EDL 660: Special Topics in Collegiate Subcultures

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Seminar Overview
This class examines the ways that both fictional and documentary films portray American college student subcultures and the influences of these films on society’s views about higher education. There are several questions that David Hinton raises in *Celluloid Ivy* that we will explore throughout the semester:

1. To what extent do the films deal with the major historical events and trends in higher education?
2. To what extent do the films reflect the changing nature of higher education, or do they continue to reflect an idealized or fantastical view of higher education from the past?
3. What are the characterizations of major members and constituencies of higher education (e.g., students, professors, administrators, trustees, alumni) and do these roles change over time?
4. What type of experiences are depicted …and what do films project as the primary experiences of higher education?
5. How do movies value higher education and how do they reflect changes in the way society values higher education?

This seminar augments the “Student Cultures in the University Environment” seminar (EDL 666) by continuing to examine multiple anthropological and cultural studies conceptualizations of subcultures, applying these theoretical insights to college students. Of particular importance are four topics related to collegiate subcultures portrayed in film: identity, access, diversity, and teaching/learning. Unlike EDL 666, this seminar focuses on visual rather than written (e.g., ethnographies) conceptualizations of collegians, so we will be viewing, interpreting, and analyzing fictional and documentary films.

This course begins with a brief introduction to film theory/criticism, visual anthropology, and subculture theory, followed by an examination of collegiate subcultural representations in film. As the semester progresses, the concepts of film and subcultures will merge as we analyze specific movies that re-present collegians and higher education institutions.
Learning Outcomes

a. Interpret college student subcultures and their universities using the theoretical aspects of cultural studies and visual anthropology.

b. Use fictional and documentary films as vehicles to analyze subculture and identify the influences of media (e.g., film) on society.

c. Produce a movie portraying college life that demonstrates knowledge about film, visual anthropology, and cultural studies.

d. Apply college student subculture insights to student affairs contexts.

Seminar Expectations

Out-of-class Preparation
The seminar “works” if students thoroughly read, evaluate, and assimilate all reading and multimedia materials and assignments before our weekly seminars. Take notes while reading texts (including film), summarize the authors’ or artists’ arguments. Compile questions, identify points of disagreement, and document issues worthy of exploration.

In-class Participation
Optimal learning takes place when seminar participants respectfully ponder issues, share perceptions, listen to colleagues, and disagree when necessary. It is essential for students to share their honest thoughts and listen carefully to others’ perspectives. The success of our weekly seminar requires all participants engage in genuine and civil dialogue throughout the semester.

Attendance
I expect students to attend every class and actively participate in class discussions. Students missing three classes will be dropped one full letter grade at the end of the semester (e.g., if a student earned an “A” and missed three classes, the student’s final grade would be a “B”). Students missing four classes will automatically be dropped from the course.

Meeting Deadlines
There are no optional written assignments. This syllabus explicitly states all due dates. Students must meet these deadlines. Students submitting a late assignment must offer, with the assignment, a written explanation for the delay that includes the due date of the assignment, the date the student submitted the assignment, a rationale for the delay, and a proposed penalty (if any) for the delay. If students fail to submit a written assignment, they may be dropped from the seminar.

Accommodations
Students with disabilities, please notify me about your special accommodations as it relates to the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this seminar so that you can fully participate. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me.

Assignments

Midterm and Final Examinations [50%—25% for midterm and 25% for final]
These exams are major undertakings that require students to synthesize and integrate the readings and connect theory to practice. The take-home midterm examination will include 2-3 questions (including film analysis). Students will receive the midterm three weeks before the assignment is due, October 12, 2010. The take-home final exam is due December 16, 2010.
Critical Film Review Essay [10%]
Each week, one student will assume responsibility for watching one film that focuses on collegiate subcultures (that they have not already seen) and writing a 1,200 word review essay about the film that offers an appraisal and critique of the film based on issues discussed in the required readings or during seminar discussions.

Student Subculture Documentary Film Assignment [35%]
Two teams of students (4 students in each team) will each produce and direct a documentary (that may not exceed 15 minutes) that represents a student culture or an issue with which numerous student subcultures grapple (e.g., peer pressure). The video should be carefully filmed and edited. Minimally, the final project should include titles, credits, and a soundtrack. Each team will also produce a 30-second YouTube video promoting the team’s documentary. The due date for the film and YouTube video is Friday, December 3, 2010.

YouTube Video Academy Awards Assignment [5%]
During the first week of the semester, each student will surf the Internet and identify 5 videos that best capture the complexities of collegiate life. Students can email the links to me and we will show these video clips throughout the semester. The due date for this assignment is August 31, 2010.

Movie Nights [Optional]
Five times throughout the semester (outside of our weekly class meetings)—approximately every three weeks—we will sponsor an optional movie night. These events will allow seminar participants to watch full-length feature films and informally discuss them. Seminar participants will have the opportunity to host these gatherings. The final movie night will premiere the two student subculture documentary films created by seminar participants.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Breaking Away (1979)</td>
<td>Week of August 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Educating Rita (1983)</td>
<td>Week of September 19</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Hoop Dreams (1994)</td>
<td>Week of November 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Premier Night</td>
<td>Week of December 12</td>
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Required Texts
Required Readings


Seminar Preparation Guide

Session 1—August 24, 2010

Topic: Seminar Introduction

Learning Goals
There are four learning goals for this introductory meeting of the College Student Subcultures in Film seminar. The first goal is to get acquainted. A second goal is to discuss seminar goals, outcomes, and community norms. A third aim is to explore the ways the academic disciplines of cultural studies, film studies, and anthropology can enrich understanding about higher education and its numerous student subcultures.

