



## BLACK FILM DIRECTORS

AFA 3930 - Section 0808 - SPRING - 2010  
African American Studies Program – The University of Florida  
**Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn**

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<b>Class Time:</b>	Thursdays 3PM-6PM (8-10)	<b>Credit:</b>	(03) Three Hours
<b>Class Location:</b>	Room 0151 PSY	<b>Office Location:</b>	211 Walker Hall
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tuesdays Noon to 3:00PM Other Times By Appointment	<b>Office Phone:</b>	352-392-5726
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### COURSE GOAL:

The goal of this course is to critically examine the films, experiences, philosophies and contributions of selected Black film directors.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides a historical/social introduction to the works, contributions and experiences of selected Black film directors. The course examines the successes, conflicts, innovations and challenges of specific “independent” and mainstream Black film directors and their impact on society and specific Black communities. Black film directors are heterogeneous and produce works in all genres which address every issue in our culture and work with subjects specific and nonspecific to the Black community. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, film screenings, team presentations, and individual presentations. Students will also view assigned films outside of class.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Each student will be able to: 1) utilize basic film analysis and terminology (narrative form, set design, “mise-en-scene,” auteur, content) in discussing the work of selected Black film directors, 2) name and describe the works of a sample of Black “independent” and “mainstream” film directors, 4) demonstrate an understanding of several basic concepts used to examine the “meaning” of films (i.e. world view, stereotype, representation, resistance, recoding, Black film aesthetic, etc.) in relation to African and African diaspora history and culture, 5) identify some common mainstream film character types of Black people and the ways that Black directors resist and/or reinforce them, 6) describe the relationship between film economics and access to production, distribution and exhibition channels, and 7) outline the ways that Black directors have utilized creative promotion, ancillary products, and new technologies (digital recording, HD, the internet) to get access distribution and exhibition channels.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is based on you being on time, signing the roll sheet, being prepared and staying for the entire class. It is assumed that enrollment in the class means that there are no conflicts with other obligations (work, travel, meetings, etc.) during class time. If you miss two classes, without a written medical excuse, you should consider dropping the course. **Poor attendance and tardiness will affect your final grade.** If you are over 15 minutes late for two classes meetings, you will earn one full absence. No further admonishments will be made. In the case of an official university excuse or a documented medical emergency provide me with a written letter and/or

medical excuse on a physician's official letterhead or official university letterhead that includes the time and date of your care or other business upon your return to class.

**MAKE UP POLICY:** All assignments are known in advance; therefore, permission to hand in an assignment late is only granted for exceptional circumstances.

**Quiz/Test/Exam:** Students with documented official university or medical excuses may take a make up quiz/test/exam. The professor must be notified before or immediately after the absence and the exam must be scheduled on the first day that the student returns to campus. Students who do not provide documentation and reschedule the example will not be given a make up.

**Assignments:** Students with valid official university or documented medical excuses be allowed to turn in assignments within one day of her/his return to campus without penalty. The assignment will be considered late and reduced one letter grade for each day the assignment is not turned in beginning with the due date if the proper documentation is not provided.

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** In compliance with the University of Florida's policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

**UNIVERSITY CODE OF HONOR:** Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Florida's Student Honor Code and Code of Conduct. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit **will be the student's own work**. Students suspected of academic dishonesty or of violating the Honor Code **will be reported** to the Dean of Students Office. To learn more about the UF policy regarding Academic Honesty, please visit: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>.

## **REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:**

1. **CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION** **(10%):**  
Attendance will be based on you arriving at class on time, signing the class roll sheet, and remaining for the entire class. Participation means that you have completed your readings and/or assignments on time and are able to contribute to the class discussions. Any information and/or changes that are announced in class **are YOUR responsibility, whether you attended class or not**. Unexcused absences and tardiness will decrease your grade for participation. If you must miss class, for any reason, on a day that you are due to present or turn in an assignment, you must turn in your work ahead of time. Permission to hand in an assignment late is only granted for exceptional circumstances.
2. **BLACK FILM DIRECTOR RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL** **20%:**  
Your proposal must include 1) a working title, 2) the name of the Black director, 3) a 600 word summary of at least 4 elements of the director's style that you intend to explore and analyze, 5) an organized outline of your plan for the final paper, 4) an **annotated** bibliography with, at least 10 sources (no more than two may be websites. (See the handout for more specifics).

