

# SC 718 Theory, Culture and Film Spring, 2006

Professor: Jim Hamm

Office hours: Monday 10 to 11:45AM

Wednesday and Friday by appointment, McGuinn 418

Classroom: O'Neil Library 211 on Monday from 3:00 to 5:30 PM

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## About the course

This course is about the construction of realities. It explores many of the social issues of our times: truth and reality, colonialism, identity, justice, race, gender, sexual orientation, indigenous social resistance, religion, marriage, a view from the other side, protest and terrorism. Why do we think the way we do? How do our concepts of reality influence the ways we behave?

The use of film for anthropology is interesting. A film can be interpreted many ways. The medium of film allows us to both identify and remain detached. We will read against the grain of the usual hegemonic discourse. A key concept for this course is developing and turning the anthropological gaze to produce a radically different understanding. Sometimes this is easy; other times, not.

Each week, we will identify what is anthropologically interesting about the films.

## Requirements

Attendance is important. All of the films are on reserve in the media center in the library. There will be a final paper on a mutually agreed upon topic. The paper should be ready for submission for publication or a conference.

## Readings

Purchase the SC718 course pack from the book store. Additional readings will be handed out in class. Read the assignment and view the film(s) each week before the class.

## Films

Except for Rashomon the films should be viewed before class. All of the films except two are on reserve in the media room in the library. Brokeback Mountain and Paradise Now are currently in theaters and are unlikely to be available on DVD this spring. Try to see them soon.

## **Lesson Plan**

### **Week 1 (1-23-06) Perception and Reality**

What is truth? How does the position of the observer affect the perception of reality?

Film: Rashomon (1959: 87 minutes) PL801.K8 R382

Four people tell their versions of what they witnessed. There are significant similarities and differences. What happened? Is there a reality? How does the agenda of the observer affect the production of the truth?

Reader: Heider, Karl. "The Rashomon Effect." American Anthropologist 1988. 90(1):73-81

Lee, Richard B. "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari." Natural History. Dec. 1969. 23-26

### **Week 2 (1-30-06) Anthropology as a Colonial Discourse**

What is the anthropologist doing when he/she observes another culture and produces an ethnography? Is the result a discovery of the way another people think and live or a construction to suit the agenda of the researcher? Is the use of a camera a way to make the result "more real?" How do the people we study react?

Film: Margaret Mead: Observer Observed (1996: 85 minutes)  
Stranger with a Camera (2000: 58 minutes) HN79.K4 S77

The Mead/Freeman debate illustrates issues that anthropologists deal with in the field and in the presentation of their results. Stranger with a Camera questions the concept of observation versus participation. When we are in the field, how are we affecting the people with whom we are working? What do we give and what do we take away? How do they respond?

The films and readings raise questions about the knowledge we produce during fieldwork, with or without a camera or by extension, a tape recorder.

Reader: Freeman, Derek. "Margaret Mead and Samoa," In Taking Sides. Kirk Endicott and Robert Welsch, eds. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill. 2001. 292-303

Holmes, Lowell D. and Ellen Rhoads Holmes. "Samoan Character and the Academic World." In Taking Sides. Kirk Endicott and Robert Welsch, eds. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill. 304-312

Rensberger, Boyce. "Margaret Mead: The Nature-Nurture Debate." In Science 84 Magazine. 25-30

Amin, Samir. Eurocentrism. New York: Monthly Review Press. 1989. 71-78, 89-117

Ashcroft, Bill. Postcolonial Transformation. New York: Routledge. 2001. 1-17

Young, Colin. "Observational Cinema." In Principles of Visual Anthropology. Paul Hockings, ed. New York: Moutarde de Gruyter. 2003. 99-113

MacDougall, David. "Beyond Observational Cinema." In Principles of Visual Anthropology. New York: Moutarde de Gruyter. 2003. 115-132

## **Week 3 (2-6-06) Conflict Resolution and Justice – Developing and Turning the Gaze**

### **Part 1 – The Gaze**

What do anthropologists learn in the field that can be taken back to the academy to challenge existing ways of seeing?

