

TDGE 131 / ETHN 163 F: Native American and First Nations Cinema

Julie Burelle **Email:** jburelle@ucsd.edu

Lecture: Wed., 6:30-9:20 pm. **Room:** Warren Lecture Hall 205

Office: Galbraith Hall 305 **Office hours:** by appointment

TA: Tezeru Teshome

Course Overview

“The movies loom so large for Indians because they have defined our self-image as well as told the entire planet how we live, look, scream, and kill.”
(Paul Chaat Smith, in Raheja, x)

Mainstream cinema has participated in creating what Daniel Francis calls “The Imaginary Indian” – a stereotypical and often romanticized character on and through whom the settler majority could (and continues to) impose its own narratives of belonging. As Francis argues, this imagined “other” has little to do with the lived reality of Native Americans or First Nations people. Unfortunately, this reductive stereotype have unfortunately served as “pedagogy and knowledge production for spectators,” shaping the ways they understand and behave toward Native American people (Raheja x).

This course aims to present films created by Native American and First Nations artists (offbeat comedies, drama, and documentaries) that actively challenge this stereotypical scenario, reclaiming control over the act of representation. These films and performances deconstruct and critique reductive stereotypes about America’s First Peoples, producing a new pedagogy for audiences by proposing complex narratives and characterizations of Indigeneity.

Through lectures, assigned readings, and group discussions, this class aims to equip students with the necessary critical vocabulary to productively engage not only with the films presented in class but also with cinema in general.

Format

Class meets once a week for 3 hours. The first hour consists of a lecture followed by an in-class screening of a film or of excerpts of films. A quiz will be given afterward.

NOTE: no laptop, tablet, or phone will be allowed in class. I will post my presentation on TritonEd.

Course requirements

- Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read all the assigned materials and visited thoroughly the assigned blogs and websites.
- Weekly quizzes (7 quizzes worth 30%)
- A midterm exam. (Worth 30%)
- A final paper (following MLA formatting style: 8 pages, double-spaced, 12pt. font). An outline is due on week 7. Paper due during exam week. (40%)

Readings

- All assigned material will be available on Triton Ed or through the UCSD library online service. They will be located in the folder for each week

A Note on Nomenclature

While the terms Native-Americans and American-Indians are used in the United States, they are not favored in Canada where the various Indigenous populations have chosen to refer to themselves as First Nations or Aboriginal people. The term Indian is still used by many to self-identify but we will avoid it in this class. All of these names are highly political and stem from the reality of ongoing settler-colonialism, which has flattened hundreds of distinct Indigenous nations (Choctaw, Cree, Innu, K'omox, for example) each with their own cultures, languages, and territorial bases into a single racialized identity.

If you feel like you do not know much about Native Americans / First Peoples, there are multiple ways to educate yourself:

- the Intertribal Resource Center at UCSD.
- <http://www.groundworkforchange.org/>

*****Warning: Some of these films deal with issues that are difficult and may be disturbing. Be advised.**

Films (shown in class and available online or through the UCSD library)

Week 1, Jan. 10: *Reel Injun* (2009), dir. Neil Diamond (Cree)

Class presentation: Racial stereotypes, appropriation and confronting our own racial biases.

Week 2, Jan. 17: *Kahnesatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), dir., Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki)

Before Class, read: blog entry by film critic Jesse Wentz (Ojibwe) at

<http://www.reelinjunthemovie.com/site/blog/guest-blog-jesse-wentz/>

Chapter 4 of Randolph Lewis's *Alanis Obomsawin: The Vision of a Native Filmmaker* p. 88-121.

Accessible here:

http://fido.palermo.edu/servicios_dyc/blog/docentes/trabajos/33591_115897.pdf

Week 3, Jan. 24: *Smoke Signals* (1998), dir. Chris Eyre (Cheyenne-Arapaho)

Before Class, read: Joanna Hearne's *Smoke Signals; Native Cinema Rising*. Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 4, Jan. 31 : *Atanarjuat, (the Fast Runner)* (2001), dir. Zacharias Kunuk (Inuk)

Before Class, read: Preface and Chapter 1 of *Reservation Reelism* by Michelle Raheja (Seneca)

Week 5, Feb 7: *Mesnak* (2011), dir. Yves Sioui Durand (Huron Wendat)

Before Class, read: the following website <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/spotlight.cfm> which spotlights Canadian

Aboriginal adaptations of Shakespeare's play. In particular, look at:
http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/spotlight/s_p_malecite.cfm

****Final paper prompt posted on TED.**

Week 6, Feb. 14: Midterm (90 minutes) and *Wapikoni, Escale à Kitcisakik* (2010), dir. Mathieu Vachon.

Week 7, Feb. 21: *Angry Inuk* (2016) dir. Alethea Arnaquq-Baril (Inuk)

Read: Michelle Raheja (Seneca) "Reading Nanook's smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)"

****Final paper outline due (print please and bring to class)**

Week 8, Feb. 28: *Drunktown's finest* (2014), dir. Sydney Freeland (Navajo)

Read: Excerpts from Qwo-Li Driskill (Cherokee) et al. *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literatures*.

See: the work of Two-Spirit artist Kent Monkman (Cree) at <http://www.kentmonkman.com/>

Week 9, March 7: *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (2013) dir. Jeff Barnaby (Mi'gmaq) (2013)

Read: Milena Santoro "The Rise of First Nations' Fiction Films: Shelley Niro, Jeff Barnaby, and Yves Sioui Durand" in *American Review of Canadian Studies*.

Watch: *Electric PowWow Drum* and *Sopranos Azteca* by A Tribe Called Red at <http://atribecalledred.com/a-tribe-called-red-videos/>

****Final paper outlined returned to you in class.**

Week 10, March 14: *Rumble: The Indians who rocked the world* (2016) by Catherine Bainbridge and Alfonso Maiorana

*******Paper Due during exam week** (via Turnitin, date TBD)

The Fine Print:

- **TritonEd:** This course uses TritonEd for readings, posting grades, posting class notifications, etc. If you are registered for the course, you have access to the website. Please go to ted.ucsd.edu to login. If you have problems follow the login instructions on the right. For further questions contact the Acs helpdesk immediately: 858.534.3227 or acs-help@ucsd.edu
- **Plagiarism Policy:** Plagiarism is grounds for failure in this class and expulsion from the university. Please make sure that your work is original or ask questions if you are unsure of proper citation practices. Papers will be turned in through turnitin.com.
- **Course Attendance:** Attendance in lecture is required in order to do well in this course. Although you will not be graded on your attendance, the quizzes and the final will include questions based on material covered **only** in lecture.

Information on declaring a Major or Minor in Ethnic Studies

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a university or college requirement. Students have taken three or four classes out of *interest* yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, education, public health, social work, non-profit work and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Monica Rodriguez, Ethnic Studies Program Advisor, via email at ethnicstudies@ucsd.edu .