Dr. David Kamper

**CLASS:** Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, Arts & Letters 105  
**OFFICE:** Arts & Letters 331B  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Mon. 12 – 1 pm & Tues. 10 – 11 am, or by appointment  
**E-MAIL:** dkamper@mail.sdsu.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**  
This course studies the relationship between active visual images of American Indians and the social construction of Indianness in greater American culture. In other words, how are film and television affected by the way that the general public thinks about Indians and at the same time how do films shape general perceptions of Indians? This class will examine the subject from both the micro and the macro levels: we will do close readings of the details that produce these images and look at how these images circulate in the larger historical, social and political contexts of American society. In the latter will particularly pay attention to the relationship between representations of Indians and Federal Indian policies. You will also have the chance to take a hands-on approach to the topic by producing and/or editing ethnographic films of American Indians. A major theme throughout this course will be examinations of popular expectations of what Indians look like, how Indians are, and what they do and to not do, and how these expectations relate to cinematic genres, such as the Western, Ethnographic Film, and Documentary.

Much of this class will rely on student participation and open discussion. Your ideas matter, and it is important that you share them with the class so that we can learn from one another. In order for this to work it is imperative that you come to class and that you come prepared: having read the assignments and being able to talk about them. It is critical to foster a positive environment for discussion—one that generates respectful attention to classmates and critical analysis of course material. In order to accomplish this I will always urge you to approach the course subject matter and your classmates with mindfulness: to be precise, honest, humble, and rigorous; to say or write nothing you can’t stand behind; to respect difference, your classmates, the instructor, and the complexity of the material; to be self-interrogating but also generous; to be detail-attentive and imaginative.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**Learning Objective 1** The successful student in this course will be able to articulate verbally and in writing what constitutes a cinematic genre.

- **Goal 1.1** Students will be able to identify how Americans Indians have been conventionally represented in popular culture.
- **Goal 1.2** Students will be able to explain how cinematic genres call upon and create popular expectations of Indianness.
- **Goal 1.3** Students will be able to describe how representations and images of Indianness from one type of popular culture relate to, overlap, or contradict representations from other types of popular culture.

**Learning Objective 2** Students will identify how visual representations connect to action and policy.

- **Goal 2.1** Students will distinguish the historical, social, and political contexts that affect how a film is made and received.
- **Goal 2.2** Students will articulate the ways in which representations of Indians creates common sense ideas about Indians that are then used to establish and justify policy.
- **Goal 2.3** Students will explain the way actors and filmmakers attempt to undo and subvert popular notions and stereotypes of Indians through visual narrative representation.

**Learning Objective 3** Students will be able to edit ethnographic films.

- **Goal 3.1** Students will be able to create a short film by shooting and editing or editing pre-shot footage.
- **Goal 3.2** Students will connect the theory of ethnographic filmmaking the actual production and editing of film.
- **Goal 3.3** Students will illustrate how the process of production and editing supports or subverts conventional representations of Indianness.
REQUIRED TEXTS: All books for this course are available at the SDSU Bookstore (http://www.aztecsshops.com). A copy of these books will be held at the Reserve Desk at the Love Library. There will also be readings posted to Blackboard. Most of the films that we will be watching will be on reserve at the Media Center in the Love Library. Some of the others can be found at local video rental stores such as Kensington Video or through Netflix.com if you have a membership.


BLACKBOARD READINGS – BB Readings will be posted to Blackboard

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

- Attendance and Participation (10%): Attendance and Participation are mandatory. More than SIX absences will result in a zero for “Attendance and participation”.