3. **TEAM PROJECT - BLACK FILM DIRECTOR** **Due Varies** **10%:**  
 You will work with a pre-assigned group to research and prepare a presentation about a Black film director whose work we **do not** address in class. The presentation should not be a mere summary of the director's life, but a critical analysis of her/his body of work and how her/his life may have influenced it. I must pre-approve the director. (Include: Cover Sheet with title & student names, A well written 600 word summary of the director's background, style, body of works. This must include a review of three elements of the director's style, 10 annotated references, 2 questions to pose to the class, 45minute Class Presentation. (See the handout for more specifics).
4. **TEST #1** **(Date: )** **15%:**  
 The test will cover class readings, discussions, presentations, lectures and films covered up to the preceding class. It will consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer and short (essay) answer items).
5. **BLACK FILM DIRECTOR PAPER RESEARCH PAPER & PRESENTATION 25%:**  
 1. Research and write an organized and clear research 3500 word paper on the director of your choice- not including the references/filmography - about a Black Film Director. Utilize film concepts, terminology and other information discussed in class. The paper must include a references / filmography with no fewer than 10 references. (See the handout for more specifics). *You must get your director and research focus approved by submitting your proposal. If you change your director, you must resubmit your proposal before turning in your final research paper.*  
 2. Present a short 7-minute summary of your research to the class:
6. **TEST #2** **(Date: )** **20%:**  
 The test will cover the entire course - lectures, readings, discussions, presentations, and films. It will consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer and short (essay) answer items.

<b><u>REQUIREMENTS &amp; EVALUATION AT A GLANCE</u></b>	<b>%:</b>
1. Attendance & Participation	10%
2. Team Project on a Black Film Director	20%
3. Black Film Director Research Proposal	10%
4. Test #1	15%
5. Black Film Director Research Paper & Presentation	25%
6. Test #2	<u>20%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Your Grade Will Be Based On The Following Scale:** 93-100=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, 77-79=C+, 73-76=C, 70-72=C-, 67-69=D+, 63-66=D, 60-62=D-, 57-59=F+, 57 and below = F.

**PRESENTATION OF WORK:**

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 point font in MS Word. You must use a standard **one-inch** margin - no **bold**-faced fonts. Use the style APA, MLA or Chicago that is used in your academic discipline. All pages should be numbered and stapled. Do not use a cover sheet. Include the identifying information in the upper right hand corner, single-spaced. *UF has an online writing assistance site at <http://web.cwoc.ufl.edu/owl>.* Work will be considered late and graded down one letter grade after the beginning of class on the due date. Work will continue to be reduced a letter grade for each additional day it is late (*see the make up work section for more details*). **Finally, DO NOT e-mail or fax papers unless I ask you to.**

**WRITING REQUIREMENT:**

AFA 3930 can provide 4000 words toward the fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades now have two components. To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

**EVALUATION OF ALL CLASS ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS IS BASED ON:**

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on all written assignments. Your work will be evaluated with respect to 1) Quality, scope and organization of documentation; 2) Clarity and coherence of expression; 3) Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation; 4) Quality of critical analysis; 5) Demonstration of an understanding of information and concepts addressed in the readings and/or discussed in class; 6) Following directions and completing assignments on time. Students are also expected to meet the minimum word count and deadlines as outlined in the syllabus.

**GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

AFA 3930 section 0808 can satisfy the General Education requirements for Humanities (H) and Diversity (D). You must complete and turn in at least 4000 words of evaluated writing during the semester in order to receive credit. You must earn a grade of “C” or better to earn general education credit.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: - CONTENT AND SKILLS:**

<b>HUMANITIES</b>		
<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
Know the history, underlying theories and methodologies used within film studies.	Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within African American Studies.  Approach issues and problems within that discipline from multiple perspectives.	Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively in forms appropriate to African American Studies, individually and/or in groups.

<b>DIVERSITY</b>		
<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>CRITICAL THINKING</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>
Know the roles of social structure and status of different African Americans within the United States and how they have been represented in Film.  Display an appreciation for the different cultures that influence and are influenced by African American culture as represented in films.	Identify, evaluate and compare your own social, cultural, racial and gender status and media consumption habits and influences with those of other persons and groups.  Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences in the film communication process that shape world views in America.	This diversity designation is in conjunction with the Humanities category and the communication outcome is listed there.  Possess communication skills specifically to effectively write and speak.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Donalson, Melvin Burke (2003). Black Directors in Hollywood. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Alexander, G. (2003). *Why we make movies: Black filmmakers talk about the magic of cinema*. New York: Harlem Moon.

The chapters on the following directors are required: Michael Schultz, Haile Gerima, Euzhan Palcy, St. Clair Bourne, Stanley Nelson, Kathe Sandler, Gina Prince Blythewood.

**REQUIRED FILMS:** Below, please find the titles of the films that you are required to see and be prepared to discuss by the date listed below. You may also rent most of the films at local video stores and via the online service Netflix (<http://www.netflix.com>).

