

Summer 2006

USP 410 / 510: Conflict and Community in Film

<http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Film>

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Office Hours:	By arrangement	Visit me:	http://www.marthabianco.com/
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Class Website:	http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Film for syllabus, readings, general information		
Class E-Mail:	https://www.lists.pdx.edu/lists/listinfo/cityfilm for class mailing list		
Time & Place:	M and W, 6-8:20 p.m., NH 8 June 26 – Aug. 16		

**COURSE
CONTENT:**

The focus of this class is how urban conflict is expressed through art via the medium of film. As such, we will look at two broad categories of conflict-as-art in film: those in which filmmakers use film as an *art form* (with varying levels of success) *to capture and express conflict* within urban communities; and those in which filmmakers use film to *document how urban and street art* (primarily music and dance) is an *expression of community-based conflict*.

We will view several different types of film, including documentary, independent, low-budget, musical, and major motion picture and contrast and compare the ways in which the directors and performers capture and express similar themes.

For purposes of this course, the films we will study are loosely grouped thematically as follows (please note overlap among groupings; also, we may not see all of the films listed or in some cases we may see only excerpts):

- **The Price of the American Dream.** *Grapes of Wrath, Raisin in the Sun, West Side Story, Roger & Me, Do the Right Thing, Avalon, Dark Days, Price of the American Dream, Devil's Playground, Maria Full of Grace*
- **The Gangster Meets the 'Hood.** *Education of Sonny Carson, West Side Story, Scarface, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Blood In Blood Out, C-Walk*
- **Art Straight from the Streets.** *The Harder They Come, Saturday Night Fever, Wild Style, Slam, Gang Tapes, 8 Mile, C-Walk, Tupac: Resurrection, Rize, Dave Chapelle's Block Party*

TEXTS:

No required text. In lieu of a reading packet, there will be online readings every week. Students must therefore have access to the Internet in order to print out readings. As a rule, readings will be assigned after Wednesday's class (e.g., on Thursday) and you should have them finished by the following Monday. Always bring your readings to class.

**CLASS
E-MAIL:**

Reading assignments and other class-related communications will be posted on line via e-mail. The class e-mail list is at <https://www.lists.pdx.edu/lists/listinfo/cityfilm>. **At a minimum, check your e-mail on Thursdays and then again on Sundays.** Students are also encouraged to engage in class discussion via the class e-mail list.

RULES
TO
LIVE BY:

Don't plagiarize. My experience is that few students really know what constitutes academic dishonesty. "Paraphrasing plagiarism" is the most common error in this regard. You are responsible for understanding the material presented at <http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/Short-Writes/plagiarism.html>. If I even *suspect* you of plagiarism of any kind, I will require you to meet with me to discuss appropriate remedial measures.

Don't be absent. Attendance is mandatory. Many of the films we will view are not easily rentable. If you miss a film, you miss the equivalent of a week of content. **You get one "free" absence** on the grounds that "life happens." **Your grade decreases half a letter for each absence thereafter** (there are some exceptions regarding contagious or serious disease or extreme emergency for which you can provide documentation; see me).

Don't be late. We will start class at **6 pm sharp**. Be here early, because the door will close and it automatically locks. It is disruptive for people to be entering the room late once discussion or a film showing has begun. Because this class takes place during the dinner hour, you may bring food with you. We may not always be able to have a formal break.

Use cell phones and laptops responsibly. Please turn cell phones to vibrate; you may use a laptop in class for note-taking purposes. Abuse of laptops (e.g., e-mail, web browsing) will result in a no-laptop policy.

Assignments are due on time. Period. **You will lose 10 percent of the assignment's value per day for each day that the assignment is late.** There are some exceptions regarding serious disease or extreme emergency for which you can provide documentation; see me.

Read your e-mail. You are responsible for staying abreast of course requirements via e-mail. "I didn't have a chance to check my e-mail," "My Internet was down," and "My computer crashed" are all unacceptable excuses.

When in doubt, ask. I am very responsive to students' questions, requests, and concerns. You can *always* get a hold of me at biancom@q7.com and should feel free to contact me whenever you like. I respond quickly. I enjoy e-mail and IMg with students. You can also call me 24/7 at 503-706-8641. If I am busy or unavailable, *I don't answer the phone*. Leave me a message, and I'll get back to you.

MLA format is required for all formal work (film reflections, critical essays, etc.) and recommended for informal work (discussion pieces) that you plan on turning in. Be sure to include a Works Cited page if you include citations in your writing, and be sure to include citations if words, thoughts, or ideas presented are not your own. Generously use the resources at <http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/checklist.htm>. You are responsible for ensuring proper adherence to MLA format and correct citation methods.

Speaking of responsibility, you are responsible for **withdrawing** from this class by the appropriate deadline. Do not assume I will give you an "X" if you don't follow through. The deadline for dropping this class is Week 6.

