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School of Dance, Film & Theater

**5720 101 Film Topics Seminar II Melodrama
School of Dance Theater and Film**

This seminar will review the history of global commercial fiction cinema's historically dominant genre, the Melodrama from *Perils of Pauline* (Gasnier, 1914) to *Big Eyes* (Burton, 2014). Capitalist society erases social reproduction — the things we must do in order to go back to work every day and to ensure that another generation of workers will follow us when we retire. Melodrama works to make social reproduction perceivable as a site of struggle. Our work will focus on the difference between melodramas that mystify social reproduction and the contradictions that structure it and melodramas that depict those contradictions directly. We will follow the lead of the films and emphasize the problems of social abjection connected to gendered domestic labor and racial social hierarchies as they play themselves out in the sphere of reproduction.

Students will be responsible for 2 presentations and a final paper.

Books Available From online vendors:

Fortunati, Leopoldina. *The Arcane Of Reproduction: Hosuework Prostitution, Labor and Capital*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995. (Use Little Black Cart Press
Kilinger, Barbara. *Melodrama and Meaning*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Holy Family: Critique Of Critical Critique*. Windham Press, 2003.

<http://littleblackcart.com/The-Arcane-of-Reproduction.html>)

Wilderson, Frank. *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms*. Durham: Duke, 2010.

Williams, Linda. *On The Wire*. Durham : Duke University Press, 2014.

—. *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002

Thursday, January 13

What are Melodrama and Social Reproduction?

Perils Of Pauline (Gasnier, 1914)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (Porter, 1903) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDyZcJlv8Tg>

Uncle Tom's Cabin, (Daly, 1914) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M7sDoydlzc>

Thursday, January 15

"Melodrama and the Consequences of Capitalism" in Singer, Ben. *Melodrama And Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2001. PDF

Chen, Chris. "The Limit Point Of Capitalist Equality: Notes toward an abolitionist antiracism." *End Notes* 3 (2014) [<http://endnotes.org.uk/en/chris-chen-the-limit-point-of-capitalist-equality>]

Gonzalez, Maya Andrea. "The Logic Of Gender." *End Notes* 3 (2013). [<http://endnotes.org.uk/en/endnotes-the-logic-of-gender>]

Caffentzis, George. "On The Notion Of A Crisis Of Social Reproduction: A Theoretical Review ." *The Commoner*, no. 5 (Autumn 2002). [<http://www.commoner.org.uk/caffentzis05.pdf>]

Recommended:

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York : Singet , 2008.

Gerould, Danliel C. *American Melodrama*. New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications , 1983.

All of "Melodrama and the Consequences of Capitalism" in Singer, Ben. *Melodrama And Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2001.

Tuesday, January 20

What are the family and "Art"?

Orphans In The Storm (Griffith, 1921)

Uncle Tom's Cabin Pollard (Pollard, 1927)

Recommended:

Birth Of A Nation (Griffith, 2014)

The Cheat (Demille, 1915)

The Joyless Street (Die freudlose Gasse) (Pabst, 2925)

Thursday, January 23

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Holy Family: Critique Of Critical Critique*. Windham Press, 2003.

Chapters 1-3 in Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode Of Excess*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. PDF

Badiou, Alain. *Alain Badiou : Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art. The Drawing Center, December 4/2003*. December 4, 2003. <http://www.lacan.com/issue22.php>

Tuesday, January 25

What are film genre, housework and prostitution?

Gaslight (Cukor, 1944)

Europa 51 (Rossellini, 1952)

Thursday, January 27

Fortunati, Leopoldina. *The Arcane Of Reproduction: Hosuework Prostitution, Labor and Capital*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995.

Chapters 1 and 2 in Altman, Rick. *Film / Genre*. New York : British Film Insititute , 1999.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript On The Scoieties Of Control ." *October*, Winter 59: 3-7. PDF

Tuesday February 3

What are axioms and subjectification?

