AAS 2224 / WGS 2224 – Black Femininities & Masculinities in the US Media
W, 2:00 – 4:30 (Dell 1 – room 105)
Professor L. Shutt

Course Description:
This course will address the role the media has played in creating images and understandings of “Blackness” in the United States, particularly where it converges with popular ideologies about gender. We will explore how different media, including feature films, popular television, documentaries, popular fiction, television, and print news media create categories of race and gender in different ways for (different) Americans – each medium encapsulating its own markers of legitimacy and expertise – each negotiating its own ideas of authorship and audience. We will concentrate on the particular ways various media produce, display, and disseminate information; in particular, we will be analyzing cultural texts, the cultural environment in which they have been produced, and the audience reception of those texts. Finally, we will ask what responsibilities those who create and circulate information have – and whether or not the consuming/viewing public shares in any sort of responsibility. This class will enable students to cultivate theoretical tools and critical perspectives to analyze and question the influence of the popular media that saturate our lives.

Grading and Assessment:
- Quizzes: 30%
- Short assignments & in-class assignments: 10%
- Take-home midterm exam: 30%
- Final paper: 30%

Class Policies
- I ask that you not use laptop computers in class and that cell phones be turned OFF before the beginning of class.
- For each day an assignment is late, you will be penalized a full letter grade (for example, an A- becomes a B- if your assignment is one day late.)
- If I provide you with a page minimum or a word count for an assignment (for example, a two-page analysis, 1000 word essay), please do not give me just short of two pages or 1000 words – you must meet the minimum to earn full credit. You will never be penalized for writing too MUCH in this particular class.
- There will be an easy quiz on your readings and assigned media texts each week. It will take place at the very beginning of class so don’t be late! There are NO makeup quizzes.
- An important part of our work together is the discussion in which we will engage at each class meeting. For this reason, you will automatically earn a grade of F for the course if you miss more than three class sessions regardless of your reason for missing class.

Professor Shutt’s Office:
227D Minor Hall
Office Hours:
Wednesdays, 12:15 – 1:30 p.m. or by appointment
Even if you have seen the assigned films before – and it’s likely that you will have seen several of these films – you will need to see them again. When you have seen films in the past, you have entered into the viewing role as an audience member wanting to be entertained. In class this semester, while it’s certainly ok to be entertained in the exercise, we will be viewing these films with a critical and analytical eye as researchers of representations of race and gender. You likely will not pass the weekly quiz if you have not recently seen the assigned film(s)!

This class deals with very sensitive themes, which often provoke emotional responses in all of us. In this class we will together analyze and critique various media that include language and visual imagery that can be considered offensive to many. It is important to note that not all members of our class will agree with each other on some of these sensitive issues and topics – this is normal & understandable. Even if you disagree, let others’ voices be heard and let us all approach the topics of the class with a critical and analytical eye while acknowledging and addressing the impact of our emotional responses to the subject matter.

SESSION SCHEDULE:

**January 17 - FIRST CLASS MEETING: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

**In-class screening:** *Hip Hop; Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006)

**January 24 - ANALYZING MEDIA & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**READ:** “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism and Media Studies,” Douglas Kellner  
**READ:** “Black Beginnings: from Uncle Tom’s Cabin to The Birth of a Nation,” Donald Bogle  
**READ:** “Five Central Media Analysis Questions”  
**READ:** Synopsis of *Birth of a Nation*

**In-class screening:** Excerpts from *Birth of a Nation* (1915)

**January 31 - RACISM IN MEDIA TEXTS**

**READ:** Stop Calling Quake Victims Looters, by Guy-Uriel Charles  
**READ:** Danny Glover article  
**READ:** Why White People Won’t See ‘Black Movies,’ by Zak Cheney-Rice  
**WRITE:** a 400 word (minimum) description of your observations of how the media uses subtlety in terms of language, visuals, etc. to express (intentionally or unintentionally) racist ideology. Indicate your word count at the end of the document and submit to Dropbox on our Collab site.

February 7 - ROOTS AND REACTIONS

READ: “From His Story to Our Story: A Review of Roots,” by Nancy Arnaz
READ: “The Importance of Roots,” by Eric Pierson
WATCH: Episodes 1-2 of ROOTS (1977)
WATCH: Episode 1 of ROOTS (2016)

February 14 - PERSPECTIVES ON FEATURE FILMS: The Color Purple

VIEW: The Color Purple (1985)
READ: “The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers,” Jacqueline Bobo
READ: “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators,” bell hooks

In-class screening: Selections from: bell hooks: Cultural Criticism & Transformation (1997)

February 21 - THE 1970s to the 2000s: BLACK MASCULINITY

READ: “Doing it for Daddy: Black Masculinity in the Mainstream,” by bell hooks
READ: “He is a Bad MotherS@%!#: Shaft and Contemporary Black Masculinity,” by M. Henry
VIEW: Shaft (1971)
VIEW: Shaft (2000)

Possible In-class screening: I am a Man (2008)

February 28 - TOUGH GUISE

TURN IN: Your take-home mid-term essay via Dropbox by February 25 at 11:59 p.m.

