



Barbara O. Jones in Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1979)

ENG375/AFS375: African American Film

Spring 2010

Tuesday/Thursday 2:25-4:15, Caldwell G107

"To be entrapped in other people's fictions puts us under arrest."

—Toni Cade Bambara

Dr. Marsha Orgeron

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Office Hours: Tuesday 4:30-6:00, or by appointment

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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. Devin Orgeron or visit our website: www.ncsu.edu/chass/film.

Texts:

- 1) Klotman, Phyllis, director. *African Americans in Cinema: The First Half Century*. CD-ROM.
- 2) Additional readings will be available on "e-reserve": <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/> under Eng and Afs 375. Please print out all essays and bring them to class for discussion.
- 3) Recommended: *Why We Make Movies*, edited by George Alexander (available used)

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 and 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. The Film Studies lab (Tompkins G116), where you can go to review films or make up screenings, will be staffed

Tuesdays 10-2, Wednesdays 3-7, and Thursdays 1-3. Feel free to email Terry Hobgood regarding availability of the film you want to see/review: tah8780@gmail.com.

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/

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. Call 515-3163 or visit 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.

Grades: All assignments will be graded with letter grades using a plus/minus scale, or on a point system with an equivalent scale. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Quizzes/In-Class Work/Response Paper: 20%

Paper #1 (5-6 pages): 20%

Paper #2 (5-6 pages): 30%

Final Exam: 30%

African American Film
Syllabus for Spring 2010

Part I. Race & Film History: Represented and Representing

- Tu Jan 12 Course Introduction & CD-Rom Demo
Screening: Edison Co. *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903); *The Watermelon Patch* (1905); *Laughing Gas* (1907)
- Th Jan 14 The Birth of Cinema and Racial Representation
Read: "Early Silent Films," Charles Musser (CD)
"Minstrelsy," Adrienne Seward (CD)
The following films should be viewed before class on the course e-reserves:
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 Due
- Tu Jan 19 Screening: Clips from *Birth of a Nation* (1915), Dir. D.W. Griffith
Read: "The Birth of a Nation," Harold Zimmerman (CD)
"The Birth of a Race," Jennifer Breen (CD)
"Segregation at the Movies," Jennifer Barker (CD)
"Black Beginnings," Donald Bogle (e)
- Th Jan 21 Screening: *Within Our Gates* (1919, 79 min.), Dir. Oscar Micheaux
Tu Jan 26 Read: "Oscar Micheaux," Charlene Register (CD)
"Lincoln Motion Picture Co.," Jane Gaines (CD)
"Norman Black Cast Films," Phyllis Klotman (CD)
"Spencer Williams: Black Auteur," Mark Giles (CD)
- Th Jan 28 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)
"Cartoons and Stereotypes," Henry Sampson (CD)
"Soundies and Musical Shorts," Jennifer Barker and Aimee Hall (CD)
"Hollywood and Passing," Michael Charney (CD)
- Tu Feb 2 Screening: *Bamboozled* (2000, 135 min.), Dir. Spike Lee
Th Feb 4 Read: "Spike Lee" (e: *WWMM*, 87-99)

Part II. Reclaiming the Silver Screen: The 1970s, Independence, and Social Protest

- Tu Feb 9 *The Murder of Fred Hampton* (1971, 88 min.), Dir. Howard Alk, The Film Group
Th Feb 11 Read: "Domestic Law and International Order," Eldridge Cleaver (e)
"Dr. King Disputes Negro Separatist," *New York Times* 5/28/1966 (e)
- Tu Feb 16 Screening: *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971), Dir. Melvin Van Peebles
Th Feb 18 Read: "Melvin Van Peebles" (e: *WWMM*, 16-27)
Enter Sidney Poitier," Janet Cutler (CD)
Clip: *Shaft* (Dir. Gordon Parks, 1971)
Paper #1 Due

- Tu Feb 23 Screening: *Bush Mama* (1979, 97 min.), Dir. Haile Gerima
 Th Feb 25 Read: "Haile Gerima" (e: *WWMM*, 196-211)
- Tu Mar 2 Screening: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973, 102 min.), Dir. Ivan Dixon
 Th Mar 4 Read: "Hoover Deplores Attacks on Police," *New York Times*, 1/3/1970 (e)
 "Blacks Found to Favor Working Through System," *NYT*, 3/30/1970 (e)
- Tu Mar 9 Screening: *Cooley High* (1975, 107 min.), Dir. Michael Schultz
 Th Mar 11 Read: "Michael Schultz" (e: *WWMM*, 71-86)
- Tu Mar 16 Class Cancelled: Spring Break
 Th Mar 18 Class Cancelled: Spring Break
- Tu Mar 23 Screening: *Talk to Me* (2007, 118 min.), Dir. Kasi Lemmons
 Th Mar 25 Read: "Kasi Lemmons" (e: *WWMM* 253-271)
 "Women Behind the Camera," William Wiggins Jr. (CD)
- Tu Mar 30 Documenting Communities: *I Am Somebody* (Madeline Anderson, 1970, 30 min.)
Just Doin' It (William Greaves, 1976, 28 min.)
 Read: "William Greaves" (e: *WWMM*, 28-45)
- Th Apr 1 Class Cancelled—Spring Holiday

Part III. Gender, Genre, and Pop Culture

- Tu Apr 6 Screening/Discussion: *A Question of Color* (1993, 57 min.), Dir. Kathe Sandler
 Read: "Black Hair/Style Politics," Kobena Mercer (e)
 "Kathe Sandler" (e: *WWMM*, 317-330)
- Th Apr 8 Screening: *Boyz N the Hood* (1991, 107 min.), Dir. John Singleton
 Tu Apr 13 Read: "John Singleton" (*WWMM*, 460-474—physical reserve DH Hill)
 "Mapping the Hood: The Genealogy of City Space" Paula Massood (e)
Paper #2 Due
- Th Apr 15 Music Videos & Contemporary African American Representation
- Tu Apr 20 Screening: *Precious* (2009, 110 min.), Dir. Lee Daniels
 Th Apr 22 Read: 5 film reviews at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0929632/externalreviews>
- Tu Apr 27 Screening: *The Secret Life of Bees* (2008, 114 min.), Dir. Gina Prince-Bythewood
 Th Apr 29 Read: "Gina Prince-Bythewood" (*WWMM*, 381-396—physical reserve DH Hill)
 Final Exam Review
- Th May 6 Final Examination, **1:00-4:00 p.m.**
There is no way to make up the final examination.