

WOMEN'S STUDIES 517: WOMEN FILM DIRECTORS

Winter Quarter, 2004
Professor Terry Moore
Office: 113B University Hall
Office hours: R, 10-12:30; 3:30-4:00
Phone: 688-4715
Email: moore.29@osu.edu

Required texts (available at SBX):

Dash, Julie. *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Film*. NY: New Press, 1992.

Lane, Christina. *Feminist Hollywood from Born in Flames to Point Break*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2000.

Mayne, Judith. *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

Zip Publishing Course Packet (also available at SBX)

Course description and objectives:

This course is a survey of the work of women filmmakers, from the earliest years of cinema to the present. The first part of the course will be devoted to the study of women film pioneers: Alice Guy Blaché, Lois Weber, and other early women directors who contributed to the birth and early development of the cinema; Dorothy Arzner, who had a successful career as a film director during the “golden age” of Hollywood; and Maya Deren, one of the founders of avant-garde, experimental cinema. We then will turn to contemporary (i.e., of the last three decades) women filmmakers who have attempted to reinvent the cinema in relationship to women’s subjectivity and women’s points-of-view. For contemporary women filmmakers, three types of cinema have been particularly important: the feminist documentary film; avant-garde/experimental cinema; and the narrative feature (both “mainstream” and “alternative”). We will examine representative examples of these categories by filmmakers Michelle Citron, Lourdes Portillo, Julie Dash, Marleen Gorris, Cheryl Dunye, Midi Onodera, Ngozi Onwurah, **Sadie Benning**, Yvonne Welbon, and Cecilia Barriga.

Emphasis throughout the course will be on close readings of individual films. Objectives include: furthering the development of students’ analytical/critical skills in reading and writing; understanding the interaction between theories of women’s filmmaking and the practice of cinema; and investigating the relationship between central issues within feminism—including gender, race, sexuality, and class—and women’s filmmaking.

Course Requirements:

Examinations (40%): There will be a midterm examination which will account for 20% of your final grade and will consist of both identifications and short essays. The final examination also will account for 20% of your final grade and will consist of a combination of identifications and short essays.

Scene Analysis (15%): A 2-3 page (typed, double-spaced) analysis of a particular scene (your choice) and its significance in *Christopher Strong* will account for 15% of your final grade.

Short Paper (10%): A one-page analysis of one example of feminist aesthetics evident in Sadie Benning's film(s) will account for 10% of your final grade. Obviously, attendance at least one of the Wexner Center's screenings of Benning's films is required. The schedule is attached.

Paper (25%): You will write a 4-6 page (typed and double-spaced) analysis of feminist aesthetics in one of the following films:

- Fire* (Deepa Mehta, 1996)
- Monsoon Wedding* (Mira Nair, 2001)
- Entre Nous [Coup de foudre]*(Diane Kurys, 1983)
- What's Cooking?* (Gurinder Chadha, 2000)
- Love and Basketball* (Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2000)
- Real Women Have Curves* (Patricia Cardoso, 2002)
- Stranger Inside* (Cheryl Dunye, 2001)

Unless arrangements have been made with me ahead of time, late papers will receive a full grade lower than the original earned grade (i.e., B- becomes C-).

Class Participation (10%): You will be expected to have completed all assignments by the day they are listed on the syllabus so that you can play an active part in class discussions. Regular class attendance is expected. More than two unexcused absences will lower this grade.

Plagiarism: As defined in University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report **all** cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple.

- ◆ Always cite your sources (your TA and/or professor can help with this)
- ◆ Always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism
- ◆ Always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment.

