ENG375/AFS375: African American Film  
Fall 2004  
Monday/Wednesday 2:35-4:25, Caldwell G107

“To be entrapped in other people’s fictions puts us under arrest.”  
—Toni Cade Bambara

Dr. Marsha Orgeron  
Office: Tompkins 287  
Email: marsha_orgeron@ncsu.edu  
Office Phone: (919) 515-4178  
Office Hours: Mon 4:30-5:30; Wed 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

Film Studies at NCSU:  
NCSU offers a Film Studies Minor (15 credit hours) and a Film Major (30 credit hours). For more information contact Dr. Maria Pramaggiore or visit our website: www.ncsu.edu/chass/film.

Required Texts:  

Course Description and Expectations:  
This course traces the relationship between African Americans and film from the turn-of-the-century to the present, though we will largely focus on post-1960s filmmaking. We will consider major directorial figures, genres, and historical movements. Students should be aware that some of the films we will be viewing this semester contain nudity, sex, violence, and profanity.

In order to succeed in this course you will need to: 1) attend all screenings and be an observant spectator, 2) carefully do the readings/screenings for each class session, 3) be ready to participate in class discussion, and 4) turn in all assignments on the days that they are due. Consistent active participation in class discussion will help your overall performance and will influence borderline grades.

Course Requirements:  
Screenings/Attendance:  
Regular course attendance is required. Please turn off all cell phones prior to the start of class (no vibrate mode, no text messaging…it’s all distracting to your fellow students during screenings and lecture/discussion).

Please bring relevant readings to each class session. If you miss a class, ask another student for notes and find out if you missed any new assignments. You are responsible for making up any
missed screenings on your own time. The library’s media center—located on the second floor of D.H. Hill, 515-2977—has most of the films we’ll be viewing this semester.

In-class quizzes and exercises cannot be made up. Documented emergencies will receive special consideration if work can be made up in a timely fashion. Excessive unexcused absences will have an adverse effect upon your grade; missing more than four days of class will result in incremental drops in your final grade of a third per additional day. For example if you miss six days of class and achieve a B in the course, your grade will drop two thirds to a C+.

**Administrative:**
Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information, visit [http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/)

If you will be participating in a sport or other University sponsored event this semester you should provide me with documentation so that we can make arrangements for you to make up for any missed classes or work.

**Written Work:**
You are welcome and encouraged to discuss paper topics or any other assignment with me in advance via email or in person. I accept late papers; they drop a grade per class day that they are late. Consider using the university’s [free Writing Tutorial Services](http://www.ncsu.edu/tutorial_center/writespeak/index.htm) for more information.

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes all forms of plagiarism, cheating on assignments or exams, turning in work that has been written (partially or entirely) by someone else (this includes websites), fabricating information or citations, or helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. In addition to failing the assignment and being referred to the Office of Student Conduct should you commit any trespass of academic integrity, I reserve the right to give you a failing grade in the course. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at: [http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/stud_affairs/policies/code95.html](http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/stud_affairs/policies/code95.html).

**Grades:**
Your final grade will be determined as follows:
Quizzes/In-Class Work/Response Paper: 20%
Paper #1 (5 pages): 20%
Paper #2 (5 pages): 20%
Midterm: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

All assignments will be graded with letter grades using a plus/minus scale, or on a point system with an equivalent scale.
African American Film
Syllabus for Fall 2004

Part I. Race & History: Represented and Representing
Wed Aug 18  Course Introduction & CD-Rom Demo

Mon Aug 23  Early Cinema and Racial Representation
Read: “Early Silent Films,” Charles Musser (CD)
“Minstrelsy,” Adrienne Seward (CD)
The following films should be viewed before class at:
http://www.indiana.edu/~bfca/clips.html:
Dancing Darkey Boy (1897);
A Morning Bath (1896);
Native Women Washing Clothes at St. Vincent, B.W.I (1903);
A Nigger in a Woodpile (1904);
The Pickaninnies (1894);
The Watermelon Contest (1896);
Who Said Chicken? (1900)