In-Class Screening: Tough Guise (1999)

* Please format your document title as follows: MediaText.Midterm.LastName.FirstName

For example, if I were submitting an exam that examined How to get Away with Murder more than any other media text, I would call my document: HowToGetAwayWithMurder.Midterm.Shutt.Lisa
March 7 – NO CLASS – ENJOY YOUR SPRING BREAK!

March 14 – FALSE FEMINISM?

In-class screening: possible excerpts from GIRL 6 (1996) and Waiting to Exhale (1995)

VIEW: She’s Gotta Have It (1986) (* Please be aware that this film includes a depiction of rape.)

READ: “Whose Pussy is This?” by bell hooks

READ: “She’s Gotta Have It: The Representation of Black Female Sexuality on Film,” Felly Nkweto Simmonds

March 21 - BLACK SITUATION COMEDIES

VIEW: historical situation comedy selections (on Collab site)
* Episode of Good Times (1974)
* Episode of Living Single (1993)
* Episode of Everybody Hates Chris (2005)

READ: “White Responses: The Emergence of Enlightened Racism,” by Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis (NOT Black Responses)

READ: “Living Single and the ‘Fight for Mr. Right’: Latifah Don’t Play,” by Kristal Brent Zook

March 28 - “MAGICAL” BLACK MEN, THE FUTURE, AND ALTERNATE REALITIES


READ: “Hoodoo Economics: White Men’s Work and Black Men’s Magic in Contemporary American Film,” by Heather Hicks

READ: “R is for Race, Not Rocket: Black Representation in American Science Fiction Cinema,” by Adilifu Nama
April 4 – NO CLASS MEETING

*** There will be no class meeting this week. You still have assignments and you will be quizzed on them next week.

WATCH: Dark Girls
WATCH: Fruitvale Station
WATCH: 2 episodes of The Game (2006): “Be Fierce, Malik” and “Do the Wright Thing”

April 11 - QUEER BLACKNESS IN THE MEDIA

READ: “Birth of a Notion,” Michelle Parkerson
READ: “Nigger, Coon, Boy, Punk, Homo, Faggot, Black Man: Reconsidering Established Interpretations of Masculinity, Race and Sexuality Through Noah’s Arc,” by Mark D. Cunningham
VIEW: Season 1, Episode 1 of Noah’s Arc (2005)
WRITE: About one example of queer blackness in the media other than examples used in this course and critique/evaluate the representation in at least 650 words; think about the complexity of the example, its quality, its realism, is it positive, negative, neutral? You can think about the “Five Central Media Analysis Questions” if it helps you to frame a critique.

April 18 - BLACK ATHLETES IN THE MEDIA

Films to keep in mind today: excerpts from The Champeen (Our Gang silent short), Brian’s Song, The Great White Hope, He Got Game, Ali, Radio, Harlem Globetrotters, Mr. 3000, The Hurricane, Hardball, Soul of the Game, Men and Basketball, Any Given Sunday, Above the Rim, Pride, White Men Can’t Jump, Moneyball, Friday Night Lights, The Game Plan, Pride, Remember the Titans

VIEW: The Blind Side (2009)
READ: “Richard Sherman is Right: Thug is the New N-Word,” by Jamelle Bouie
READ: “Stanford Man,” by Rembert Brown
April 25 – GET OUT: LAST DAY OF CLASS

WATCH: Get Out (2017)
WRITE: a 650-word explanation of at least three positive, responsible, and/or complex examples of blackness that you have observed in the US media – would you like to see more examples like these?

Submit your assignment to Dropbox (labeled Examples.Lastname.Firstname) and be prepared to discuss your choices and reasoning in class. You should provide at least three examples, though you do not need to discuss them all equally.

FINAL PAPERS DUE: May 2 by 11:59 p.m. to COLLAB DROPBOX

•Please format your document title as follows:

Prompt#.Final.Lastname.Firstname

So, if I were to submit a final for prompt number 2, my document title would be:

2.Final.Shutt.Lisa

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Best of luck with your exams & papers and CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!