Rebecca (Hitchcock, 1940)

Mildred Pierce (Curtiz, 1945)

Recommended

Citizen Kane (Welles, 1941)

Umberto D (De Sica, 1952)

Thursday February 5

"Savages, Barbrarians, And Civilized Men"

in Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. Translated by Mark Seem, and Hellen R. Lane Robert Hurley. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Tuesday February 10

What are reception and remakes?

Imitation Of Life (Stahl, 1934)

Imitation Of Life (Sirk, 1959)

Thursday February 12

Fassbinder, Rainer Werner. "Six Films By Douglas Sirk ." *New Left Review* , May-June 1975: 88-96. PDF

Kilinger, Barbara. *Melodrama and Meaning*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press , 1994

Tuesday February 17

What is everyday life?

All The Heaven Allows (Sirk, 1955)

Ali Fear Eats The Soul (Fassbinder, 1974)

Thursday February 19

Heller, Agnes. "The Marxist Theory Of Revolution and the Revolution of Everyday Life." *Telos*, 1970. PDF

Costa, Mariarosa Dalla, and Selma James. *The power of women and the subversion of the community*. 1972.[<https://libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james>]

Mayne, Judith. "Fassbinder and Spectatorship." *New German Critique*, Fall 2001. PDF

Tuesday February 24

What is the contemporary?

Far From Heaven (Haynes, 2002)

Thursday February 26

Skvirsky, Salomé Aguilara. "The Price Of Heaven: Remaking Politics in All That Heaven Allows, Ali Fear Eats The Soul." *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 3 (2008): 90-121. PDF

Tuesday March 10

What are the forms of housework?

The Housemaid (Hanyeo) (Williams, On The Wire 2014)(Kim, 1960)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5acgtKKMpS8>

Recommended

(Deserto Rosso) (Antonioni, 1964)

Thursday March 12

Tuesday March 17

What is a remake? II

The Housemaid (Hanyeo) (Im, 2010)

Thursday March 19

Presentations

Tuesday March 24

What is Race?

Bush Mama (Gerima, 1979)

Thursday March 26

Wilderson, Frank. *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms*. Durham: Duke, 2010.

Tuesday March 31

What is Race? II

Monster's Ball (Forester, 2001 (Skvirsky 2008))

Thursday April 2

Williams, Linda. *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Tuesday April 7

What is abolition today?

Les Misérables (Hooper, 2010)

Thursday April 9

Tuesday April 14

What are forensics?

Wire, Season 1 (Simon, 2002) On your own.

Thursday April 16

Williams, Linda. *On The Wire*. Durham : Duke University Press , 2014.

Tuesday April 21

What is contemporary melodrama?

Discussion of *Big Eyes* (Burton, 2014) and *Her* (Jones, 2013)

Thursday April 23

Research Presentations

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs and provide written documentation from Student Accessibility Services. If you are not yet registered as a student with a disability, please contact Student Accessibility Services at 740-593-2620 or visit the office in 348 Baker University Center.

OU Plagiarism Policy: [Plagiarism is defined as](#) the presentation of the ideas or the writing of someone else as one's own. You will **fail the course** if you plagiarize and possibly be turned in to University authorities. Examples:

- Reproducing another person's work, whether published or unpublished. (This also includes using materials from companies that sell research papers.)
- Submitting as your own any academic exercise (written work, computer printout, sculpture) prepared totally or in part by another.
- Allowing another person to substantially alter or revise your work and submitting it as your own.
- Using another's written ideas or words without properly acknowledging the source. If a student uses the words of someone else, he or she must put quotation marks around the passage and add indication of its origin, such as a footnote. Simply changing a word or two while leaving the organization and content substantially intact and failing to cite the source is plagiarism. Students should also take note that failure to acknowledge study aids such as Cliff's Notes or common reference sources constitutes plagiarism.
- If a student is unsure about a question of plagiarism or cheating, he or she is obligated to consult his or her instructor on the matter before submitting the material. If you have any questions, consult the Office of University Judiciaries.

