FTV 114 Film Genres: African American Cinema
Spring 2014
Tues/Thurs 9-11:20am, 1409 Melnitz & weekly discussion sections
Professor Allyson Nadia Field
(310) 825-4239; afIELD@tft.ucla.edu
Office hours: Tues 11:30-1:30, 3335 Macgowan

T.A.s: Sean Bristol-Lee (seanbristol81@gmail.com), Aruna Ekanayake (aekanayake@ucla.edu), and Dahlia Schweitzer (dahlia.schweitzer@gmail.com)

Course Description
The course covers the rich and diverse history of African American filmmaking from the silent era to the present day. Emphasis is on the use of film as a medium of protest, resistance, and cultural affirmation. Films will be discussed in the context of the complex issues surrounding race and representation in American cinema. Special attention will be paid to the preservation and restoration work of the UCLA Film & Television Archive’s collection of African American films.

Given the brevity of the quarter, the course is organized in three sections to cover key periods in the trajectory of African American cinema: “Race Film” (silent and sound), 1970s Black film cultures, and 1990s to contemporary Black cinema.

This 5-unit course satisfies the Arts & Humanities GE (Visual and Performance Arts Analysis and Practice)

Course Objectives
As a GE, the course aims to provide students with the perspectives and intellectual skills necessary to comprehend and think critically about our situation in the world as human beings. In particular, this course provides students with the basic means to appreciate and evaluate the ongoing efforts of humans to explain, translate, and transform our diverse experiences of the world through such media as language, literature, philosophical systems, images, sounds, and performances. The course will introduce students to the historical development and fundamental intellectual and ethical issues associated African American cinema. Through the lens of African American cinema, the course also investigates the complex relations between artistic and humanistic expression and other facets of society and culture.

Requirements
• Short paper (~3 pages, due April 22 at the start of lecture): 10%
• Midterm exam (1 hour, Thursday, May 1): 20%
• Long paper—open topic to be approved by your TA (~8 pages, due May 27 at the start of lecture): 20%
• Final Exam (Tuesday, June 10th, 2014, 11:30-2:30): 30%
• Active and thoughtful participation in section: 20%

Readings
All readings are available on the course website.
Part I: “Race Film” & Beyond

Week 1 – Course Introduction
Tuesday April 1
St. Louis Blues (Dir. Dudley Murphy, 1929, 16’)
Now (Dir. Santiago Álvarez, 1964, 5’)
When it Rains (Dir. Charles Burnett, 1995, 13’)

Thursday April 3
Within Our Gates (Dir. Oscar Micheaux, 1920, 79’)

Clips from The Birth of a Nation (Dir. D.W. Griffith, 1915, 190’)

Reading:

Week 2 – “Race Film” and its audiences
Tuesday April 8
Body and Soul (Dir. Oscar Micheaux, 1925, 79’)

Clips from Hell Bound Train (Dir. James and Eloyce Gist, 1929-30)
Selections from Zora Neale Hurston's fieldwork footage (Dir. Zora Neale Hurston, 1928, 5’)

Reading:

Thursday April 10
The Blood of Jesus (Dir. Spencer Williams, 1941, 68’)
Dirty Gertie from Harlem, U.S.A. (Dir. Spencer Williams, 1946, 60’)

Reading:

Week 3 – Film & Social Change: Interracial Collaborations in the 60s
Tuesday April 15
Felicia (Dirs. Bob Dickson, Alan Gorg, Trevor Greenwood, 1965, 13’)
Nothing But a Man (Dir. Michael Roemer, 1964, 95’)

Lisa Doris Alexander. ”Nothing But a Man Revisited.” Journal of Popular Film and Television 41.3 (September, 2013): 136-144.
Thursday April 17
Black Panther (a.k.a. Off the Pig) (Newsreel, 1968, 15’)
Dutchman (Dir. Anthony Harvey, 1967, 55’)

Reading:

Part II: 1970s Black Film Cultures

Week 4 – Black Independent Filmmaking & (Re)discovery of the Black urban audience
Tuesday April 22
*Short Paper Due

Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song (Dir. Melvin Van Peebles, 1971, 97’)

Clips from Story of a 3-Day Pass (Dir. Melvin Van Peebles, 1968, 87’)
Clips from Watermelon Man (Dir. Melvin Van Peebles, 1970, 100’)

Reading:

Thursday April 24
The Spook Who Sat by the Door (Dir. Ivan Dixon, 1973, 102’)
Special presentation: Sean Bristol-Lee

Clips from Shaft (Dir. Gordon Parks, 1971, 100’)

Reading:

Week 5 – Alternatives to “Blaxploitation”
Tuesday April 29
Car Wash (Dir. Michael Schultz, Universal, 1976, 97’)

Clips from Cooley High (Dir. Michael Schultz, AIP, 1975, 107’
Thursday May 1
*Midterm Exam

Week 6 – The “L.A. Rebellion”
Tuesday May 6
As Above So Below (Dir. Larry Clark, 1973, 52’)
Illusions (Dir. Julie Dash, 1982, 34’)
Your Children Come Back to You (Dir. Alile Sharon Larkin, 1979, 30’)

Reading:
Familiarize yourself with the UCLA Film & Television Archive's L.A. Rebellion website:
http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/la-rebellion


Thursday May 8
Bless their little hearts (Dir. Billy Woodberry, 1984, 80’)

Clips from Killer of Sheep (Dir. Charles Burnett, 1977, 83’)
Clips from Bush Mama (Dir. Haile Gerima, 1979, 97’)

Reading:

Part III: 1990s-Contemporary Black Cinema

Week 7 – The New Commercial Black Film
Tuesday May 13
Do the Right Thing (Dir. Spike Lee, 1989, 120’)

Reading:

Thursday May 15
Boyz ’n the Hood (Dir. John Singleton, 1991, 112’)
Special presentation: Aruna Ekanayake
Reading:

**Week 8 – Black Women’s Filmmaking & Gender and Sexuality**
**Tuesday May 20**
*Daughters of the Dust* (Dir. Julie Dash, 1991, 112’)

Reading:

**Thursday May 22**
*The Watermelon Woman* (Dir. Cheryl Dunye, 1996, 90’)

Clips from *Tongues Untied* (Dir. Marlon Riggs, 1990, 55’)

Reading:

**Week 9 – The contemporary scene**
**Tuesday May 27**
*Madea’s Family Reunion* (Dir. Tyler Perry, 2006, 107’)

*Long Paper Due*

Reading:

**Thursday May 29**
*Precious: Based on the Novel ‘Push’ By Sapphire* (Dir. Lee Daniels, 2009, 110’)
Special presentation: Dahlia Schweitzer

Reading:

**Week 10 – “A Banner Year”**
**Tuesday June 3**
*Middle of Nowhere* (Dir. Ava DuVernay, 2012, 100’)
Special presentation: Ava DuVernay, TBD
Thursday June 5

Fruitvale Station (Dir. Ryan Coogler, 2013, 85')
Special presentation: Fruitvale Station producers, TBD

*The Final Exam is Tuesday, June 10th, 2014, 11:30-2:30