org/2014-Native-FilmFest)
- American Indian Film Institute: [http://www.aifisf.com/](http://www.aifisf.com/)
- ImagineNative Film + Media Arts Festival: [http://www.imaginenative.org](http://www.imaginenative.org)
- National Museum of the American Indian Film and Media: [http://nmai.si.edu/explore/film-media/](http://nmai.si.edu/explore/film-media/)
- Sundance Film Festival Native Forum: [http://www.sundance.org/programs/native-film](http://www.sundance.org/programs/native-film)
- Vtape: [http://www.vtape.org/research-centre](http://www.vtape.org/research-centre)
- Native America Calling: [http://www.nativeamericacalling.com/](http://www.nativeamericacalling.com/)
- Indian Country Today: [indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com](http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com)
**Course schedule:** This course is organized into seven two-week learning modules. Each learning module contains an introduction to the learning focus of the module, reading assignments, links to online learning activities, assignment directions and due dates.

The first week of each learning module is time for you to watch the films, read, prepare for online activities, and work on assignments. The second week of each learning module will usually be the time when we interact through in class discussion, interactive activities, short writing assignments and critical cumulative assessment.

**Module #1: August 28, September 2, 4: What is Indigenous Cinema?**

First day of class August 28th: *The Embargo Collective* (2009)  
http://www.imaginenative.org/program.php?id=59

**Class Forum #1 online discussion due September 7th by midnight**  
Review and respond to two shorts. Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.


2) Each student selects one film from this selection of 28 emerging filmmakers: *Reel Native*  
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/reel_native

Read more at:  
Tanya Tagaq  
http://www.isuma.tv/tagaq

Reel Native  
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/native_now/

- **Required reading:**

*Singer, Beverly.* “Thinking Indian Thoughts,” in *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), vii-13.
Public Agenda. Walking a Mile: A First Step Toward Mutual Understanding: A Qualitative Study Exploring How Indians and Non-Indians Think About Each Other

Native American Stereotypes

Myth of the Noble Savage

Smithsonian Institution. Erasing Native American Stereotypes
http://anthropology.si.edu/outreach/Indbibl/sterotyp.html

• Recommended reading:


National Indian Education Association. “Indians 101” Basic Facts about American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Education

The Authentic History Center. Native Americans & American Popular Culture
http://www.authentichistory.com/diversity/native/

Module #2: September 9, 11, 16, 18: The Art of the Short

• Class Forum #2 due September 21st by midnight
  Review and respond – Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.

Tree. Shelley Niro (2006)


- **Web resources:**

  Keep America Beautiful:  
  [https://secure2.convio.net/kab/site/SPageServer;jsessionid=0713BAC209FEB1B264F5BAC7373DFCD0.app272a?pageName=kabmedia_psa](https://secure2.convio.net/kab/site/SPageServer;jsessionid=0713BAC209FEB1B264F5BAC7373DFCD0.app272a?pageName=kabmedia_psa)

  Dave Chappelle:  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kJzFjemVg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kJzFjemVg)

  Iron Eyes Cody:  

  Shelley Niro  
  [http://archive.is/53mh](http://archive.is/53mh)

  [http://www.britesites.com/native_artist_interviews/sniro.htm](http://www.britesites.com/native_artist_interviews/sniro.htm)

  Suite: Indian  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRcrTAZSzos](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRcrTAZSzos)

  Kissed by Lightning  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhOWdqNmLtww](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhOWdqNmLtww)

  The Shirt:  

  National Museum of the American Indian Film and Video Center  
  [http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/reservation_x/eXtras/media/feverB.htm](http://nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/reservation_x/eXtras/media/feverB.htm)

- **Required readings:**


• Recommended Reading:


Module #3: September 23, 25, October 7, 9: Indian Princess – Gender Politics

• Class Forum #3 due October 12th by midnight Review and respond – Discussion guidelines provided in Moodle online under Forum.


• Required readings:


Sardar, Ziauddin. “Walt Disney and the Double Victimization of Pocahontas,” In The Third Text Reader:

The American Indian Experience: How has the marked increase in violence against Native American women on reservations affected clan/family/social structure and traditions? Read the Enduring Question and also the three responses to the right.


Native American Representations

Indian Women as Sex Objects
http://www.bluecorncomics.com/princess.htm

Disney Pocahontas
http://princess.disney.com/pocahontas

Disney's Pocahontas film 1995
http://0-americanindian2.abc-clio.com.oasys.lib.oxy.edu/Search/Display/1520051?terms=Disney%27s+Pocahontas%3a


• Recommended reading:


NO CLASS OCTOBER 13 – FALL BREAK

Module #4 October 16, 21, 23 Auto Ethnographic Film

* Midterm in class October 16

* Film Review Paper #1 by October 26th midnight

• Film: Navajo Talking Picture. Arlene Bowman (1986)

• Required readings:

  Jackson, Deborah Davis. “’This Hole in Our Heart’: The Urban-Raised Generation and the Legacy of Silence.” American Indians and the Urban Experience, eds. Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters, 189-206. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2001).


The Navajo Nation Government
http://www.navajo-nsn.gov/history.htm

The American Indian Experience, Indian Relocation:

• Recommended reading:

Indian Child Welfare:
https://www.aclu.org/blog/racial-justice/why-are-these-indian-children-being-torn-away-their-homes

**Module #5: October 28, 30, November 4, 6 The Documentary**

* Research Paper Proposal due November 4

* Film Review Paper #2 due November 9th midnight

  - Film: *Way of the Warrior.* Patty Loew (2007)

  - Required readings:

    **Fischer, Joan.** “Interview, Way of the Warrior,” *Wisconsin People & Ideas,* Fall 2007, pp.37 – 42. See producer interview, web access:
    http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/WoW%20Extras/WPI_fall07_Warrior.pdf

    http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/

    Way of the Warrior discussion questions
    http://www.wpt2.org/wayofthewarrior/discussion.cfm

  - Recommended reading:


**Module #6: November 11, 13, 18, 20 The Boarding School Experience**

* Film Review Paper #3 due November 23rd midnight

Individual meetings with professor on Research Paper
• **Film:**  *Older Than America*. Georgina Lightning (2008)

• **Required readings:**


  *Older Than America* web resource
  www.olderthanamerica.com

  Older Than America Film 2008

  Tantoo Cardinal
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5xLZX2JR1k&feature=related

  Georgina Lightning
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Roz0QcApSwo&feature=related

  Wes Studi

  American Indian Boarding Schools
Interview With Native educator Tsianina Lomawaima
http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/today7.html

• Recommended reading/viewing:


We Were Children Tim Wolochatiuk (2012) National Film Board of Canada: http://tinyurl.com/k4rd9gj


Module #7: November 25, December 2, Storytelling: Indigenous Cinema in the North

* Final Research Paper due December 3rd midnight


• Required readings:


Isuma Productions http://www.isuma.tv/isuma-productions/

http://www.isuma.tv/atanarjuat

Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)


• Recommended Reading:


There is no final exam for this course.