

**Film and Ethnicity**  
**Fuller Theological Seminary**

Instructor: John McAteer, [filmphilosopher@gmail.com](mailto:filmphilosopher@gmail.com)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is an introduction to U.S. ethnic narratives through their (mis)representation in Hollywood films. Students will be introduced to the concept of race as a social construction and will then explore the way Hollywood movies have constructed racial identities. The course will focus especially on African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latino narratives but will also touch on Arabic, Indian, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and other ethnicities. Special attention will be given to the concept of “whiteness”, “otherness”, and to miscegenation with the goal of encouraging thought on the development of multiracial church congregations.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** (1) Students will be able to articulate historical and theoretical knowledge about ethnic cultures as social constructions, especially concerning the United States and the representations of ethnicities in Hollywood films. (2) Students will express appreciation from ethnic cultures, personal and communal responsibility and ownership regarding ethnic narratives, and a commitment to overcoming racism in society and in churches. (3) Students will demonstrate culturally-informed interpretive and communication skills regarding social histories, contemporary cultural expressions (especially in film), and personal relationships. (4) Students will be able to critically engage the course’s theoretical and narrative resources in relationship to church and ministry today.

**RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY:** By studying the ethnic identities and the way these identities are constructed by American popular culture, students will be able to see through (and teach others to see through) the ways popular culture encourages misunderstanding and intolerance. As a result, students will be prepared to work for racial reconciliation within the church and in the wider American culture.

**COURSE FORMAT:** TBD

**REQUIRED READING**

Benshoff, Harry M. and Sean Griffin. *America on Film: Representing Race, Class,*

*Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (Blackwell, 2003): ISBN 0631225838

Bruce, Steve. *Sociology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000): ISBN 0192853805

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul, Michael O Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim.

*United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford, 2004): ISBN 0195177525

Wartenberg, Thomas E. *Unlikely Couples: Movie Romances as Social Criticism* (Westview, 2001): ISBN 081333439X

**RECOMMENDED READING**

Bernardi, Daniel, ed. *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness* (University of Minnesota, 2001): ISBN 0816632391

Bernardi, Daniel, ed. *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema* (Rutgers, 1996): ISBN 0813522765  
Emerson, Michael O. and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford, 2001): ISBN 0195147073  
Friedman, Lester D., ed. *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and the American Cinema* (University of Illinois, 1991): ISBN 0252061527  
Plate, S. Brent and David Jasper, eds. *Imag(in)ing Otherness: Filmic Visions of Living Together* (Oxford, 2001): ISBN 0788505939  
Vera, Hernan and Andrew Gordon. *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (Roman & Littlefield, 2003): ISBN 0847699471

<http://ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/Race/index.asp> (Especially material on whiteness, etc.)

ASSIGNMENTS: TBD [compare Frederick Douglas narrative to Kearney on constructing identity through stories.]

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: Meets MA Cultural Literacy Requirement

FINAL EXAMINATION: TBD