

History/English 1600
American Cultures in Film
Fall 2006

Jay Anderson
Office: Main 323-I
History Department

Wednesday: 4:30-7:00
Classroom: Main 115
Office Hours: Wed., Thurs. 3:00-4:00

Course Description: Since motion pictures were invented in the 1890's, both feature films and documentaries have been an excellent way of interpreting, or exploring and explaining, cultures. In this course we will study 8 films that portray American cultures and their foodways.

R-Rated Films: Of the 8 films we will study, five are R-rated, two are PG-13, and one is PG. If you have personal problems watching and discussing R-rated films, THIS IS NOT THE COURSE FOR YOU. Sorry.

Watching Films Outside of Class: You are responsible to view each film BEFORE it is discussed in class. Copies of these films are on reserve in the Sci-Tec Library. Local video store (The Book Table, Sommers, Hastings, Blockbuster, Hollywood Video, etc.) also have copies. If you rent the videos, please return them promptly so that other class members will also have rental access.

Assignments and Grading: There will be a 10 point quiz covering each film. You will also have a 20 point Foodways project based on eating out and reviewing authentic ethnic restaurants. If you miss a class, you will need to complete a 6 page Film Review Form.

Assessment: Utah State asks all professors to assess their success or failure in achieving stated course goals. In this course I have three primary goals: 1) Help students better understand the United States as a pluralistic, multi cultural nation; 2) Demonstrate that films can be educational as well as entertaining and that we can learn valuable humanistic lessons from watching good movies (i.e., visual literacy); and 3) Create opportunities to practice critical thinking and group communication skills in class.

Mission Statement: This course meets the requirements of the History and English Departments' mission statements and the Folklore Program, too!

Course Schedule

August 30	Course Introduction
September 6	“Art” of Watching Cultural Films
September 13	<u>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</u> (PG, 95 min) Greek Americans (Quiz #1)
Sept. 20, 22, Oct 4	Foodways Fieldwork. Class will not meet.
October 11	<u>My Family</u> (R, 128 min) Mexican-Americans (Quiz #2)
October 18	<u>A Bronx Tale</u> (R, 122 min) Italian-Americans (Quiz #3)
October 25	<u>Dances with Wolves</u> (PG-13) Native-American (Quiz #4)
November 1	<u>Soul Food</u> (R, 114 min) African-Americans (Quiz #5)
November 8	<u>Joy Luck Club</u> (R, 135 min) Chinese-American (Quiz #6)
November 15	<u>Woman on Top</u> (R, 93 min) Brazilian, Gay-Americans (Quiz #7)
November 29	<u>What’s Cooking</u> (PG-13, 110 min) Multi-Cultural Thanksgiving Quiz #8)
December 6	Last Class. “Oscars” Course Evaluation