SOC 454/545: SOCIOLOGY THROUGH FILM

Spring 2021
Time and Day: Asynchronous
Location: Online via Canvas
Group Office Hours: T 9:30-10:00 am; 5:30-6:00pm
Individual Office Hours: 9:00-9:30am; 5:00-5:30pm
Office Hours: Conferences via Canvas

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION
Filmmakers, like sociological fieldworkers, use stories to trace the action of their subjects or characters and scenes to reconstruct their shared social worlds. Through sociological studies and documentary and narrative films, the course examines portrayals of social institutions and processes which may include education, ethnic relations, artistic production, and other fields. 4 credits. Prerequisite: SOC 200, SOC 310, or SOC 320.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Through the examination of films and using various film genres (i.e., dark humor, foreign, satire, comedy, documentary), this course is designed to develop critical thinking by using visual, oral, and aural modes of communication. We will apply theoretical perspectives to explain how society, communities, and subgroups address issues that may be controversial, complex, or mundane. Film is a useful tool to illustrate sociological concepts covered in the course material. The films are intended to help students make connections between the course material as well as broadening their understanding of the various issues covered in the course to the society-at-large. Please be aware that this is NOT a course where you will engage in idle film viewing. There will be films that we may love, some you we hate, others that will horrify us, and others that we will want to watch over and over again.

With these varied film styles and your responses to them, you are expected to apply appropriately and adequately your knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, complete quizzes, submit writing assignments, and engage in discussions through the course modules. It may help you to take notes when viewing the films or when reviewing the course lectures/discussions. You may find them of use when completing the assignments.
COURSE GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The goal of this course is to provide you the opportunity to apply sociological concepts and theories to films and to engage in critical thinking and critical viewing of films. Thus, you will be an active learner rather than a passive participant.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, all students will have either acquired or begun to:

- Develop the ability to discuss sociological issues/concepts as they appear in film and apply the theoretical processes that underlie them.
- Apply their knowledge of the course material by adequately and appropriately responding to quizzes, essay assignments, and exam questions.
- Enhance their ability to hear and understand the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments of others and in one’s own, as well as being able to defend their arguments.
- Through the process of writing assignments, refine their individual writing skills.
- Be able to critique their writing strengths and weaknesses.
- Gain the ability to engage in critical thinking through viewing films and connecting them with the assigned course materials.
- Ability to show knowledge of sociological theory through course assignments.
- Submit work in the required American Sociological Association (ASA) Style format.

THE COURSE MATERIALS

All of the readings are on the course website. The majority of the course videos are available through Millar library (i.e., Kanopy, Films on Demand), YouTube, and other sources such as Amazon Prime, Netflix, etc. There are no course texts so consider one-month free trials or paid subscriptions by film or by month for the above providers.

The films have been selected after consideration of their content and the stories on, within, and behind the camera. Be we will be covering films that many of you have probably never heard of and/or have never seen. This will make it all the more imperative that you take notes when viewing films. Pay attention to characters, sets, lighting, location, and plot lines.

There may be times when we will be reading or watching historical or contemporary material or engaging in discussions that may be uncomfortable for some of you due to its graphic nature. If you feel it necessary to take a breather, please do so. Nonetheless, each student is responsible for the assigned material as they are likely to be included in the course assignments. Thus, you should work with your classmates in either online chats or group discussions of the material or see me during office hours for assistance.

It is true that readings and videos may difficult at times. Yet, everyone is bound to find something that piques their interest so that they feel comfortable bringing up in the online discussions or when completing assignments. Given the diverse approaches in the course readings, we will learn how to gain a better understanding of sociology by engaging in in-depth critiques of the written and visual material. It is important to participate in the online discussions and complete the assignments because they can help us to better grasp of and deeper insight into the material. I have noticed that those who consistently participate in online discussions AND submit the course assignments do better overall than those who do not.
HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I PUT INTO THE COURSE?

In the hectic world we live in today, we are being hard pressed to find someone who is not busy, however, that does not mean that there are no expectations regarding how much work should go into each course. If you are using your time wisely (turn off the cellphone and get off of Tik Tok!) you can complete the work in a reasonable amount of time. Each film has the running time included. For the readings, I have taken into consideration how much time it takes on average to read or listen to them. Similarly, I know how long it takes me to write a certain number of words or pages and have increased the time for you.

Given the advice on PSU’s Academic Planning page [https://www.pdx.edu/advising/academic-planning](https://www.pdx.edu/advising/academic-planning) on the amount of time allotted for classroom instruction and out of class work for a 4 credit course breaks down to about 4 hours of instruction per week and 8-12 of out-of-class time per week which includes studying, reading, and assignments. It may seem like a lot, but manage time using a calendar or alarm can help determine when there are periods of time when there is a lot to do and times when there is less to do. The course calendar and to-do list on Canvas show when assignments are due.

