

Professor Chris Gilliard

Office Briggs 218, 993-2003

Office Hours TTh 12:35-1:35 and by appointment

Email *gilliacs@udmercy.edu*

Day/Time TTh 9:55-11:10

Room CF 208

"I propose that we view the whole of American life as a drama acted out upon the body of a Negro Giant."

--Ralph Ellison *Shadow and Act*

Course Description

This course studies the intersections of mass media, culture, and ideology. It looks at all aspects of the mass media as texts which can be "read" in order to reveal the value systems of the culture, especially as they apply to race, class, gender, work, identity and knowledge. The main focus of this course will be the analysis of both visual and discursive narratives of the black body in order to further our understanding of the concepts of "black" and "blackness" within the United States.

Required Texts

Black Looks: Race and Representation, bell hooks

Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art (coursepack), ed. Thelma Golden

Watching Race, Television and the Struggle for "Blackness", Herman Gray

Class Process

This course is a seminar. As such, the quality of the class will depend upon **you, the student**, as much (if not more), than upon me the professor. While I have provided the general structure and assignments, my job is not to provide you with "answers". Your contributions are essential to making this an exciting and worthwhile class. Your primary job is to do all of the assigned readings and come to class prepared to engage in intelligent, constructive, and critical discourse with the rest of the class about the assigned texts.

Students will also be responsible for posting at least two messages per week on an email list. This list will serve as an extension of classroom discussions. The purpose of the list is to more fully engage classroom issues, to ask and answer questions, and to provide an intellectual community that operates in conjunction with the class. These messages must be substantial (at least two paragraphs in length), thoughtful, and relevant to the course. They also must adhere to the same standards of conversational etiquette which govern the classroom.

Students will also be responsible for attending all film screenings (12:45-2:00 in Briggs 10 unless otherwise indicated). If you are not available during this time, you must make other arrangements to view the films, which will be on reserve at the library.

Assignments

Class participation and email list: 20% (see above)

Midterm paper: 25%

Group project: 15%

Students will form small groups (no more than 5), choose a topic relevant to Black popular culture, provide readings for the entire class, and conduct one class session

Final project: 40%

This project can be a research paper, a website, a film, a work of art, or any other "text" in the Cultural Studies sense that critically engages, performs, or problematizes one or more of the dominant themes that make up the class.

Reading List

Tuesday September 4: Introduction

Thursday September 6: Cultural Studies and "Blackness"

What is Cultural Studies?

Stuart Hall "What is this "Black" in Black Popular Culture?"

Tuesday September 11

Gilroy "All About the Benjamins"

Thursday September 13

hooks, in *Black Looks*, Intro and "Loving Blackness"

Omi and Winant, "Racial Formation in the United States"

Tuesday September 18: African Americans and Film

Guerrero in *Framing Blackness*, "From Birth to Blaxploitation"

Screening: *Birth of a Nation*

Thursday September 20

hooks in *Black Looks*, Ch. 7

Diawara "Black Spectatorship"

Tuesday September 25

Guerrero "The Rise and Fall of Blaxploitation", in *Black Male*, "The Black Man on Our Screens and the Empty Space in Representation"

Screening: *The Mack*

Thursday September 27

Wiegman "Feminism, 'The Boyz' and Other Matters Regarding the Male"

Jones "The Construction of Black Sexuality"

Tuesday October 2

Boskin "An Epitaph Read Backward in Time", "Prismatic Projections"

Screening: *Bamboozled*

Thursday October 4: Television and Blackness

Gray *Watching Race*, Ch. 1-4

Tuesday October 9

Gray *Watching Race* Ch. 5, 6, 8

Kristal Brent Zook *Color by Fox* Ch. 2-3

Thursday October 11

Butler "Endangered/Endangering"

Fanon "The Fact of Blackness"

Tuesday October 16

Marable "Clarence Thomas and the Crisis of Black Political Culture"

Gray Ch. 9-10

Wallace, "Entertainment Tomorrow"

Thursday October 18: Black Athletes and Commodity Culture

Midterm Paper Due

Tuesday October 23

Goldman and Papson "Just Metacommunicate It", "Nike and the Construction of a Celebrity Democracy", "Alienation, Hope and Transcendance"

Thursday October 25

hooks, "Eating the Other" in *Black Looks*

Tuesday October 30

Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"

Dyson "Michael Jordan and the Pedagogy of Desire"

Thursday November 1

hooks in *Black Male* "Feminism Inside"

Andrews "Excavating Michael Jordan's Blackness"

Tuesday November 6

LaFrance and Rail "As Bad as He Says He Is?"

Dworkin and Wachs "Disciplining the Body"

Thursday November 8

Oriard Muhammad Ali: The Hero in the Age of Mass Media

Tuesday November 13: Interrogating Whiteness

hooks "Representations of Whiteness"

Dyer "The Matter of Whiteness"

Thursday November 15

Dyer "Coloured White, Not Coloured"

Giroux

Tuesday November 20

TBA

Thursday November 22: Thanksgiving

Tuesday November 27: What Now?

hooks "Reconstructing Black Masculinity"

Thursday November 29

Tate in *Black Male*

Tuesday December 4

West "The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual"

Thursday December 6

TBA

Tuesday December 11

Final Project Due