

ENGL 4950/5950: American Film and the South

Fall 2018

M, 5:00pm-7:45pm

Arts & Sciences 368

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Office Hours: M 11am-1pm, T 12:30-1:30 pm, W 11am-1pm, and by appointment

Course Description

The South's place in American film history is in the midst of significant change due to a proliferation of film and TV production across the nation and in the region. This place has been shaped on the one hand by popular narrative cinema, in films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Deliverance* (1972), and, on the other hand, by widely-circulated documentary images of southern poverty and racism. As we look back toward the past and ahead to the future, moving images of South shed important light on the imaginary iterations of national identity played on moving image screens. This course will introduce students to key films that depict the American South by focusing on their cultural contexts and visual politics. We will consider a range of fiction and nonfiction, studio and independent productions, as well TV and online content. During the course, we will analyze the central themes and ideological issues that arise in these films and media as well as the major genres and aesthetics that are used, or not used.

Throughout, we will read scholarship that has addressed how the South has been represented in Hollywood, popular culture, and marginal and subcultural contexts. As the class progresses, we will also formulate key critical questions about how and why the South has been represented on screen in the U.S. by being attentive to the politics and social movements that have characterized the region and its place within the nation.

Required Texts

(available at GCSU Bookstore, Amazon, and elsewhere)

Karen Gocsik, Richard Barsam, Dave Monahan. *Writing About Movies*, 4th edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016. ISBN: 978-0393265231

Tara McPherson. *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0822330400

(due for release Oct 15) Meredith McCarroll, *Unwhite: Appalachia, Race, and Film*. Athens: UGA Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0820353623

Susan Courtney. *Split Screen Nation: Moving Images of the American West and South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0190459970

Selected texts, available in .pdf format on GeorgiaVIEW

Course Outcomes

American Film and the South will prepare students:

- To demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories, and methodologies used in film and media studies
- To analyze visual components of film and media in relation to historical, economic, and cultural contexts (including but not limited to factors such as: production value; exhibition or distribution market; genre; political ideology; social identity; nationality and regionalism)
- To consider the significance of the South as a representational space within American creative traditions, written and visual
- To interpret film, media, and related texts from various perspectives and to present insights about them orally and in writing
- To understand and assess the major scholarly conversations surrounding American film and the South
- To conduct advanced academic research and writing that synthesizes course material

Assignments

Participation (100 pts)

Participation will be graded based on the student's preparation for class, demeanor during class, and attendance record. I will give quizzes that count toward participation if it becomes apparent students are not completing assigned readings or watching assigned films.

Informal Close Readings (250 pts)

Two informal papers of 2-3 pages that closely analyze visual details in one of the films featured in class and relate them to at least one of the course readings.

Proposal (200 pts)

A 1-2 page essay that proposes your topic, methods, and argument for the Conference Paper & Presentation due at the end of the course. The proposal should overview the films or set of films that you will analyze and situate them in an appropriate context. You must also include a research question or tentative thesis and your plan for how you will conduct your analysis in a way that supports your question/thesis. Also required is a bibliography of at least 5 scholarly sources (no more than 3 sources from class).

Book Review (150 pts)

1.5-2 page formal review of a book (from the class or an outside source related to the course topic and/or your Proposal and Conference Paper).

Conference Paper & Presentation (250 pts)

A 9-10 page essay that closely analyzes a film or set of films and makes an argument about how they relate to or comment on any aspect of the American South. You must cite at least 4 sources in the body of your paper. You will present this paper to your peers as the conclusion of the course.

Draft and Peer Review (50 pts)

Students are required to submit preliminary version of the Conference Paper. In addition, students must review and provide feedback on the draft of a peer.

Grading Scale

Final grades will be evaluated on a 1000-point scale:

A	930-1000
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	630-669
D-	600-629
E	0-599

Course Policies

Class Preparation and Participation

I expect students to participate actively in our discussion and activities during each class period, which means you need to arrive prepared and on time. You will be expected to silence your cell phones and to keep them in your bag during class unless I prompt you to use them. Laptops and tablets are permitted for accessing class materials and note taking. If using a laptop or tablet, I expect you to remain attentive and engaged in class lecture and discussion. Inappropriate use of a laptop or any other device will affect your participation grade and may result in dismissal from class.

Georgia View

Students will use GeorgiaView to check the syllabus and course schedule, to view assignment sheets and rubrics, and to submit assignments. For written assignments, please upload a Microsoft Word document (.doc, .docx). Other file types will not be accepted.

Formatting of Written Documents

All written assignments must be typed in a Microsoft word document (.doc, .docx) and formatted according to [MLA guidelines](#). This includes general layout and citations.