The course materials will be available in sections. So, while it is possible for you to do some of the material in advance or according to your own schedule, others, such as the weekly discussions will need to be submitted during a one-week period.

PSU DISABILITY STATEMENT

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. I have already been notified by DRC if you receive accommodations.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and believe accommodations are required, contact the Disability Resource Center site [https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center/accommodations](https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center/accommodations) to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. You may also contact the DRC by calling 503-725-4150 or via email drc@pdx.edu.

PSU IX REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU’s support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU’s Sexual Misconduct Response site [https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/](https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/) or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725- 5672.

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor or the University’s Title IX Coordinator or the Office of Affirmative Action. For more information about Title IX, please visit the PSU Sexual Assault Student Code of Conduct site [https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/student-code-conduct](https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/student-code-conduct).
EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT IMPACT YOUR PERFORMANCE IN THIS CLASS?
Please be sure to let me know if you begin to encounter problems understanding the material. If you need assistance, ask for it. Do not feel you are alone. There is help available. If you are dealing with a matter that requires your professors to be notified or where you need help and need to talk to someone on the CARE Team, contact the Dean of Student Life https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/ for assistance. They are located in 433 Smith, by phone at 725-4422, or by email at askdos@pdx.edu.

There are deadlines for requesting permission for a late withdraw and they are only given for extenuating circumstances. However, prior to this deadline, there is the ability to withdraw from a course without permission. Deadlines are on the Office of the Registrar website. https://www.pdx.edu/registration/withdraw-cancellation-and-drops

SOME RULES OF THE ROAD
Please refer to me as either “Dr. Jackson” or “Prof. Jackson”. You can always reach me during online office hours or by email. You may leave a message on my voicemail which will come to me via email. It is rare that I will not be available during scheduled office hours. If something comes up, I will post a message under Announcements on Canvas or through email.

- Adhere to all deadlines. Use a calendar, hard copy or virtual to help keep you organized. This is especially important because I do not accept late assignments. Submit assignments early if you believe you will have a problem conforming to deadlines. If you are not checking in to the course site regularly, you will likely miss announcements or assignments. I do not offer extra credit. If you miss an assignment, you have missed it.
- Professors are asked to report students’ progress midway through the term to the Registrar’s Office and I will be responding to their request for all undergraduate students.
- Ethical and professional behavior is standard in all classroom settings (face-to-face and remote). Students must adhere to the university’s academic honesty policy and to the professional standards required in all courses in the department of sociology.
- If you do not understand a word or phrase I am using in the course videos, assignments, or elsewhere on the course site, please ask. Someone else probably is wondering the same thing!
- Get help when you need it. Do not ignore a problem because you feel embarrassed. If you have trouble with note-taking or writing papers, please visit the Writing Center for help. See the Helpful Resources link on Canvas.
- I expect you to do well in the course and you should expect to do well too. I am an experienced teacher. If I recommend that you do something (i.e., edit your work before submitting it, write more, read the comments provided in graded assignments and/or rubrics, read more, participate more frequently, etc.), it is because I believe it will help you. Try to adjust your habits so you are more productive. I want you to be successful not only in this course but everywhere.
- I have had countless students over the years. I have heard everything. Do not hesitate to see me if you are having a problem with the class. If you need help with things issues that are not related to the class, please seek help from your advisor, the counseling office, DRC, your coach, or whomever is there to assist you.

MY OFFICE HOURS
OFFICE HOURS – GROUP and ONE-ON-ONE OPTIONS
✓ The group office hour is just that, an open format that gives you an opportunity to discuss topics that
you might be stuck on. The link to group office hours is under the Conferences link on Canvas. Offices
hours are not mandatory and students in asynchronous courses rarely take advantage of them, but I
offer them for those who may need them. The Conferences office hours will take you to something
called Big Blue Button. Once you click the link to join, I will see an icon alerting me that you are there.
You have the option of turning your camera off or on (I tend to have my camera off) and for some
students, this is a better option if Wi-fi is inconsistent. There is also a chat box option for you to type
your questions.

✔ One-on-one office hours give students an opportunity to discuss anything of a more private nature (i.e.,
DRC related, confusion about an assignment, clarification about a grade, individualized ideas for how
to study and prepare for writing assignments, quizzes, advising, and other types of personal concerns
or issues you might want to discuss). Use the Conferences tab on Canvas for group office hours. You
can request a one-on-one appointment in one of the available slots on Tuesday mornings or afternoons.
✔ You will receive an email confirmation from me that we will be meeting. If you need more time, we will
expand our meeting, schedule permitting.