I work for you. You pay for me. This is your education, not mine.

This is what I do. Teaching is not just my job; it's my passion. If you need my help, please ask for it.

**I have a special interest in working with students with learning disabilities or native languages other than English. Please know that I will work with you to help you meet course requirements to the best of your ability. Additionally, although this class requires active participation and presentations, if you experience a high degree of stress in public presentations, please see me to discuss accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS:
FORMATTING:

Instructions for each assignment will be presented in class and detailed instructions will be at

<http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/Assign/default.htm>.

Everything you turn in should:

- ❑ Be prepared according to strict MLA format, which includes
 - 1-inch margins
 - Title page *or* header information
 - MLA-style numbered pages
 - Double spacing
 - 1/2-inch indentation for new paragraphs
 - 12-point Times New Roman font
- ❑ Include a Works Cited page if you quote, paraphrase, use, or reference any words, thoughts, or ideas not your own
- ❑ Be proofread by you and/or another human being (do not rely solely on your word processor's grammar and spell checker)
- ❑ Be stapled (ahead of time; please don't ask *me* for a stapler)

You will lose at least 5 percent of the points value for an assignment for any of these components that are missing. For example, if you turn in a 100-point paper that is not stapled, you will automatically lose 5 points. Helpful information for everything I require is located at

<http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/Cities/checklist.htm>.

- **Discussion Pieces.** All students will prepare discussion pieces for presentation, discussion, and sharing on a regular basis (generally, every week). Although this pattern will vary, as a rule after we see a film, we will read some materials related to the film and/or subject matter. Please prepare material to bring to class the following session for discussion purposes. This may include notes from the readings or the film, clips from other films, related artwork, soundtracks, or any other word, sound, or visuals that you'd like to share for the purposes of stimulating and participating in discussion. You are graded on preparation (i.e., that you actually bring something to class to share and present) and participation. **Worth 75 percent undergrad; 50 percent graduate.**
- **Film Reflections:** All students are to write two film reflections, one near the middle of the term and one near the end of the term. You will receive further instruction on film reflections later; in general, however, these are to be short (two-page) expressive/analytical essays. *These are not film reviews.* MLA style is required. **Worth 25 percent.**
- **Critical Essays:** Graduate students only are to write one five- to six-page critical essay. You will receive further instruction on critical essays; in general, however, this is to be a formal critical/analytical-argumentative pieces, *not a film review.* MLA style and reference to literature are required. **Worth 25 percent.**

In general, students are graded as follows (*graduate equivalents are italicized*)

GRADING:

Scale:	94.91-100%	A	excellent	56.28-63.01	C	satisfactory (<i>substandard</i>)
	89.79-94.90	A-		49.54-56.27	C-	substandard
	83.15-89.78	B+		22.80-49.53	D+	
	76.41-83.14	B	good (<i>satisfactory</i>)	15.34-22.79	D	inferior (<i>failure</i>)
	69.67-76.40	B-		00.67-15.33	D-	
	63.02-69.66	C+		00.00-00.66	F	failure

The following schedule lists the proposed order in which we will tentatively view films within the context of the three themes for this course. We will not always be able to see films in their entirety. We will decide the specifics of the reading and discussion schedule as we move along, but in general, expect to do one or two hours of reading per week, plus any other preparation you may need to do to produce your discussion pieces. Discussion piece presentations will occur approximately once a week, generally on Mondays.

Films will *always* be shown with subtitles, if they are available.

A number of these films are not easy to find in rental stores or libraries. If and when you are able, I encourage you to view the films before and/or after class viewing, at least once with director’s commentary, if available.

Full citation information for each page will be available on the class web site.

Theme: The Price of the American Dream	
Devil’s Playground, 2002 (77m) Grapes of Wrath, 1940 (129m) Roger & Me, 1989 (91m) Avalon, 1991 (126m) Raisin in the Sun, 1961 (129m)	Maria Full of Grace, 2004 (101m) Blood In Blood Out, 1993 (180m) Price of the American Dream, 2001 (97m) West Side Story, 1961 (152m) Do the Right Thing, 1989 (120m) Dark Days, 2000 (84m)
Theme: Gangster Meets Hood	
Scarface, 1983 (170m) Education of Sonny Carson, 1974 (104m)	Boyz N the Hood, 1991 (107m) Menace II Society, 1993 (97m)
Theme: Art Straight from the Street	
Harder They Come, 1972 (103m) Wild Style, 1982 (82m) Saturday Night Fever, 1977 (118m) 8-Mile, 2003 (110m) Tupac: Resurrection, 2003 (90m)	Rize, 2005 (86m) C-Walk, 2002 (85m) Slam, 1998 (86m) Gang Tapes, 2001 (81m) Dave Chapelle’s Block Party, 2005 (110m)