Revision

To pass this course, students will need to REVISE all of their written work. Effective writing does not happen in one sitting. Students should plan and prepare written assignments well in advance of due dates. Begin with informal or “low stakes” writing to get out any ideas you are thinking through. Those ideas will not be fully developed or totally clear, but they will become stronger and more specific as you continue to draft, organize, and revise your writing over time.

Communication with Professor

If you have major questions about assignments, your work, or your progress in the course, please stop by my office hours. If you have minor questions, feel free to email me (in an appropriate, professional manner).

Attendance

If you miss more than 2 classes, your final grade will be lowered by a letter grade at my discretion. Excessive absences will result in failure of the course. You are considered tardy if you are more than 15 minutes late to class or if you leave more than 15 minutes early. 3 tardies = 1 absence. Conferences (in my office) at the end of the course are considered class sessions, and you will be counted absent if you do not show up for your scheduled time. Written documentation is required to excuse absences due to illness, death or extreme illness among family members, and natural and physical catastrophes. When absent from class, it is your responsibility to complete readings and written assignments on time.

Late Assignments

Late work will be penalized by a full letter grade for each day that the submission is late. No late work will be accepted for quizzes and in-class activities. I will consider extensions for assignments (not quizzes) if you ask me at least 24 hours before the due date.

Plagiarism

It is crucial that you learn to distinguish your own, original work from the ideas of others (authors, online writers, classmates, and friends) in this course and throughout your time at GC and beyond. All instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and will be reported to and handled by the appropriate governing body. GC has an Honor Code and a procedure for handling cases when academic misconduct is alleged. Information about the Honor Code and the misconduct procedure may be found at <http://www.gcsu.edu/studentaffairs/codeofconduct>

Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Not placing quotation marks around a quoted words or lines from a source
- Not providing parenthetical citations for quotations
- Paraphrasing via changing a few words. This is plagiarism whether you provide a citation or not.
- Not including a Works Cited page
- Cutting and pasting from the Internet or ebooks
- Having your friend, family member, significant other, or any other person write any portion of your paper
- Copying, even a sentence, from your classmate
- Buying a paper from a person, organization, or service, and turning it in as your own effort and/or having your classmate write a paper for you is cheating
- Resubmitting writing that has already been submitted and graded in another class

Campus Policies

Religious Observance Policy

Students are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays and other activities observed by a religious group of which the student is a member without academic penalty. Exercising of one's rights under this policy is subject to the GC Honor Code. Students who miss class in observance of a religious holiday or event are required to make up the coursework missed as a result from the absence. The nature of the make-up assignments and the deadline for

completion of such assignments are at the sole discretion of the instructor. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures voids all student rights under this policy.

Assistance for Student Needs Related to Disability

If you have a disability as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, you may be eligible to receive accommodations to assist in programmatic and physical accessibility. Disability Services can assist you in formulating a reasonable accommodation plan and in providing support in developing appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to all GC programs and facilities. Course requirements will not be waived, but accommodations may assist you in meeting the requirements. For documentation requirements and for additional information, we recommend that you contact Disability Services located in Lanier Hall at 478-445-5931.

Student Rating of Instruction Survey

Near the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete an online survey. Your responses are valued because they give important feedback to instructors to help improve student learning. All responses are completely confidential and your name is not stored with your responses in any way.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be conducted annually. In the event of a fire alarm, students will exit the building in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of the building. Do not use elevators. If you encounter heavy smoke, crawl on the floor so as to gain fresh air. Provide assistance to those who are in need of help without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus or other designated assembly area.

Electronic Recording Policy

Electronic video and/or audio recording is not permitted during any class unless the student obtains permission from the instructor and every student present. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Violation of this policy is grounds for removal from the class and referral for disciplinary action. Students granted specific electronic recording accommodations from Disability Services do not require special permission; however, the instructor must be notified. Any distribution is prohibited.

Academic Honesty

The integrity of students and their written and oral work is a critical component of the academic process. The submission of another's work as one's own is plagiarism and will be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the GC Catalog. Remember that allowing another student to copy one's own work violates standards of academic integrity.

Academic Grievances or Appeals

An academic grievance or appeal is an allegation by a student of substantial and/or unjustified deviation, to the student's detriment, from policies, procedures and/or requirements regarding admission, grading policies, special agreements, instructor's requirements and academic requirements of the University. Students shall have the right to file academic grievances or

appeals according to the procedures approved by the University and outlined in the University Catalog.