Film: Trobriand Cricket (1976: 54 minutes)

Any Given Sunday We will watch about 12 minutes of clips from this film in class and develop and turn the gaze.

The Trobriands have taken the staid English game of cricket and transformed it to meet their needs. We will use our observation of what they have done to first develop an anthropological gaze and then to turn that gaze upon ourselves as we observe our American game of football.

Reader: Marcus, George E. and Michael M. J. Fischer. Anthropology as Cultural Critique. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1999. 137-141

Metcalf, Peter A. "Death Be Not Strange." In John B. Williamson and Edwin S. Shneidman, eds. Death: Current Perspectives. Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing Company. 1995. 83-87

### **Part 2 - Justice**

How do different societies resolve conflicts? Is the concept of justice universal or is it constructed to meet local needs?

Film: Meat Fight (1974: 14 minutes) DT1058.K86 M43

The Cows of Dolo Paye (1970: 52 minutes)

Little Injustices: Laura Nader Looks at the Law (1980: 59 minutes) KF1609.L58

Stranger with a Camera (2000: 58 minutes) HN79.K4 S77

These films illustrate different ways conflicts are resolved (or not resolved). Why does justice take different forms? Are they effective?

Reader: Gibbs, James L. 1988. "The Kpelle Moot," In J.B. Cole. Anthropology for the Nineties. New York: The Free Press. 69-76

## **Week 4 (2-13-06) Ideology**

Why do we accept conditions that oppress us? Why are we generally not aware that we are oppressed? Why do we mostly not think about it? Specifically, why do minorities and women accept lesser job opportunities? Why do Blacks and immigrants accept that they should earn less money, live in poor neighborhoods and send their children to “lesser” schools?

Film: Born on the Fourth of July (2000: 85 minutes) DS559.9.K68

Reader: Hawkes, David. 1996. Ideology. New York: Routledge. 1-7, 115-130, 155-188

## **Week 5 (2-22-06) Race and the Cultural Construction of Difference**

What is race? How old is our current concept of race? If ideas of race change over time, how do they develop? What are the implications for how we individually feel about race?

Film: Introducing Dorothy Dandridge (1999: 115 minutes) PN1992.77.I58

Skin Deep (1996: 60 minutes) E185.61.S58

Other possibilities: Bamboozled, Crash, House of Sand and Fog, Ray

Introducing Dorothy Dandridge is about a black singer/actress working her way to the top. This film provides a glimpse at race relations in the U.S. on the eve of the era of racial change following Brown vs. the Board of Education (1954). When this film is considered alongside Ray, race moves to an intersection of race and gender. Skin Deep examines the dialog of race on college campuses. Students from across the U.S. meet for a three day encounter.

Reader: McIntosh, Peggy. 1988. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." In Paula S. Rothenberg, ed. Race, class and Gender in the United States, New York: Worth Publishing, 2001. 162-168

Tatum, Beverly D. "Defining Racism: Can We Talk?" In Readings for Diversity and Social Justice. Maurianne Adams et al. London: Routledge. 2000. 79-82

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. "Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs." In Arranged Marriage. New York: Anchor Books. 1996. 35-56

Lopez, Alfred J. Postcolonial Whiteness. Albany: State University of New York Press. 2005. 1-30

## **Week 6 (2-27-06) Sexual Orientation**

What does it mean to be different with regard to sexual orientation? Where do each of us fit into the gendered scheme of things? Why are homosexuals devalued?

Film: Two Spirit People (1995: 28 minutes)

The Times of Harvey Milk (1984: 87 minutes) HQ78.8.U5 T56

Brokeback Mountain ( 2005: 134 minutes)

Two Spirit People provides a way for native American homosexuals to see themselves as a third gender who have been historically special and significant to their people. The Times of Harvey Milk explores an openly gay man's rise to prominence in San Francisco. Harvey is shown to represent all the people in his district. The film looks at what it means for a public figure to be openly gay.