VIEW BEFORE CLASS ON	FILM TITLE	LOCATION
	<i>That's Black Entertainment</i> (1990) William Greaves & G. William Jones.	In Class
	<i>Within Our Gates</i> (1919) Oscar Micheaux	Library West
	<i>Oreos With Attitude</i> (1991) Larry Carty	In Class
	<i>New Jack City</i> (1991) Mario Van Peebles	Marston Science
	<i>Amazing Grace</i> (1974) Stan Lathan	Library West
	<i>Woman Thou Art Loosed</i> (2004) Michael Schultz	Library West
	<i>Cooley High</i> (1975) Michael Schultz	Library West
	<i>Sankofa</i> (1993) Haile Gerima	In Class
	<i>Finding Christa</i> (1991) Camille Billops	Marston Science
	<i>She's Gotta Have It</i> (1986) Spike Lee	Library West
	<i>School Daze</i> (1988) Spike Lee	In Class
	<i>Juice</i> (1992) Ernest Dickerson	Library West
	<i>Cycles</i> (1988) by Zeinabu Irene Davis	In Class
	<i>Sugar Cane Alley</i> (1983) Euzhan Palcy	In Class
	<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> (2002) Prince -Bythewood	Library West
	<i>Hair Piece: A Film For Nappy Headed People</i> (1985) Ayoka Chenzira	In Class
	<i>Four Women</i> (1976) Julie Dash	In Class
	<i>A Question of Color</i> (1993) Kathe Sandler	Library West
	<i>The Murder of Emmet Till</i> (2002) Stanley Nelson	In Class
	<i>Chameleon Street</i> (1990) by Wendell B. Harris, Jr.	Library West
	<i>Devil In A Blue Dress</i> (1995) Carl Franklin	Library West

## BLACKS FILM DIRECTORS - COURSE OUTLINE

DATE	TOPIC(S)	READING(S)/FILM(S)/ASSIGNMENT(S)
<i>Week 1</i>	<b>COURSE OVERVIEW</b> Film Communication Process Film Directing, Film Terms	<b>Film In Class:</b> <i>That's Black Entertainment</i> (1990) William Greaves & G. William Jones.
<i>Week 2</i>	<b>PATHMAKERS</b> <b>VISIONARY ACTORS</b> Oscar Micheaux, Gordon Parks and William Greaves	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson – Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2  <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>Within Our Gates</i> (1919) Oscar Micheaux (Silent Film) <b>Film In Class:</b> <i>Oreos With Attitude</i> (1991) Larry Carty
<i>Week 3</i>	<b>BLACK URBAN ACTION FILMS</b> <b>MAINSTREAM IMAGES</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 3 <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>New Jack City</i> (1991) Mario Van Peebles
<i>Week 4</i>	<b>DIRECTING APPROACHES</b>  <b>BLACK SENSIBILITIES &amp; MAINSTREAM IMAGES</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 4  <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>Amazing Grace</i> (1974) Stan Lathan
<i>Week 5</i>	<b>MICHAEL SCHULTZ</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 5 <b>Film In Library:</b> <i>Woman Thou Art Loosed</i> (2004) Michael Schultz <b>Film in Class:</b> <i>Cooley High</i> (1975) Michael Schultz
<i>Week 6</i> Jan 28	<b>HAILE GERIMA</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Alexander: Chapter on Haile Gerima

	<b>THE L.A. REBELLION FILM MOVEMENT</b>	<b>Film In Class:</b> <i>Sankofa</i> (1993) Haile Gerima
<b>Week 7</b> <b>Feb 4</b>	<b>SPIKE LEE</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 6  <b>Due:</b> Turn In Term Paper Proposal <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>She's Gotta Have It</i> (1986) Spike Lee <b>Film In Class:</b> <i>School Daze</i> (1988) Spike Lee
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>A THIRD WAVE OF MEN TEAM #1</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 7  <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>Juice</i> (1992) Ernest Dickerson
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>TEST #1</b>	<b>TEST #1:</b> Covers everything through Week 6  <b>Film In Class:</b> <i>Cycles</i> (1988) by Zeinabu Davis
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>EUZHAN PALCY</b>  <b>TEAM #2</b>	<b>Alexander:</b> Chapter : Euzhan Palcy  <b>Film:</b> <b>Film in Class:</b> <i>Sugar Cane Alley</i> (1983) Euzhan Palcy
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>BLACK WOMEN DIRECTORS</b>  <b>TEAM #3</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 8 Alexander: Chapter on G. Prince-Bythewood  <b>Film In Library:</b> <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> (2002) Prince - Bythewood <b>Film In Class:</b> <i>Hair Piece: A Film For Nappy Headed People</i> (1985) Ayoka Chenzira AND <i>Four Women</i> (1976) Julie Dash
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>NONFICTION DIRECTORS</b>  <b>TEAM #4</b>	<b>Alexander:</b> Chapters on Stanley Nelson, Kathe Sandler and St. Clair Bourne  <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>A Question of Color</i> (1993) Kathe Sandler <b>Film In Class:</b> <i>The Murder of Emmet Till</i> (2002) Stanley Nelson
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>DIRECING COMEDY &amp; ROMANCE</b>  <b>TEAM #5</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapters 9 & 10  <b>Film In Library:</b> <i>Chameleon Street</i> (1990) by Wendell B. Harris, Jr.
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>NEW TRENDS AND A HIP HOP FLAVOR</b>  <b>HOW FAR HAVE BLACK DIRECTORS COME?</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Donalson - Chapter 11  <b>Film in Library:</b> <i>Devil In A Blue Dress</i> (1995) Carl Franklin
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>RESEARCH PAPERS (E-Mail, Turn in hard copy &amp; give presentation)</b>	<b>Due:</b> E-mail Final Papers to me by 10AM. Hard Copy due at the start of class. NO LATE PAPERS will be accepted. <b>Due:</b> Final research paper presentations (5-7 minutes each)
<b>Week 16</b> <b>EXAM DAY</b>	<b>TEST #2</b>	<b>LAST CLASS MEETING</b>

