

# American cultures in film

**Course #:** CINA 11  
**Instructor:** adam wadenius  
**Email:** adam@apwadenius.com  
**Website:** www.apwadenius.com

**Office Hours:** By email or appointment  
**Semester:** Summer 2018  
**Day & time:** T/Th, 6:00p – 9:05p  
**Building:** Vacaville Center, #133

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## course description

The aim of this course is to introduce you to contemporary theories of American culture, through the lens of the popular medium of film. Throughout the semester we will study the impact of mainstream Hollywood cinema, as well as the peripheral viewing positions that emerge through women's studies, queer studies, bisexual, gay, and lesbian films, and transgender cinema. We will also explore the diverse perspectives of films by, for, and about other marginalized identities such as Native Americans, African Americans, Latin and Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and foreigners.

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## student learning outcomes

- ~ Assess the perspectives and creative contributions of diverse cultural, ethnic, and gender groups to contemporary American life through the art of film.
- ~ Think critically about the significance of film as a reflection of popular culture.
- ~ Articulate the ways in which Hollywood has typically represented race, sex, gender, and class in popular cinema throughout its history.
- ~ Identify and explain the various formal and stylistic elements involved in cinematic representations of American culture.

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## course requirements

**Class Lectures & Screenings:** You are responsible for attending each of the class lectures. Please email me if you know you cannot make it to section on a given day. There is no talking/discussion during the films, audio recordings or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the lectures. Your enrollment in this class is your responsibility. It is incumbent upon you to double-check your enrollment status periodically throughout the semester, as I do not maintain my rosters after the census has been processed. If you decide that you do not wish to continue with the course, it is your responsibility to drop, as I do not take it upon myself to drop anyone from the course at any time.

I encourage you to use your personal computer, iPad, or other learning tool during class time if you are using it appropriately (viewing class slides, taking notes), however, be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on those and any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity. There is no food allowed in class at any time (drinks are okay). Copies of all the lectures are available on the course website for download and review. If you require any additional accommodations such as a note taker, testing services, captions, or special chairs/desks, please speak with me personally, or provide the proper authorization letter from the Disability Resources Department.

**Readings:** It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each session having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. We will be spending as much time discussing the readings as the films, and a firm understanding of them will benefit your overall understanding/interpretation of the film texts. All readings are located on the course website.

**Discussion:** You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to your success in this course. My goal is to aid in the development of your analytical/critical skills, and I expect everyone to maintain an open mind, and take a creative approach to the material. Be respectful of your fellow classmates when addressing and critiquing conflicting viewpoints.

**Short-Answer Quiz:** There will be one short-answer quiz this semester, due by the time class starts on the assigned date. Each quiz is due by the time class starts on the assigned date, and no late quizzes will be accepted. No late quizzes will be accepted. I do not accept physical papers, so please email your quiz to me at [adam@apwadenius.com](mailto:adam@apwadenius.com). All emergency situations leading to late quizzes will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for making-up a missed quiz. You are required to visit the course website to view the quiz questions and the clips, as there are additional writing and formatting guidelines for you to review.

**Group Writing Exercise:** You will complete one group writing exercise this semester. The format of the quiz will echo the individual short answer-quizzes, and will be discussed in further detail in class.

**Film Analysis Essay:** You will be required to write one 1000-1250 word essay this semester, due by the time class starts on the assigned date. No late papers will be accepted. I do not accept physical papers, so please email your essay to me at [adam@apwadenius.com](mailto:adam@apwadenius.com). All emergency situations leading to late papers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Each of the essay questions, as well as an example of an A paper are located on the course website. It is required that you visit the website to view the example paper, as it details additional guidelines for writing successfully in this course.

**\*\* NOTE \*\*** *Plagiarism and other issues concerning academic integrity will not be tolerated, and are grounds for an automatic failure in the course. Acknowledge all reading and research sources with appropriate footnotes and bibliography.* Keep all copies of your quizzes and notes until you have received a final grade for this class.

**Film Notes & Participation:** Your attendance is expected at each of the film screenings, and missing or leaving the film screenings early will result in a lowered participation grade. To compliment any notes you may be taking on the lectures and discussions, you will be required to keep a separate notebook with your notes on each of the films (one page per each film). This is a good habit to practice when watching and analyzing films, as it will help you to remember important narrative and stylistic elements to be used as supportive examples in your writing. This notebook will be checked on the final session of the semester (Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup>), and must be submitted in one of two ways:

- 1) as an electronic document (word, pdf, text, pages, etc.)
- 2) as a packet of individual sheets of paper, assembled and stapled together

Do not turn in any three-ring binders or spiral/binded notebooks with your notes in them, as they will not be accepted.

assessments

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Film Notes (140 pts.)	A = 516	B- = 439	D+ = 368
Screenings and Participation (150 pts.)	A- = 494	C+ = 423	D = 351
Short-answer quiz (100 pts.)	B+ = 478	C = 406	D- = 329
Group Writing Exercise (50 pts.)	B = 461	C- = 384	F = 313
Film Analysis Essay (100 pts.)			

texts & materials

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- 1) All course readings and materials are posted on the course website @ [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com).
  - 2) All films screened in class, as well as any excerpt screened during the lectures.