Reader: Lang, Saline. 2003. "Lesbians: Men-Women, and Two-spirits," In Constructing Sexualities. Suzanne LaFonte, ed. Upper Saddle Hill, NJ: Prentice Hall. 202-217

Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality. 3-49, 92-102

### **Week 7 (3-13-06) Indigenous Social Resistance: the State and the Individual**

As European nations colonized the world from the fifteenth century to the present, they had to both deal with the indigenous people they subjugated and develop a justification for their often ruthless behavior. What is the cultural impact of the attempted erasure of indigenous identities?

Film: Rabbit Proof Fence (2002: 120 minutes) PN1993.5.A8

This film documents the experiences of three young Australian Aboriginal girls as they are taken from their families and put into camps to be educated to be useful to white society.

Reader: Manne, Robert. "The Colour of Prejudice." Sidney Morning Herald. Feb 23, 2002. 1-5

Hume, Marion. "Outback Ingenue." Sun Herald. Nov 2, 2002. 1-5

Quin, Karl. "Molly's Story." The Sunday Age. Feb 17, 2002. 1-7

Williams, Sue. "Home Truth." Sun Herald. Feb 3, 2002. 1-3

Beverly, John. Subalternity and Representation. Durham: Duke University Press. 1999. 1-24

### **Week 8 (3-20-06) Marriage**

What is marriage? How and why do people enter into marriage? What are the implications for concepts of the family? How do concepts of marriage reflect and influence the way a society operates?

Film: Monsoon Wedding (2002: 115 minutes) PN1993.5.14.M66

This film takes us into the realm of arranged marriage in India. We see contradictions between tradition and modernity and loyalties based on blood and marriage relationships. What does it mean to be a good Indian woman or man?

Reader: Nanda, Serena. 2000. "Arranging a Marriage in India." In Stumbling Toward Truth. Philip de Vita, ed. Prospect Heights: IL: Waveland. 196-204

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. Arranged Marriage. New York: Anchor Books. 1996. 17-33, 57-71

### **Week 9 (3-27-06) A View from the Other Side**

How do we construct the other? Why do we do this? Edward Said, in Orientalism (1978), wrote that western cultural institutions are responsible for the creation of the Other, whose differences from us can then be used to justify whatever behavior toward them we choose. Peace of Mind looks at the "Palestine question" from the perspectives of teenagers who have a shared experience.

Film: Edward Said: Orientalism (1999: 40 minutes) DS12.S24  
Peace of Mind: Coexistence Through the Eyes of Palestinian and Israeli Youth (1999: 57 minutes)

Reader: Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books. 1979. 1-9

Barsamin, David. "Intifada 200: The Palestinian Uprising: an Interview with Edward Said, November, 2000." Z Magazine, December 2000. 52-57

Reinhart, Tanya. "The Peace That Kills." Infopal. December 6, 2000. 1-7

Solomon, Norman. "Media Beat." 7

Meital, Yoram. Peace in Tatters. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 2006. 1-10

### **Week 10 (4-3-06) Protest**

What is the role of protest? Does it do any good? Under what conditions can it happen?

Film: Berkeley in the 1960s (1990: 117 minutes) F869.B5 B37  
Dogtown and Z-Boys (2001: 91 minutes)

Berkeley in the 1960s documents how the protest movements that swept the U.S. in the late 1960s and the 1970s got started. Look for a young Joan Baez and Jerry Garcia.

How did the "authorities" handle/mishandle the student activities? Did they do the best they could or did they inadvertently contribute to a process that overwhelmed them and the country?

Dogtown and Z-Boys looks at the evolution of surfers into skateboarders in Southern

California. Is this a form of protest and resistance or just an American sport?

Reader: King, Martin Luther, Jr.. "Letter From Birmingham Jail." American Visions 1(1) Jan/Feb 1986. 52-59

Highlander Center, "Social Movements." 1-4

Sarat, Austin, ed. Dissent in Dangerous Times. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2005. 1-19

Philo, Simon. "Be Childish, Be Irresponsible, Be Disrespectful, Be Everything the Society Hates': Punk, Youth and Protest." In American Youth Cultures. Neil Campbell, ed. New York: Routledge. 2004. 209-236

### **Week 11 (4-10-06) Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Terrorism**

How has European colonialism since 1492 shaped the world we live in? Has colonialism ended or changed its form?