To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Accommodation of students with disabilities: Students who wish to have an accommodation for disability are responsible for contacting the professor as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307; 292-0901 TDD) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

Availability of films: Except for films owned by OSU, films are on reserve in 10 Lord Hall for a second viewing. (You must bring your own headphones and a student ID to use the facilities in Lord.) Some of the films also are available at local video stores. To see a film owned by OSU, you need to talk to me. Lois Weber films shown by Kerrie and the films of Sadie Benning are **not** available.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE	T, 1/6	Introduction to the course: Screening of <i>Women Who Made the Movies</i> (Gwendolyn Foster-Dixon, 1991) and <i>Reel Models</i> (Koch, 2000)
	R, 1/8	Screening of <i>Sisters in Cinema</i> (Yvonne Welbon, 2003)

Readings:

--Slide, Anthony. "Alice Guy Blaché." *Early Women Directors*. South Brunswick and New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1977. 15-33.
--Redding, Judith M. and Victoria A. Brownworth. "Yvonne Welbon." *Film Fatales: Independent Women Directors*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1997. 112-16.

WEEK TWO	T, 1/13	Women directors in Hollywood: Screening of films by Lois Weber Guest lecture: Kerrie Welsh
-----------------	---------	---

Readings:

--Koszarski, Richard. "Lois Weber." *Hollywood Directors 1914-1940*. New York: Oxford UP, 1976. 49-53.
--Kaplan, E. Ann. "How Men Propose." *Before Hollywood: Turn of the Century Film From American Archives*. New York: American Federation of the Arts, 1986. 150.
--Koszarski, Richard. "The Years Have Not Been Kind to Lois Weber." *Women and the Cinema: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary. New York: Dutton, 1977. 146-152.

	R, 1/15	Women directors in Hollywood: Dorothy Arzner Screening of <i>The Wild Party</i> (1929)
--	---------	---

Reading:

--Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*: 1-90

WEEK THREE

Film Assignment:

Christopher Strong (Dorothy Arzner, 1933)-- available for screening in 10 Lord Hall—bring your own earphones).

T, 1/20 Discussion of *The Wild Party*

Reading:

--Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*: 90-181

R, 1/22 Discussion of *Christopher Strong*
SCENE ANALYSIS DUE

WEEK FOUR

T, 1/27 Maya Deren and avant-garde cinema:
Screening and discussion of *Meshes of the
Afternoon* (Maya Deren, 1943-59)

Reading:

--Rabinowitz, Lauren. "Maya Deren and an American Avant-Garde Cinema." *Points of Resistance: Women, Power and Politics in the New York Avant-Garde Cinema, 1943-1971*. Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1991. 49-91.

R, 1/29 The feminist film movement: the theory and
practice of image-making
Screening and discussion of *Daughter Rite*
(Michelle Citron, 1978)
BRING PACKET TO CLASS

Readings:

--Lane, Christina. *Feminist Hollywood*, "Introduction" (11-64).

--Lesage, Julia. "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film." *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*. Ed. Patricia Erens. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. 222-37.

Please **do not** read the following until **after** the screening of *Daughter Rite*:

--Rich, B. Ruby. *Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. 207-19.

--Citron, Michelle. "Women's Film Production: Going Mainstream." *Female Spectators*. Ed. E. Deidre Pribram. New York: Verso, 1988. 45-63.

--Feuer, Jane. "*Daughter Rite*: Living with Our Pain and Love." *Films for Women*. Ed. Charlotte Brunson. London: BFI, 1986. 24-30.

WEEK FIVE T, 2/3 Feminism and documentary: Screening & discussion of *Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo* (Lourdes Portillo and Susana Muñoz, 1985).

Readings:

-- Gaines, Jane. "White Privilege and Looking Relations." *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism*. Ed. Diane Carson, et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. 176-90.

--hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992. 115-31.

--Fusco, Coco. "*Las madres de la Plaza de Mayo*: An Interview with Susanna Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo." *Cineaste*. 15. 1 (1986): 22-25.

-- Redding, Judith M. and Victoria A. Brownworth. "Lourdes Portillo." *Film Fatales: Independent Women Directors*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1997. 212-18.

--Recommended web site: <http://www.lourdesportillo.com/>

R, 2/5 **MIDTERM EXAM**

WEEK SIX T, 2/10 Feminist experimental cinema: Screening & discussion of *The Displaced View* (Midi Onodera, 1988)

Reading:

--Onodera, Midi. "*Locating the Displaced View*." *Feminisms in the Cinema*. Ed. Laura Pietropaolo and Ada Testaferri. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. 20-27.