TECHNOLOGY
✔ Your enrollment in this course is because you are eager to learn the material and to complete the
requirements for your degree. If you have Wi-fi limitations, please consider whether the course will
work for you given its asynchronous format and required film viewings.

✔ In order to address concerns about technology, you have deadlines to complete the work but do not
wait until the last minute. Submitting assignments early is a much better tactic than waiting five minutes
before you hit the upload or send button. [See Timeliness below for more on this topic.]

TIMELINESS
✔ Early assignments are not penalized, but late assignments are heavily penalized. Thus, you are
encouraged to start assignments early and submit them early on Canvas where indicated. If you need a
“nudge” to get you to focus on writing, I highly recommend Focusmate.com and TomatoTimer.com,
writing and time management accountability sites. You should also watch the TED Talk video on The
Mind of a Master Procrastinator. It is entertaining and the speaker makes some very good observations.
All of the above can be found on Canvas.

EXTRA CREDIT
✔ None. Given the amount of time allotted for completion and the nature of the assignments, there is no
need to assign additional assignments. If I added another assignment at the start of the course that is
one thing but to add it at the end is something different. If I give one student an extra credit assignment
later in the term, I would have to do the same for everyone. That does not really seem fair if you have
to add yet another unexpected assignment to your schedule.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND DUE DATES
The distribution of the course assignments allows each student to know where they stand during the semester. I aim to help you optimize your grade by assigning you projects that are small weekly ones and those where you submit small assignments throughout the semester rather than relying on one or two large projects to determine your final grade. While there are minimum page requirements, keep in mind that it is the content that matters as much as the quantity. If you tend to do a job that is last-minute, falls short of delving into the content, and are weak in your analysis, it will show. It will particularly stand out if you have peers who are really into films and who do a deeper analysis.

Weekly Discussions 20%
During the term, you will be responding weekly to questions or comments I provide in Canvas under Discussions. The purpose of the discussions is to provide me and your classmates with your analysis of the readings and films in a 300-word minimum post. These are due by midnight each Saturday.

Weekly Response posts 10%
Give a 150-word response to at least two posts (you are welcome to respond to more) by your classmates. Try to avoid waiting until the last minute to post. You will not receive full credit for extremely brief or weak responses. These are due by midnight each Saturday.

Quizzes, Comments, and More! 10%
Participation in the discussions can contribute to your understanding of the material within a synchronous environment. However, there are other assignments you will be given to help you learn the material. Some of these may include quizzes, polls, response essays, and other opportunities to stay engaged, check your understanding of the material, and ensure you are not falling behind. Look for these in the PowerPoints.

Short Essay Assignments 20%
There are two (2) short essay assignments worth 10% each due by midnight on Thursday, April 15, 2021 and Thursday, May 7, 2021 respectively. These will be brief, ranging from 4-6 pages, excluding the reference page. There is a specific purpose for these assignments, so it is important that you submit them. Detailed information on each of the short-essay assignments will appear on Canvas approximately two weeks before the due date which gives you ample time in which to begin and finish. You are encouraged to attend the group office hours if you need help with an assignment. These are due in weeks 3 and 6. All essay assignments must be in ASA Style Format.

Mid Term Assignment 20%
The midterm is due by midnight on Thursday, April 29, 2021. As with all other essay assignments, it must be submitted on Canvas by the due date. Also, if you have any problems with this assignment, please contact me. This is a seven (7) page minimum assignment builds upon the first essay assignment that is revised and expanded upon. This is due on Thursday, April 29. The midterm assignment must be in ASA Style Format.

Final Research Paper 20%
Your research paper is due by midnight Thursday, June 10, 2021. This final paper is the culmination of the two short essay assignments and the midterm. The result is a final paper that addresses a substantive issue or theme that was covered in the films and readings. Your paper will be 15-17 pages, not including citations. Your paper must have a research question, literature review, discussion, and references in American Sociological Association (ASA) style format.
SCHEDULED READINGS AND FILM VIEWINGS

Film and its Emergence in U.S. Cinema – We begin by discussing the social impact of the film industry on the U.S. We will also cover various film genres, character, and plot lines that show the film industry’s attempt to address social issues. Some of the issues discussed in one week, may have been touched upon in previous weeks so consider how the knowledge of issues may serve as building blocks for deeper understandings. Look for themes that focus on race, deviance, stereotypes (gender, race, cultural), gender identity, and conflict, to name a few.

