

Spring 2006 **COLI 331E-02 - CINEMA AND VIOLENCE** (Credits: 4)

Class meetings: **Tuesday/Thursday 2:50PM-4:15PM** (85 mins.) Location: **AAG007**

Freda Fuller Coursey, Office LT1507 Office Hours TR 1:00PM-2:30PM

freda.coursey@binghamton.edu fredacoursey@yahoo.com Home phone: (607)-772-9918

Textbooks (REQUIRED) available in the campus bookstore (prices from their website):

1. DICK, Philip K., *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* New: \$13.00 Used: \$9.75

(Dick text to be paired with the viewing of *Blade Runner*)

2. CONRAD, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness + Selections...* New: \$7.95 Used : \$6.00

3. LEE, Harper, *To Kill a Mockingbird, 40TH Anniversary* New: \$11.95 Used: \$9.00

Don't wait to buy books; bookstores start sending textbooks back to publishers, pretty soon.

### **Syllabus subject to change.**

CINEMA AND VIOLENCE investigates representations of violence in cinema, examines articulations of violence and the relations certain films pose between forces such as hegemonic powers and "the other," good and evil, religious/spiritual and political forces, private and public spheres, or other forces. Violence in films may be explored along lines such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or the potential for subversive/biased ways to represent violence. Reasons for/causes of/sources of violence will be discussed. Films viewed in class may include *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick, 1998, 170 mins.), *Behind the Lines* (Gillies MacKinnon, 1997, 96 mins.), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982, 1991 Director's Cut, 117 mins.), *Heart of Darkness* (Nicolas Roeg, 1993, 105 minutes), *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1992, 100 mins.), *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992, 127 mins.), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962, 130 mins.), *La Femme Nikita* (Luc Besson, 1990, 117 mins.), *Deadlock: Russia's Forgotten War* (documentary on Chechnya) (40 mins.), other as/if time allows. *These films contain adult subject matter.*

This is an Aesthetic Perspective (A) course. Through aesthetic experience, students can gain an expanded sense of culture, a greater appreciation of the diverse ways in which human beings express themselves, and deeper insight into the role of the imagination in the creative process. Some reading (three texts and various shorter pieces, to be assigned) and some writing are required for this course. All films under study must be viewed by students enrolled in this course. Course format will include lecture and discussion. Attendance is required. Promptness is required; films often will begin at 2:50!!! No cell phones in class. No laptops or other devices that can access the Internet allowed during tests or quizzes. No music devices to be worn during class. Come prepared to take notes and discuss, having completed all assignments, especially assigned readings. Blackboard (Bb) and e-reserve may be used. Other homework and in-class assignments may be added. Quizzes/tests may be added, generally when/if students don't do assignments and/or don't enter discussions; punitive additions WON'T be announced (so KEEP UP and PARTICIPATE in class), but other added quizzes or tests would be announced in advance. Grades will be based on in-class discussions, writing assignments, attendance

and attitude, and other, percentages TBA. No plagiarism will be tolerated in writing assignments, but you SHOULD take notes during the class discussions, because you CAN use those notes as "jumping off points" for the essays you will be writing for this class. Note the date in your notes, and then cite the lecture notes as your source at the end of your essay(s).

You may turn in your lecture notes for bonus points at the end of the semester. Good notes could add up to 5 points to your semester grade as part of "participation." Notes either must be typed, or very legibly written. At least several relevant points must be noted for each class period. On the film viewing days, note several relevant things to consider from the material viewed that day, even though there may not yet have been any discussion of the film at that point. You might do this by writing down things that particularly strike you as you are watching the films.

If you keep up and attend class, this shouldn't be a difficult course. If you don't, it should be.

**cin·e·ma** (n.): 1. a. A film or movie; b. A movie theater.; 2. a. Films or movies considered as a group; b. The film or movie industry; 3. The art or technique of making films or movies; filmmaking. *More on cinema:* (n.) 1. cinema - a medium that disseminates moving pictures; "theater pieces transferred to celluloid"; "this story would be good cinema"; artistic creation, artistic production, art - the creation of beautiful or significant things; "art does not need to be innovative to be good"; medium - a means or instrumentality for storing or communicating information.

**vi·o·lence** (n.): 1. Physical force exerted for the purpose of violating, damaging, or abusing: crimes of violence; 2. The act or an instance of violent action or behavior; 3. Intensity or severity, as in natural phenomena; untamed force: the violence of a tornado; 4. Abusive or unjust exercise of power; 5. Abuse or injury to meaning, content, or intent; 6. Vehemence of feeling or expression; fervor. *More on violence:* (n.) 1. violence - an act of aggression or force; aggression, hostility - violent action that is hostile and usually unprovoked; domestic violence - violence or physical abuse directed toward a spouse or domestic partner; usually violence by men against women; public violence, riot - a public act of violence by an unruly mob; 2. violence - the property of being wild or turbulent; ferocity, fierceness, furiousness, vehemence, wildness, fury; intensiveness, intensity - high level or degree; the property of being intense; 3. violence - a turbulent state resulting in injuries and destruction etc. [not necessarily PHYSICAL injuries; this is an important point for students to note]; upheaval, turbulence - a state of violent disturbance and disorder (as in politics or social conditions generally).