R, 2/12 Feminist experimental cinema: Screening & discussion of Ngozi Onwurah: *The Body Beautiful* (1991; 23 mins.)

Reading:

--Foster, Gwendolyn. "Ngozi Onwurah." *Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1997. 24-42.

Filmmaker Sadie Benning may come to one class during the last four weeks of the quarter to discuss her work. If she is able to attend, our schedule will be adjusted accordingly. If she is not able to come to class, we still will have a discussion of her work during the last week of class. Assigned reading for the Wexner retrospective of her work (as well as your paper) is: Chris Holmlund, "When Autobiography Meets Ethnography . . ." (in your packet).

WEEK SEVEN T, 2/17 Feminist narrative film: Screening of
A Question of Silence (Marleen Gorris, 1984)

Reading:

-- Redding, Judith M. and Victoria A. Brownworth. "Marleen Gorris." *Film Fatales: Independent Women Directors*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1997. 173-78.

R, 2/19 Discussion of *A Question of Silence*

Readings:

--Glaspell, Susan. "A Jury of Her Peers." *American Voices, American Women*. Ed. Lee Edwards and Arlyn Diamond. New York: Avon, 1973. 359-81.

--Root, Jane. "Distributing *A Question of Silence*': A Cautionary Tale." *Screen*. 26.6 (1985): 58-64.

--Williams, Linda. "A Jury of Their Peers: Marlene Gorris's *A Question of Silence*." *Postmodernism and Its Discontents*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. London: Verso, 1988. 107-115.

WEEK EIGHT T, 2/24 Independent feature film: Screening of
Daughters of the Dust (Julie Dash, 1991)
NOTE: Film will run over by 5 minutes

Reading:

--Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*: 75-171.

R, 2/26 Discussion of *Daughters of the Dust*

Reading:

-- Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*: xi-xvi, 1-71.

WEEK NINE T, 3/2 Independent Feature Film: Screening of
The Watermelon Woman (Cheryl Dunye, 1996)
SHORT PAPER DUE

R, 3/4 Discussion of *The Watermelon Woman*

Reading:

--Sullivan, Laura L., "Chasing Fae: *The Watermelon Woman* and Black Lesbian Possibility." *Callaloo*. 23.1 (2000): 448-60.

WEEK TEN T, 3/9 Recreating the cinema: films about film
Screening and discussion of
--Julie Dash, *Illusions* (1983, 34 mins.)

Reading:

--Mayne, Judith. "Screen Tests" [on *Illusions*]. *The Woman at the Keyhole*.
Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. 59-67.

 R, 3/11 Recreating the cinema: films about film
Screening and discussion of
--Cecilia BARRIGA, *Meeting of Two Queens* (1991, 14
mins.)

Reading:

--White, Patricia. "Lesbian Cinephilia." *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and
Lesbian Representability*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 29-60.

PAPER DUE

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, 3/16—1:30-3:18

RESERVE LIST:

The following books are on reserve in the Journalism Library.

- PN1998.2 B57 1998 Bobo, Jacqueline. *Black Women Film and Video Artists*. New York : Routledge, 1998.
- PN1995.9.W6 M82 1994 c.2 Carson, Diane, and Linda Dittmar, Janice R. Welsch, eds. Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- PN1998.A3 D44 C5 1984 Clark, Vévé, et al. The Maya Deren Project (2 volumes).
- PN1995.9.W6 I87 1990 c.2 Erens, Patricia, ed. Issues in Feminist Film Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990
- JOU REFERENCE PN1998.2.F67 1995 (use in lib.) Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. Women Film Directors: An International Bio-Critical Dictionary. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- MAIN PN1998.2.F672 1997 Foster, Gwendolyn Audrey. Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora: Decolonizing the Gaze, Locating Subjectivity. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- E185.86 H734 1992 hooks, bell. Black Looks: Race and Representation. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
- PN1995.9.W6 F448 2000 Kaplan, E. Ann, ed. Feminism and Film. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- JOU REF (use in lib.) PN1995.9.W6 W657 1991 Kuhn, Annette, and Susannah Radstone, eds. Women in Film: An International Guide. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991.
- PN1995.9.W6 K8 1994 Kuhn, Annette. Women's Pictures. London; New York: Verso, 1994.