Week 1: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture in Film

Readings

1) African Americans in U.S. Film*¹ (1-20)
2) Asians in American Film* (39-52)
3) Jewish Americans in American Cinema* (483-493)
4) Latinos and Latinas in Hollywood Films* (498-501)
5) How the L.A. Times Covered the Premiere of the original “Birth of a Nation”
6) “How ‘The Birth of a Nation’ Revived the Ku Klux Klan” History.com

Films

- Demographic Structure of Society – Race and Ethnicity (5 mins 46 secs)
  https://youtu.be/4WliConeatM
- The Birth of a Nation (1915, 192 mins)* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_yU8rRQKoA
- [Note: View only 1:25-3:10 Abraham Lincoln’s assassination, Reconstruction Era, creation of the Ku Klux Klan]
- That Chink at Golden Gulch (1910, 14 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ES53eJPqQsA
- [Optional The Cheat (1915, 58 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ES53eJPqQsA]

Week 2: Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Identity, and Culture

Readings

1) Ching, Eric, Christina Buckley, and Angélica Lozano-Alonso. 2007. “Film Foray”: Mi Familia/My Family in Pps. 306-17, Reframing Latin America: A Cultural Theory reading of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
5) Indians in Film* (451-456)

Films

- *Mi Familia/My Family* (1995, 126 mins English w/Spanish subtitles)
- *My Mother Thought She was Audrey Hepburn* (1992, 19 mins)  
  https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/my-mother-thought-she-was-audrey-hepburn
- *Broken Arrow* (1950)  
  https://tubitv.com/movies/545172/broken-arrow?utm_source=google-feed&tracking=google-feed

Week 3: LGBTQ+ Films

Readings


Films

- *Pariah* (2011, 1:26) (Available on Amazon Prime Video)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it7Kra-Aw-g
- *The Watermelon Woman* (1996, 84 mins)  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luEx0222yXQ (English with Portuguese subtitles)
- *Moonlight* (2016, 111 mins)  
  https://psu.kanopy.com/video/moonlight

Week 4: Group Dynamics

Readings

   *Black Camera* 8(2):183-207.

Films

- *Do the Right Thing* (1989, 125 mins)  
  Free trial on Hulu available https://www.hulu.com/movie/do-the-right-thing-e80c4543-a56a-4cd1-aee5-59772aadba9b
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpQqfuxRxh8
- *High Noon* (1952, 85 mins)  
  https://vimeo.com/156370921

Week 5: Children and Conflict in Film

Readings

1) Gildersleeve, Jessica and Beata Batorowicz. 2017. “‘He is Telling Us Fairy Tales’: Parental Anxiety and Wartime Childhood in *Life is Beautiful, The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and *Fairy Tales from Auschwitz.*”  

**Films**
- *Life is Beautiful* (*Le Vita è Bella*) (1997, 122 mins)
- *Osama* (2003, 83 mins) (Afghani with English captions)
  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpFJJd3ZNpo

**Week 6: Deviance**

**Readings**


**Films**
- *Reefer Madness* (1936, 68 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhQlcMHhF3w
- *A Clockwork Orange* (1971, 137 mins) (Available on Netflix, Showtime subscription, pay for other streaming services)
  
  Behind the Scenes of A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick) (52 mins)
  

**Week 7: Blaxploitation**

**Readings**

3) Pierson, Eric. 2016. “In the Beginning There was *Shaft.*” Pages 77-101 in L. Novotny, G Gerald R. Butters, Jr., Novotny Lawrence, Gerald R. Butters, Jr., Walter Metz, Vivian N. Halloran (Eds.) *Beyond Blaxploitation.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

**Films**
- *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973, 102 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= BynXfREPG8
Week 8: Tackling Social Realities

Readings

Films
- Jungle Fever (1991, 148 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrSk8MoWtFo (poor quality but it was the best I could find)
- Fruitvale Station (2013, 85 mins) (Available on Netflix)
- The Cast of 'Fruitvale Station' on Working on a True Story (3 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDaaEWqi5O0

Week 9: Documenting Histories and Realities

Readings

Films
- 13th (2016, 100 mins) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8
- Divided States: Portland (2018, 44 mins)

Week 10: Dystopian Films

Readings
Films

- **Get Out** (2017, 164 mins) [https://digitalcampus-swankmp.net.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/portlandstate303549/play/479263b4e3b6b6b6?referrer=direct](https://digitalcampus-swankmp.net.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/portlandstate303549/play/479263b4e3b6b6b6?referrer=direct)
- **Children of Men** (2006, 149 mins) [https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/portlandstate303549/watch/EE9BC0E43A7B7209?referrer=direct](https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/portlandstate303549/watch/EE9BC0E43A7B7209?referrer=direct)
- **Snowpiercer** (2013, 126 mins) [https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/portlandstate303549/watch/7E67BDC407D58358?referrer=direct](https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/portlandstate303549/watch/7E67BDC407D58358?referrer=direct)