(Definitions based on items from *American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th Edition (2000, updated 2003), Houghton Mifflin.)

Spring Semester 2006 (tentative schedule, subject to change)

Make certain to have finished reading *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* before Tuesday, Feb. 14. Also have read the short e-reserve essay "Fractal Geographies," by Scott Bukatman, before Tues, Feb. 14. (The essay is about a page and a half long.)

Tuesday, Jan 24 Introduction: course content, discussion of terms "cinema" and "violence," intros to films.

WARNING: Next two classes will be very tight; THIN RED LINE is our longest film.

Thursday, Jan 26 View first 85 minutes of THE THIN RED LINE. BEGIN AT 2:50. Think about it until 1/31.

Tuesday, Jan 31 View remaining 85 minutes of THIN RED LINE. BEGIN AT 2:50. Discussion on Thursday.

Thursday, Feb. 2 (Groundhog Day) Discussion of THIN RED LINE; intro to BEHIND THE LINES.

Friday Feb 3 Course-drop deadline

Sunday Feb 5 Course-add deadline

Tuesday Feb 7 View first portion of BEHIND THE LINES; begin at 2:50 (up to 85 minutes of film)

Thursday Feb 9 View remaining minutes of BEHIND THE LINES; begin at 2:50 (11+ minutes of film); discuss. Write a three-page paper for next Tuesday discussing the violences reflected by these two films (THIN RED LINE and BEHIND THE LINES.)

Make certain to have finished reading *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* before Tuesday, Feb. 14. Also have read the short e-reserve essay "Fractal Geographies," by Scott Bukatman, before Tues, Feb. 14.

Tuesday Feb 14 Briefly introduce *Blade Runner*, mentioning differences in versions, book and film, etc. Begin viewing *Blade Runner* (director's cut).

Thursday Feb 16 Finish viewing *Blade Runner* (director's cut). Discuss.

Tuesday Feb 21 Continued discussion of *Blade Runner* and related issues.

Thursday Feb 23 Spend some time discussing violence and the sources of violence. Give first writing assignment: to consider the sources of violence, and discuss how these are reflected and/or investigated in the films we view up through *Reservoir Dogs*. Paper will be due on Thursday

Mar. 9.

Tuesday Feb 28 View *Reservoir Dogs*.

Thursday Mar 2 Finish viewing *Reservoir Dogs*. Begin to discuss if there is time.

Tuesday Mar 7 Discussion of *Reservoir Dogs*. Renew discussion of the sources of violence.

First major writing assignment reminder: On Thursday, Mar. 9, your writing assignment on the sources of violence, and how those are reflected in the films we have seen so far this semester, will be due at the beginning of class.

Thursday Mar 9 First major writing assignment due at the beginning of class. (The only midterm exam will be the paper, unless the plan changes due to lack of participation and discussion)

Introduce Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, colonialism, colonialist expansionism, Belgian Congo issues, etc. Assignment: Make certain to have finished reading *Heart of Darkness* before Tuesday, Mar. 21.

Mar 11-19 Spring recess (check times for specific courses to meet or not on the 11th)

Tuesday Mar 14 Out for Spring recess

Thursday Mar 16 Out for Spring recess

Mar 20 Classes resume

Reminder: Make certain to have finished reading *Heart of Darkness* before Tuesday, Mar. 21.

Tuesday Mar 21 Begin viewing *Heart of Darkness*.

Thursday Mar 23 Finish viewing *Heart of Darkness*. Discuss.

Friday Mar 24 Course-withdraw deadline

Tuesday Mar 28 Discuss *Heart of Darkness*, text and book. Bring in *Apocalypse Now*, and other *HofD* variations. Somewhere in here the schedule may flex some, in order to work in related short video, if we are ready for it.

Thursday Mar 30 Introduce *Basic Instinct*. View *Basic Instinct*.

Tuesday Apr 4 View *Basic Instinct*.

Thursday Apr 6 Discuss *Basic Instinct*.

Tuesday Apr 11 Introduce issues of racism in the U.S., and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.  
Apr 12 Classes recess 1 p.m.  
Apr 12-17 Recess (Passover, Easter)  
Thursday Apr 13 Out for Recess (Passover, Easter)

Remember to file your tax returns by midnight on Sat Apr 15!!!  
Tuesday Apr 18 Classes resume

Make certain to have finished reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* before Tuesday, Apr. 18.

Tuesday Apr 18 Begin viewing *To Kill a Mockingbird*.  
Thursday Apr 20 Finish viewing *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Discuss.

Tuesday Apr 25 Discuss *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Pay attention to differences between text and film.  
Thursday Apr 27 Introduce *La Femme Nikita*. View *La Femme Nikita*.

Tuesday May 2 View *La Femme Nikita*.  
Thursday May 4 Discuss *La Femme Nikita*.

Tuesday May 9 View *Deadlock: Russia's Forgotten War* (documentary). Discuss, including differences (?) between "true" films and "fictional" films. Discuss how perspective/agenda/bias affect such categories.

Thursday May 11 Final discussion of the semester.

Friday May 12 Last day of classes (our class doesn't meet on this day)  
May 13-14 Reading period

May 15-19 Final examinations week. (The only final exam will be the paper, unless the plan changes due to lack of participation and discussion)

Final major writing assignment due by noon Monday May 15.