

**Florida State University
International Human Rights & Film
Williams 013**

Fall 2005

FIL 3932

Instructors:

Vall Richard, Assistant BFA Director, FSU School of Motion Pictures, Television & Recording Arts. 644-8763, vrichard@mailier.fsu.edu

Terry Coonan, Executive Director, FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights, 644-4550, tcoonan@admin.fsu.edu

Course Objective: to explore issues concerning international human rights using film as the key medium. Students will learn basic cinematography concepts and techniques as well as the history and terminology of the human rights movement. Course lectures and weekly film viewings will examine how film producers and directors have explored human rights themes through film. Students will be responsible for a class journal, for a major research or creative project, and for a final exam.

August 29: Introduction to the Course

September 5: No Class (Labor Day)

**September 12: Introduction to Human Rights
Introduction to Film**

September 19: Romero (film starring Raul Julia about the life and assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop Romero).

September 26: Men With Guns (film by John Sayles about an insulated doctor in an unnamed Latin American country who is forced to recognize that human rights violations are commonplace in his homeland).

October 3: Death and the Maiden (film adaptation of Chilean playwright Ariel Dorfman's story about a torture victim who suddenly has her former torturer delivered into her power).

Journals Due

October 10: Ararat (film by Atom Egoyan that examines how questions about responsibility for the genocide of Armenians in Turkey arise anew in the making of a film decades later).

- October 17:** **Ghandi** (film starring Ben Kingsley recounting the human rights struggle in India following the Second World War).
- October 24:** **Bopha** (directorial debut of Morgan Freeman in a film about a black South African policeman—Danny Glover—who is led to the realization that he has served as an instrument for the apartheid regime).
- October 31:** **Fried Green Tomatoes** (drama about the friendships of several generations of southern women and questions of race and domestic violence that they confront).

Journals Due

- November 7:** **In the Name of the Father** (story of an Irish Catholic, played by Daniel Day Lewis, who is tortured under interrogation and wrongfully convicted by a British court of a terrorist bombing).

Proposal for Major Project Due

- November 14:** **Dead Man Walking** (The story of Sister Helen Prejean and an examination of the death penalty in the United States).
- November 21:** **Before Night Falls** (film by Julian Schnabel examining the life and struggles of the gay Cuban poet & refugee Reinaldo Arenas)
- November 28:** **No Mans Land** (black comedy by Bosnian director Danis Tanovic about the Bosnian conflict of the early 1990s).

Journals Due

- December 5:** **Major Project Due** (no film)

Class Policies & Grading

Class will meet on Monday evenings in Williams 013 from 5:00 PM to 8:15 PM. Weekly attendance is mandatory and roll will be taken. Every student is allowed one unexcused absence over the course of the semester. **More than one unexcused absence will result in the student failing the class.** Tardiness will also cause a student's class grade to be lowered. Please turn off all cell phones before entering classroom

The first two classes will consist of background lectures introducing the students to the basics of both filmmaking and international human rights law & theory. On evenings that films are screened, the screening will be preceded by a 15 minute lecture on a filmmaking technique particular to that film and a 15 minute lecture on the human rights context of the film. A brief 15-20 minute discussion will follow each film screening. **Please note that because of the length of some of the films our discussions may at times take us past 8:15 PM.**

Journals

Each student will keep a journal (8"x11_" hardbound Acid Free Paper) in which she or he will respond to reflection questions assigned in class. You can also paint, draw, or use images from newspapers, magazine articles, or photographs as part of the journal. These will be turned in three times during the semester for review.

Major Project

Each student will be responsible for selecting and completing one of the following projects:

- 1) **Screenplay (treatment):** The student may write a screenplay/treatment (10-15 pages) for a single scene involving one of the characters from one of the films viewed during the course. Such a screenplay could be either a prequel or sequel to the film shown in class, and should further develop the character's experience or awareness of human rights in that character's particular setting (i.e., what life experiences might have led to a character behaving as he or she did in the film? Or what life experiences might occur after the point where the film finishes?)
- 2) **Research Paper:** The student may write a 10-15 page research paper on one of the movies from class and/or the human rights situation which inspired it. This option will allow students who have an interest in a particular film or human rights situation to analyze it in greater depth.
- 3) **Comparative Paper:** The student may write a 10-15 page comparative paper on themes introduced as part of the course (i.e., an analysis of different approaches utilized by film directors in treating human rights issues...character development in human rights films as regards human rights issues... the use of sound, lighting, or camera angles in human rights films... political or cultural biases that are discernible in human rights films... etc.).
- 4) **Independent Project :** The student may propose an independent project particular to his or her own interest and background. This must be proposed and approved in advance, and the student must describe the film component of the project, its human rights component, and criteria for evaluation.

Proposals for the major projects are due at the beginning of class on the week of **October 31**. The projects are due at the beginning of class on the week of **December 5**.

Final Exam

A Final Exam for the course will be administered. It will be based on the course lectures given throughout the semester.

Course Grades

Each student's final grade will be weighted as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Journals:	20%
Major Project	50%
Final Exam	20%

Academic Honor Code

The Academic Honor System of the Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility 1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, 2) to refuse tolerate violations of academic integrity in the University community, and 3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the University community.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Center (SDRC). A letter should be submitted to the instructors from SDRC indicating you need academic accommodations. This must be done within the first week of class.

Modification of this Syllabus

This instructor reserves the right to amend or modify this syllabus at any time by giving written notice of the change at a scheduled class.