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LEH 301: “Real to Reel”: New York Immigration in Film

Course Description: This course examines how twentieth-century immigration to New York City is depicted in American and foreign films released between 1917 and 2005. Each week students will view a film and discuss its depiction of the immigrant experience. They will compare this depiction with that found in the readings assigned for that class session. Through their regular attendance and active participation in class, by the end of the semester, the student will be able:

- To identify and describe common immigrant experiences such as the economic and political motivations for emigrating to New York City, the immigrants’ perception of New York City and the United States, the tensions associated with assimilating into American society, the effort to maintain home-country cultural practices, and the generational conflict between immigrants and their American-born children.
- To compare different directors’ treatment of the above experiences.
- To judge how realistically the director depicts the particular group’s immigration and assimilation process.
- To describe how cinematic depictions of the immigrant experience to New York City changed between 1917 and 2005.

Course Requirements: The required work for this course consists of weekly film reviews and five three-page film responses (30% of final grade), a midterm project (30%), an end-of-semester project (30%), and attendance/participation (10%).

- The weekly film reviews will require the student to complete a copy of the National Archives and Records Administration’s “Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet” found at www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/movies.html.
- The five three-page film responses will answer questions for a particular film. The questions for the session’s film will be written on the board before the start of each class.
- The midterm project will be an analysis of a particular immigrant group depicted in one of the films. Using primary and secondary sources, students will examine how a group in one film actually lived. The student will research the group’s life in the particular neighborhood in the particular period seen in the film. *For this project, students may select a group from a film viewed after the midpoint of the semester.*
- The end-of-semester project will be an analytical paper exploring how a group of films address a particular topic/theme. The quality of the end-of-semester project, to a great extent, is dependent on the effort put into the weekly film reviews and film responses.
- ***Unless previous arrangements have been made, late analyses and projects will not be accepted.***
- ***I expect students to attend ALL class sessions.***

Academic Honesty: All work submitted will be the result of the student’s own effort. Any cheating on the reviews, responses or projects will result in a failing grade for the particular assignment and possibly the course. Simply put: ***Do not plagiarize!****

* Plagiarize: “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own; to use (a created production) without crediting the source.” See: *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary 150th Anniversary Edition*, (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1981).

Course Filmography:

- *The Immigrant* (Charlie Chaplin, 24 minutes, 1917).
- *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 89 minutes, 1927).
- *Little Nellie Kelly* (Norman Taurog, 99 minutes, 1940).
- *My Girl Tisa* (Elliott Nugent, 95 minutes, 1948).
- *Popi* (Arthur Hiller, 113 minutes, 1969).
- *Hester Street* (Joan Micklin Silver, 90 minutes, 1975).
- *Moscow on the Hudson* (Paul Mazursky, 117 minutes, 1984).
- *Combination Platter* (Tony Chan, 84 minutes, 1993).
- *Nueba Yol* (Ángel Muñiz, 106 minutes, 1995).
- *Szczęśliwego Nowego Jorku (Happy New York)* (Janusz Zaorski, 95 minutes, 1997).
- *La Ciudad* (David Riker, 88 minutes, 1998).
- *Two Family House* (Raymond De Felitta, 108 minutes, 2000).
- *ABCD* (Krutin Patel, 100 minutes, 2001).
- *The War Within* (Joseph Castelo, 93 minutes, 2005).

Course Reading: The following readings will provide this essential information for class discussions and assignments:

- Selections from Nancy Foner, editor, *New Immigrants in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
 - Nancy Foner, "Introduction: New Immigrants in a New New York."
 - Ellen Percy Kraly & Ines Miyares, "Immigration to New York: Policy, Population, and Patterns."
 - Patricia R. Pessar & Pamela M. Graham, "Dominicans: Transnational Identities and Local Politics."
 - Robert C. Smith, "Mexicans: Social, Educational, Economic, and Political Problems and Prospects in New York."
 - Min Zhou, "Chinese: Divergent Destinies in Immigrant New York."
- Marion R. Casey, "'From the East Side to the Seaside': Irish Americans on the Move in New York City" in *The New York Irish*, edited by Ronald H. Bayor & Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- Michael Cooper, "Neighborhood Reports: Greenpoint; Local Poles: Walesa Loyalists," *The New York Times*, 10 December 1995.
- Roger Daniels, "Refugees and Human Rights: Cubans, Southeast Asians, and Others" in *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004).
- Mary Patrice Erdmans, "Immigrants, *Wakacjusze*, and Refugees," from *Opposite Poles: Immigrants and Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976-1990* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).
- Nathan Glazer & Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Italians," in *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963).
- Peter Hellman, "Old-World Poland with an East River View," *The New York Times*, 6 January 1995.
- William Dean Howells, "An East-Side Ramble," in *Impressions and Experiences* (New York: Harpers & Brothers, 1896). <http://tenant.net/Community/LES/howells1.html>.

- Excerpts from: S. Mitra Karita, *Suburban Sahibs: Three Immigrant Families and Their Passage from India to America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).
- Yuri Sinelnikov, “Yuri Sinelnikov: From the USSR, 1976,” in *American Mosaic: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It*, edited by Joan Morrison & Charlotte Fox Zabusky (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980).
- Gerald Sorin, “New York as the Promised Land,” in *A Time for Building: The Third Migration 1880-1920 (The Jewish People in America)* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
- WNYC website: “Six Months: Immigration & Identity.”
www.wnyc.org/specials/sixmonths/immigrationandidentity.html.
 - “A Former Detainee . . .”
 - “Nafisa Travels to Bayonne, New Jersey . . .”
 - “Mohammed Bilal Mirza’s Uncle . . .”
 - “INS Spokesman Russ Bergeron . . .”