Session 2—August 31, 2010

Topic: Hollywood Goes to High School

Learning Goals
There are two primary goals for this second seminar session. First we will examine the interrelationship of cinema, schools, and American culture by reading Bulman's *Hollywood Goes to High School*. Reading this text will also allow us to examine some of the complex cultural processing of social difference (e.g., social class, gender) that occur as American teens “come of age” and the myths about high school perpetuated by Hollywood, that no doubt influence students as they transition to college. In student affairs, history and context matters. This session takes a look back at the influences that accompany students to college.

Required Readings

Session 3—September 7, 2010

Topic: Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies

Learning Goals
There are two primary goals for this third seminar session. First we will continue to examine the interrelationship of cinema, schools, and American culture by reading David Hinton’s *Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies 1960-1990*. Reading this text will also allow us to examine some of the complex cultural processing of social difference (e.g., social class, gender) that occur while students are undergraduates. We will also examine the myths about college perpetuated by Hollywood, that no doubt influence collegians and student affair educators.
Required Readings


Session 4—September 14, 2010

Topic: The Hollywood Curriculum

Learning Goals

This fourth session focuses on what Mary Dalton refers to as the “Hollywood Curriculum.” In particular, we will focus on collegians’ relationship with professors and learning. This segment views popular culture in general and this curriculum in particular through a cultural studies and critical pedagogy.

Required Readings


Session 5—September 21, 2010

Topic: Ethnographic Cinema and Visual Anthropology—1

Learning Goals

Two goals for this session are to focus exclusively on documentary films about college students and to explore the fields of ethnographic cinema and visual anthropology. We will explore topic such as subjectivity, reflexivity, bias, and assumptions about visual representation.

Required Readings


hooks, b. (1996). Reel to real: Race, sex, and class at the movies. New York: Routledge. [Chapter: Neo-colonial fantasies of conquest—Hoop Dream,” pp. 77-82]
Session 6—September 28, 2010

Topic: Ethnographic Cinema and Visual Anthropology—2

Learning Goals
Two goals for this session are to focus exclusively on documentary films about college students and to explore the fields of ethnographic cinema and visual anthropology. We will explore topics such as subjectivity, reflexivity, bias, and assumptions about visual representation.

Required Readings


Session 7—October 5, 2010

Topic: Ethnographic Cinema and Visual Anthropology—3

Learning Goals
Two goals for this session are to focus exclusively on documentary films about college students and to explore the fields of ethnographic cinema and visual anthropology. We will explore topics such as subjectivity, reflexivity, bias, and assumptions about visual representation.

Required Readings

Session 8— October 12, 2010

Topic: Midterm Theoretical Synthesis

Learning Goals
During this session, we will revisit the required reading for the first half of the seminar, focusing on reading we did not discuss in-depth. We will also read 1-2 articles selected by students that augment the content discussed during the first weeks of class.

Required Readings
During session seven, we will reach a consensus on the readings from the first 1/2 of the semester we want to revisit and new texts we want to read.

Session 9— October 19, 2010

Topic: Subcultures—Cultural Histories and Social Practices—1

Learning Goals
This session returns to a popular theme of EDL 666—subculture. During this session we will learn about a cultural history of subcultures—focusing on numerous and competing conceptualizations. The Gelder text identifies six ways that subcultures have historically been understood. This framework is a starting point for our discussion.

Required Readings

Session 10— October 26, 2010

Topic: Subcultures—Cultural Histories and Social Practices—2

Learning Goals
This session returns to a popular theme of EDL 666—subculture. During this session we will learn about a cultural history of subcultures—focusing on numerous and competing conceptualizations. The Gelder text identifies six ways that subcultures have historically been understood. This framework is a starting point for our discussion.

Required Readings
Session 11—November 2, 2010

Topic: Social Class and Race/Ethnicity in Film

Learning Goals
This session will focus on the multiple ways Hollywood portrays social class and race/ethnicity in film. Of particular importance are issues of: stereotyping, essentialism, and cultural assimilation.

Required Readings


Session 12—November 9, 2010

Topic: Social Class and Race/Ethnicity in Film

Learning Goals
This session will focus on the multiple ways Hollywood portrays social class and race/ethnicity in film. Of particular importance are issues of: stereotyping, essentialism, and cultural assimilation.

Required Readings


Session 13—November 16, 2010

Topic: Gender in Film

Learning Goals
This session will focus on the multiple ways Hollywood portrays gender in film. Of particular importance are issues of: male privilege and gender power dynamics.
Required Readings


Session 14—November 30, 2010

Topic: Teaching and Learning in Film

Learning Goals

This session we return to themes that Dalton raised in her text at the outset of the semester. In particular how Hollywood and popular culture re-present educators (e.g., teachers, administrators) as well as the learning process. If particular importance are issues of anti-intellectualism and subculture tensions (faculty/administrators vs. students).

Required Readings


Session 15—December 7, 2010

Topic: Subcultures and Film—A Look Back, a Look Ahead

Learning Goals

Required Readings