Film: The Battle of Algiers (1965: 120 minutes) DT295.B37  
Paradise Now (2005: 90 minutes)

The Battle of Algiers has influenced revolutionaries, terrorist organizations and government intelligence agencies. It has been shown at the Pentagon as a primer on urban warfare. The segment from Advertising and the End of the World asks how world (military) powers will act in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as important natural resources are exhausted and environmental pollution renders parts of the world unlivable. Is this phenomenon part of the overdetermination of what is happening in the Middle East today?

Reader: Evans, Martin. "La Lutte continue...? Contemporary History and Algeria." History Today. 47(2). 1997. 10-12

Gross, Larry. "A Blast from the Past that Continues to Resonate." Film Comment 40(1). 2004. 22-23 (1-2 online)

Fanon, Franz. "Concerning Violence." In The Wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press. 1963. 35-45

"David and Goliath." I Samuel 17. Bible History Online. 1-4

Rice, Condoleezza. "Opening Remarks to Commission on Terrorist Attacks." MIBT Library. 4-8-04. 1-8

Sundar, Nandini. "Toward an Anthropology of Culpability." American Ethnologist. 31(2). 2004. 1-6

Urstadt, Bryant. "The Get-Ready Men." Technology Review. Oct. 2005. 72-74

## **Week 12 (4-24-06) Globalization**

What is it? Is it or to what extent is it happening? Is it good or bad?

Film: Globalization Is Good (2003: 52 minutes)  
Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos (2000: 55 minutes) HD9734.M42  
Surviving the Bottom Line: Running with the Bulls (1998: 19 minutes)  
HC106.82.S96  
Surviving the Bottom Line: Living on the Fault Line (1998: 31 minutes)  
Trading Democracy (2002: 30 minutes) HF1756.T73  
Hotel Rwanda (2005: 122 minutes) PN1993.5.G7 H68

Taken together, these films present opposing views of globalization. Is any view the correct one? The social science literature from 1980 until recently (1997) has largely fallen into the oppression camp. Public debate has been more balanced. Governmental action has been supportive of globalization. Where are you?

Reader: Greider, William. One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1997. 11-53

Hirst, Paul and Graham Thompson. "The Problem of 'Globalization': International Economic Relations, National Economic Management and the Foundation of Trading Blocks." Economy and Society. 21(4) Nov, 1992. 357-370

Radhakrishnan, R. Theory in an Uneven World. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2003. 1-30

Useen, Michael. Investor Capitalism. New York: Basic Books. 1996. 15-37

## **Week 13 (5-1-06) Overdetermination**

Why do we seek to explain events in terms of cause and effect relationships? How can we know that anything is exactly the cause of something else? Why are we oriented toward scientific explanations and the ability to predict? If, instead, we understand that an event or situation has too many determinations to be able to single out any one or several of them as a principal cause(s) and that there are likely to be more determinations that we have not recognized, then we have arrived at a point of overdetermination.

Film: The Butterfly Effect (2004: 114 minutes) PN1977.2.B88  
Other possibilities: Sliding Doors, Regarding Henry, Thirteen Going On Thirty

In this film, one of the characters has the ability to choose a point in the past and re-enact an event to bring about a different outcome for himself and the other people involved. He can choose "door B." How many times have you wished that you had done something differently in the past? As the film shows, when you change something, there are unforeseen consequences. You can take an action, but you must realize that the consequences are unpredictable. The consequences of an event are overdetermined.

Reader: “The Butterfly Effect (2004).” <http://movies.yahoo.com>. 1-3

Gleich, James. Chaos: Making a New Science. New York: Penquin Books. 1987.  
11-31

Web. “Chaos Theory: A Brief Introduction.”  
[www.inho.com/grae/chaos/chaos.html](http://www.inho.com/grae/chaos/chaos.html) 11-10-04. 1-6

web. “Overdetermination.”  
[www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/sgabriel/post\\_structuralism.htm](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/sgabriel/post_structuralism.htm) 11-10-05. 1-5

Other Possibilities:

Consumer culture (behavior)

Technology (the body versus technology), Utopian visions – Harroway, McCluen,  
Kroker

Social fears – how the media is expressed through films