- PN1998.2.L35 2000 Lane, Christina. Feminist Hollywood from *Born in Flames* to *Point Break*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000.
- PN1998.3.A763 M39 1994 Mayne, Judith. Directed by Dorothy Arzner. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- PN1995.9.W6 M355 1990 Mayne, Judith. The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- PN1995.9.W6 M84 1989 Mulvey, Laura. Visual and Other Pleasures. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- PN1995.9.W6 F45 1988 Penley, Constance, ed. Feminism and Film Theory. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- PN1995.9.W6 F455 1995 Pietropaolo, Laura and Ada Testaferri. Feminisms in the Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.
- PN1995.9.W6 F44 1988 Pribram, E. Deidre. Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television. London: Verso, 1988.
- PN1995.9.E96 R34 1991 Rabinowitz, Lauren. Points of Resistance: Women, Power and Politics in the New York Avant-garde Cinema, 1943-1971. Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1991.
- PN1998.2.R43 1997 Redding, Judith and Victoria Brownworth. Film Fatales. Seattle: Seal Press, 1997.
- PN1995.9.W6 R47 1998 Rich, B. Ruby. Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- JOU PN1998.2 .S548 1996 Slide, Anthony. The Silent Feminists: America's First Women Directors. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996.
- PN1995.9.L48 W54 1999 White, Patricia. Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Sadie Benning

Based in Chicago, Sadie Benning has been one of the country's most respected and influential video artists. In the late 1980s, when she was still a teenager, Benning used the Fisher-Price Pixelvision 2000 toy camera to produce a series of remarkable confessional short tapes about her emotional life as a young lesbian. Discovered early on by the art world, she was included in the 1993 Whitney Biennial at age 20. Benning has since remained faithful to the values of do-it-yourself media production and to the value of video as a vehicle for young people's self-expression. A visual artist as well as musician (she was a founding member of riot grrl band Le Tigre), Benning has worked in the Wexner Center's Art & Technology facility on several projects. She returns this year as recipient of the center's residency award in media arts for 2003–04. This complete retrospective series is highlighted by an onstage conversation with Benning and preview clips of her works in progress.

Program 1

Fri, Feb 13 / 7 pm

Living Inside (1989), **If Every Girl Had a Diary** (1990), **Me and Rubyfruit** (1990), **Jollies** (1990), **A New Year** (1989), **A Place Called Lovely** (1991), **It Wasn't Love** (1992), **Aerobicide—Julie Ruin** (1998)

Benning's breakthrough early videos centered on her attempts to imagine a positive lesbian identity in the midst of teenage doubts and anxieties. Using the camera as a surrogate diary, Benning documents her crushes and kisses, all the while playing with gender stereotypes and embracing emotional extremes. The program's final piece, *Aerobicide—Julie Ruin* is the music video Benning created with Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna, right before they became Le Tigre. (Program approx. 73 mins.)

Program 2

Fri, Feb 20 / 7 pm

Girl Power (1992), **The Judy Spots** (1995), **German Song** (1995), **Flat Is Beautiful** (1998)

Bikini Kill provides the sound of *Girl Power*, a raucous vision of what it means to be a girl in the 1990s. *The Judy Spots* focus on a hapless puppet named Judy, and *German Song* is an evocative music video for the Boston band Come. *Flat Is Beautiful*, Benning's most ambitious project to date, combines live action, animation, and dramatic scenes to examine the inner life of an androgynous 11-year-old girl raised by a single mother and her gay roommate. (Program approx. 85 mins.)

A Conversation with Sadie Benning

Sat, Feb 28 / 7 pm

A repeat screening of *Flat Is Beautiful* (50 mins.) is included in this onstage conversation with Benning. She'll discuss previous works and share clips of the videos she's developing during her residency at the Wexner Center's Art & Technology facility.