Course Schedule		
DATE	READING & SCREENING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Week 1		
M, 8/20	Syllabus & Course Introduction	
Week 2		
M, 8/27 *Informal Close Readings assigned	Screening: Start <i>Gone With the Wind</i> (1939, dir. Victor Fleming) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 3-34 & browse Illustrated Glossary of Film Terms (p. 195) <i>Reconstructing Dixie</i> , p. 1-37	
Week 3		
M, 9/8	LABOR DAY	
Week 4		
M, 9/10	Screening: Finish <i>Gone With the Wind</i> (1939) <i>Sherman's March</i> (1985, dir. Ross McElwee) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 35-100 <i>Reconstructing Dixie</i> , p. 39-147	
Week 5		
M, 9/17	Screening: <i>Steel Magnolias</i> , (1989, dir. Herbert Ross) Reading: <i>Reconstructing Dixie</i> , p. 149-203 (Optional): "Introduction: The Southern Imaginary," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 1-23 Riché Richardson, "Mammy's 'Mules' and the Rules of Marriage in <i>Gone with the Wind</i> ," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 52-78	
W, 9/19		Informal Reading #1
Week 6		
M, 9/24	Screening: <i>Easy Rider</i> (1969, dir. Dennis Hopper) Reading: <i>Split Screen Nation</i> , p. 3-35 (Optional): Chris Cagle, "The Postwar Cinematic South: Realism and the Politics of Liberal Consensus," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 104-121	
Week 7		
M, 10/1	Screening: Selection of nontheatrical films	

*Proposal assigned	Reading: (pdf) Streible, Roepke, and Mebold, "Introduction: Nontheatrical Film" <i>Film History</i> 19 (2007): 339-343. <i>Split Screen Nation</i> , p. 38-79 (Optional): Leigh Ann Duck, "Bodies and Expectations: Chain Gang Discipline," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 79-103	
W, 10/3		Informal Reading #2
Week 8		
M, 10/8	FALL BREAK	
Week 9		
M, 10/15	Screening: <i>Mandingo</i> (1975, dir. Richard Fleischer) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 103-137 <i>Split Screen Nation</i> , p. 81-114 (pdf on GeorgiaVIEW) Sharon Monteith, "Exploitation Movies and the Freedom Struggle of the 1960s" in <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i>	
Week 10		
M, 10/22 *Book Review assigned	Screening: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (1951, dir. Elia Kazan) Reading: <i>Split Screen Nation</i> , p. 127-184 (Optional): Briallen Hopper, "The City that Deja Vu Forgot: Memory, Mapping, and the Americanization of New Orleans," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 277-292	Proposal
Week 11		
M, 10/29 *Conference Paper assigned	Screening: <i>Mississippi Masala</i> (1991, dir. Mira Nair) Reading: (pdf on GeorgiaVIEW) Jay Watson, "Mapping Out a Postsouthern Cinema: Three Contemporary Films" in <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 219-252	
Week 12		
M, 11/5	Screening: <i>Harlan County, USA</i> (1975, dir. Barbara Kopple) <i>Herion(e)</i> (2017, Elaine McMillon) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 137-146 <i>Unwhite: Appalachia, Race, and Film</i> , TBA	
Week 13		
M, 11/12	Screening: <i>Goodbye Solo</i> , (2009, dir. Ramin Bahrani)	

	Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 147-166 <i>Unwhite: Appalachia, Race, and Film</i> , TBA	
W, 11/14		Book Review
Week 14		
M, 11/19	Screening: <i>Mississippi Damned</i> (2009, dir. Tina Mabry) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 167-181 (pdf) Joel Nolfi, "Making Her Own Way" <i>Curve Magazine</i> (2016): 26-28 (pdf) Gates & Gillespie, "An Introduction — Dossier: Dimensions in Black: Perspectives on Black Film and Media" (Optional): R. Bruce Brassell, "Humid Time: Independent Film, Gay Sexualities, and Southernscapes," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 293-316	
Week 15		
M, 11/26	Screening: <i>Southern Comfort</i> (2001, dir. Kate Davis) <i>Queer Eye</i> , Athens/Skyler episode Reading: (pdf on GeorgiaVIEW) Chris Cagle, "Imaging the Queer South: Southern Lesbian and Gay Documentary" in <i>Between the Sheets, In the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary</i> (1997) (pdf on GeorgiaVIEW) Charles E. Morris III, "Introduction: 'Travelin' Thru' the Queer South" <i>Southern Communication Journal</i> 74, no. 3 (2009): 233-242	
Week 16		
M, 12/3	Screening: <i>Did You Wonder Who Fired the Gun?</i> (2017, dir. Travis Wilkerson) Reading: <i>Writing About Movies</i> , p. 181-191	Draft & Peer Review
Week 17		
M, 12/10	Screening: 2 episodes of recent TV (<i>Atlanta</i> ? <i>Rectify</i> ? <i>Queen Sugar</i> ?) (Optional: Tara McPherson, "Revamping the South: Labor, Relationality, and Southern Representation," <i>American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary</i> , p. 336-351	
Final Exam		
F, Dec 14 (6:00-8:15pm)	Presentations	Conference Paper & Presentation