**FINAL NOTES:** This syllabus is subject to change, but you will be notified ahead of time. No eating or drinking in class. Also, cell phones, computers and other electronic devices may not be used during class.

# Names of Selected Directors FYI

Abiola Abrams	Shirikiana Gerima	Sidney Poitier
William Alexander	F. Gary Gray	Tim Reid
Madeline Anderson	Henry Hampton	Matty Rich
Orlando Bagwell	Hobart Whitaker Harris	Marlon Riggs
Neema Barnett	Wendell Burks Harris, Jr.	Hugh Robertson
James Bond III	Reginald Hudlin	Michael Schultz *
St. Clair Bourne *	Warrington Hudlin	Oz Scott
Charles Burnett *	Allen & Albert Hughes	Jackie Shearer
Gina Prince – Bythewood	Kevin Hooks	Millicent Shelton
Roy Campanella II	Ashley James	John Singleton
Topper Carew	Dianne Houston	Arlando C. Smith
Thomas Carter	David Clark Johnson	Charles Stone III
Ayoka Chenzira *	Avon Kirkland	Kevin Rodney Sullivan *
Francee Covington	Alile Sharon Larkin	George Tillman Jr. *
Ice Cube	Stan Lathan	Robert Townsend *
Lee Daniels	Spike Lee	Melvin Van Peebles *
Julie Dash *	Kasi Lemmons	Mario Van Peebles
Zeinabu Irene Davis	Darnell Martin	Mark Warren
Ivan Dixon	Louis Massiah	Denzel Washington
Earnest Dickerson	Barbara McCullough	Keenan Ivory Wayans *
Bill Duke	Oscar Devereaux Micheaux *	(Damon, Shawn and Marion)
Cheryl Dunye	Gilbert Moses	Yvonne Welborn
Jamaa Fanaka	Stanley Nelson	Spencer Williams
Carl Franklin	Euzhan Palcy *	Fred Williamson *
Wendell Franklin	Michelle Parkerson	Allen Willis
Antione Fuqua	Gordon Parks *	Preston Wittmore
Haile Gerima *	Gordon Parks, Jr.	Forest Whitaker
	Tyler Perry *	Theodore Witcher

## **RECOMMENDED READING:**

Bobo, Jacqueline Bobo. (1998). Black Women Film and Video Artists NY: Routledge, AFI Film Readers.

Bogle, Donald (2003). *Toms, coons, mulattoes, mammies & Bucks: An interpretive history of blacks in american films (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*. NY: Continuum.

George, Nelson. (2002). Blackface: Reflections on African Americans and the Movies New York, NY: Cooper Square Press.

Guerrero, Ed. (1993). Framing Blackness: the African American Image in Film. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Series title: Culture and the moving image.

## **RECOMMENDED WEBSITES:**

Blackflix.com

blackfilm.com

Black Film Center / Archive: <http://www.indiana.edu/~bfca/>

Blaxploitation Cinema: <http://www.blaxploitation.com/>

Black Box Office: <http://theblackboxoffice.com/about/>

Black Hollywood Education & Resource Center: <http://bherc.org/>

Internet Archive of Moving Images: <http://www.archive.org/details/movies>

Racism in Disney Cartoons on YouTube

Film Term Glossary: <http://www.filmsite.org/filmterms.html>

Tips on Viewing a Film: <http://www.filmsite.org/filmview.html>

AI Movie Guide: <http://www.allrovi.com/movies?r=allmovie>

Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/>