

MAP Expressive Culture; Prof. Ed Guerrero
Wed. 12:30 to 4:30, Rm 102 Cantor

Black American Cinema

This course will view a range of films made by, for, and about black Americans in popular commercial cinema. Our viewing, reading and writing will cover a developmental, historical range of black focused films and film making practices over the past one hundred years. We will cover a range of critical concerns from the crude racial provocations of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), to an 'entertaining blackness' expressed in such films as *Cabin in the Sky* (1943); to Blaxploitation's brilliant industry intervention and moment; or the challenge of independent black narratives like *Killer of Sheep* (1977) and *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1984); to 'crossover,' commercially ambitious films like *Soul Food* (1997) or *Paid in Full* (1997); and on to viewing break through masterworks like *Do the Right Thing* (1989). We will cover the debates and issues focused on the development of black American cinema, including the representation of race, class, gender and sexuality, as well as how social and economic conditions work to overdetermine African American cinema production and its varied directions. We will also view and discuss the two main currents of black cinematic expression: the brilliant contributions that blacks have made to mainstream cinema and the independent, breakthrough productions that mark African American efforts to build an emergent, fully representational black cinema practice

Required Reading:

White Screens, Black Images, by James Snead.

Do the Right Thing (BFI Modern Classics) by Ed Guerrero.

Black Cool: One Thousand Streams of Blackness, Rebecca Walker ed.

No Name in the Street by James Baldwin.

*** Other essays articles and book chapters will be posted of Blackboard***

*** Reading schedule TBA***

Course Requirements:

[1] Approximately 12 page minimum, final essay due (tba). (50% of the final grade).

[2] Four short 'critical response' papers (4 pages minimum) that will provide, and develop, the concept, premise or argument of your final paper. (30% of final grade)

[3] Participation in the class and seminar discussions and regular attendance are essential. Each student will bring to the general screening/lecture two written questions about the screenings/readings. (20% of final grade)

[4] All work must be word processed and come in on time. ***No late papers will be accepted.***

Screenings:

- 9/5 "Cabin in the Sky" (1943)
- 9/12 "A Rasin in the Sun" (1961)
- 9/19 "Nothing but a Man" (1964)
- 9/26 "Killer of Sheep" (1979)
- 10/3 "Super Fly" (1972)
- 10/10 "Soul Food" (1997)
- 10/17 "Space Is the Place" (1974)
- 10/24 "Do the Right Thing" (1989)
- 10/31 "Just another Girl on the I.R.T" (1992)
- 11/7 "Eve's Bayou" (1997)
- 11/14 "Drop Squad" (1994)
- 11/21 "Across 110th Street" (1972)
- 11/28 "Black Dynamite" (2009)
- 12/5 "Paid in Full" (2009)