*Please remember that if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or any of the course materials that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, the course website, or by placing a note for me in my box in the department office.*

~ Sex & Gender in Hollywood ~

**day #1 ~ (Jun. 12<sup>th</sup>) ~ what is “normal”?**

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Lecture: Introduction to Culture & Gender

Reading: “Understanding Patriarchy,” by bell hooks

Screening: *Middle Sexes: Redefining He and She*, dir. Antony Thomas (2005)

**day #2 ~ (Jun. 14<sup>th</sup>) ~ ideology and the classical Hollywood style**

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Reading: “Narrative Structure: Television Stories,” by Jeremy G. Butler

Screening: *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, dir. Steven Spielberg (1981)

**day #3 ~ (Jun. 19<sup>th</sup>) ~ men and masculinity in film**

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Reading: “Ch. 10 - Gender and Masculinity, pgs. 359-371” by Bill Nichols

Screening: *The Maltese Falcon*, dir. John Huston (1941)

**day #4 ~ (Jun. 21<sup>st</sup>) ~ women and femininity in film**

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Reading: “The Woman’s Film,” by Molly Haskell

Screening: *Stella Dallas*, dir. King Vidor (1937)

**day #5 ~ (Jun. 26<sup>th</sup>) ~ the male gaze**

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Reading: “Ch. 11 – Exploring the Visual Parameters of Women in Film,” by Benshoff & Griffin

Screening: *Vertigo*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1958)

**day #6 ~ (Jun. 28<sup>th</sup>) ~ representing otherness**

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Reading: “An Introduction to the American Horror Film,” by Robin Wood

Screening: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, dir. Robert Zemeckis (1988)

\*\* *Short-answer quiz due* \*\*

~ “Other” Genders & Sexualities ~

**day #7 ~ (Jul. 3<sup>rd</sup>) ~ re-imagining women in film**

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Reading: “The Image of Women in Film: Suggestions for Future Research,” by Sharon Smith

“Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema,” by Claire Johnston

Screening: *Winter’s Bone*, dir. Debra Granik (2010)

**day #8 ~ (Jul. 5<sup>th</sup>) ~ gays and lesbians in film**

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Reading: "Gay and Lesbian Criticism," by Anneke Smelik  
Screening: *Milk*, dir. Gus Van Sant (2008)

**day #9 ~ (Jul. 10<sup>th</sup>) ~ transgender cinema**

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Reading: "Gender Terror, Gender Rage," by Kate Bornstein  
Screening: *Tangerine*, dir. Sean Baker (2015)

**\*\* Short answer feedback due \*\***

**day #10 ~ (Jul. 12<sup>th</sup>) ~ new queer cinema**

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Reading: "There's Something Queer Here," & "Queer Theory," by Alexander Doty  
Screening: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, dir. John Cameron Mitchell (2001)

**day #11 ~ (Jul. 17<sup>th</sup>) ~ midterm check-ins**

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**\*\* Group writing exercise assessed in class \*\***

*~ Representing Race & Culture ~*

**day #12 ~ (Jul. 19<sup>th</sup>) ~ Native Americans in American film**

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Reading: "Genesis of the Stereotypes," by Jacquelyn Kilpatrick  
"My Heroes Have Never Been Cowboys" & "Reservation Drive-In," by Sherman Alexie  
Screening: *Smoke Signals*, dir. Chris Eyre (1998)

**day #13 ~ (Jul. 24<sup>th</sup>) ~ African Americans in American film**

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Reading: "Black Beginnings: From *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *The Birth of A Nation*," by Donald Bogle  
Screening: *15th*, dir. Ava DuVernay (2016)

**day #14 ~ (Jul. 26<sup>th</sup>) ~ Hispanics and Latinos in American film**

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Reading: "Stereotyping in Films in General and of the Hispanic in Particular," by Charles Ramirez Berg  
Screening: *Stand and Deliver*, dir. Ramon Menendez (1988)

**day #15 ~ (Jul. 31<sup>st</sup>) ~ Asians in American film**

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Reading: "Asian Americans in Film and Television Entertainment," by Stephanie Greco Larson  
Screening: *Chan is Missing*, dir. Wayne Wang (1982)

**day #16 ~ (Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup>) ~ final class session**

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**\*\* Essay assignment due \*\***

**\*\* Film notes due \*\***