Response Paper #1 Due

Wed Aug 25  Screening: Midnight Ramble (Bowser/Cram, 1994)
Clips from Birth of a Nation (1915), Dir. D.W. Griffith
Read: “Segregation at the Movies,” Jennifer Barker (CD)
“The Birth of a Nation,” Harold Zimmerman (CD)
“The Birth of a Race,” Jennifer Breen (CD)

Mon Aug 30  Screening: Within Our Gates (1919, 79 min.), Dir. Oscar Micheaux

Wed Sep 1  Read: “Oscar Micheaux,” Charlene Regester (CD)
“Lincoln Motion Picture Co.,” Jane Gaines (CD)
“Norman Black Cast Films,” Phyllis Klotman (CD)
“Spencer Williams: Black Auteur,” Mark Giles (CD)

Mon Sep 6  Labor Day—Classes Cancelled

Wed Sep 8  African Americans in Mainstream Hollywood
Clips from: The Jazz Singer (1927), Jezebel (1938), Gone With the Wind (1939),
Imitation of Life (1959), & Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? (1967)
Read: “Black Rhapsodies,” Jennifer Barker (CD Rom)
“Cartoons and Stereotypes,” Henry Sampson (CD)
“Soundies and Musical Shorts,” Jennifer Barker and Aimee Hall (CD)
“Hollywood and Passing,” Michael Charney (CD)

Part II. Rethinking History
Mon Sep 13  Screening: Hollywood Shuffle (1987, 78 min.), Dir. Robert Townsend

Wed Sep 15  Read: “Robert Townsend” (WWMM 118-132)

Mon Sep 20  Screening: Bamboozled (2000, 135 min.), Dir. Spike Lee

Wed Sep 22  Read: “Spike Lee” (WWMM, 87-99)

Mon Sep 27  Screening: Daughters of the Dust (1991, 112 min.), Dir. Julie Dash
Wed Sep 29  
Read: “Julie Dash” (*WWMM* 232-243)  
“Women Behind the Camera,” William Wiggins Jr. (CD)

**Paper #1 Due**

Mon Oct 4  
**MIDTERM**

Wed Oct 6  
Class Cancelled—Fall Break


Mon Oct 11  
Screening: *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (1971, 97 min.), Dir. Melvin Van Peebles

Wed Oct 13  
Read: “Melvin Van Peebles” (*WWMM* 16-27)  
“Enter Sidney Poitier,” Janet Cutler (CD)

Mon Oct 18  
Screening: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973, 102 min.), Dir. Ivan Dixon

Wed Oct 20  
Discuss paper #2

Mon Oct 25  
Screening: *Bush Mama* (1979, 97 min.), Dir. Haile Gerima

Wed Oct 27  
Read: “Haile Gerima” (*WWMM* 196-211)

**Part IV. Gender & Genre**

Mon Nov 1  
Screening: *Cooley High* (1975, 107 min.), Dir. Michael Schultz

Wed Nov 3  
Read: “Michael Schultz” (*WWMM* 71-86)

Mon Nov 8  
Screening: *Boyz N the Hood* (1991, 107 min.), Dir. John Singleton

Wed Nov 10  
Read: “John Singleton” (*WWMM* 460-474)

Mon Nov 15  
Screening: *Posse* (1993, 111 min.), Dir. Mario Van Peebles

Wed Nov 17  
**Paper #2 Due**

Mon Nov 22  
Music Videos & Contemporary African American Representation

Wed Nov 24  
Class Cancelled—Thanksgiving

**Part V: History, Independence, Protest, Gender, and Genre Revisited**

Mon Nov 29  

Wed Dec 1  
Discussion and Final Exam Review  
Read: “Kasi Lemmons” (*WWMM* 253-271)

Wed Dec 8  
Final Examination, **1:00-4:00 p.m.**  
*There is no way to make up the final examination.*