- Twitter Assignments (10%): An additional way for you to participate in the class is through virtual community discussion through Twitter. You need to write (at least) 2 tweets every week. They should end with the hashtag: “#AMIND435”. Don’t tag ME in your tweets because I want to be able to search them specifically this way. I’ll visit Twitter a few times a week to read and count your class-related tweets, using this hashtag—without I will have trouble searching for your related tweets so you won’t get credit for them so make sure you use this hashtag. By the end of the semester you should have tweeted at least 28 times. Your tweets for class should comment on or relate to the readings and our in-discussion. Try to make each tweet individual, so it can stand by itself (that is, avoid multiple tweets that add up to one LONG, serialized tweet: the point is to craft concise, interesting commentary.) You will only get credit for the tweets that I “like (star).” Have fun with this part! Be imaginative and semi-inform/playful (or imaginative and serious). But don’t stress out about it. Mostly, this is a way to create a community of participation and discussion around the class and it’s material. Engage with your classmates, post links to relevant online commentary or whatever. Feel free to retweet; HOWEVER, retweets DO NOT count as one of your weekly tweets. They’re not “for credit,” but they’re fun so feel free to do so whenever you feel so moved. Follow me as soon as you get your account up and running. You might want to create a special account especially for this class. Make sure the Twitter account you use for this class is PUBLIC: if you have your account set as “private” no one will be able to see what you tweet (and you won’t get credit). My Twitter handle is: @kampersdsu (And, yes, feel free to unfollow me as soon as the semester is over. No offense will be taken!). And remember: I’ve added this social media assignment to my courses to build community, to get you all talking to one another. So read each other’s tweets; follow each other; if nothing else it’s a surefire to build up your followers!

- Film Response Papers (20%): Over the course of the semester each student will write a 1-page response papers to a film the student will be watching on his/her own. You will be analyzing and responding to a film of your choice from the Supplemental Film List (appended and posted on Black Board) that is divided up based on the weeks of the class. This paper should be no longer than one page and is meant to be an analysis and your response to a given film and your explanation of how this film relates to the major themes of the class and the week’s readings. You will be expected to discuss this film in terms of the components that make meaning in a film. These assignments need to be e-mailed to me by 11 am on the Thursday that you sign up to turn yours in. Please either send this assignment as a MS Word file or cut & paste it in to the body of an e-mail.

- Midterm Exam (30%): The exam will be taken in class and consist of a combination of identifications, short answers and an essay question. It is not designed to take longer than 1 hour but you will be given the whole class period to complete it. The most important way to prepare for the exam is to keep up with the reading, however; I will be giving you a very basic study guide a few weeks before the exam. The Midterm Exam will be on Thursday, October 22nd.

- Final Exams (30%): Your final can be completed it two different formats: either a short film project or a 5 – 7 page paper. It will be due on the day of the scheduled class final (there will be no in-class final that day), TUESDAY, December 15th by 12:30 pm. Written papers must be turned in using the Turnitin feature on Blackboard. Film projects must be turned in as a DVD, Quicktime/mp4/mv4 file on CD, or youtube link e-mailed to me at dkamper@mail.sdsu.edu. Film projects can be based on footage that you have shot or pre-recorded material edited together. If you do your own footage make sure that you discuss your idea with me,
get my approval, and start shooting soon. You may do this project in groups of two (but no more than two). If you choose to write the paper you will write comparison of three films (one from each of the lists from the Supplemental Film List). **NO LATE PAPERS/PROJECTS WILL BE ACCEPTED, NO EXCEPTIONS.**

- **Course Relationship to GE Exploration Goals:** This class fulfills the graduation requirement for General Education Humanities at the Exploration level. To this end my lectures are geared toward teaching you some of the overarching goals of a GE Humanities class and my assignments orientate toward assessing your ability to meet these goals. The College of Arts & Letters has established four main goals of GE Humanities classes and this class is mainly geared toward three of them:
  
  o **Goal 1:** Analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments. Your film response papers and the midterm and final exams will assess your ability to accomplish this goal as you analyze how films made both non-Indians and Indians make meaning about Indian people and perceptions of Indianness in general.
  
  o **Goal 2:** Develop a familiarity with various aesthetic and other values systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures. Your film response papers and the midterm and final exams will assess your ability to accomplish this goal as I ask you to examine the specific cinematic techniques filmmakers use and the consequences of their artistic choices.
  
  o **Goal 4:** Demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities. Your film response papers and the midterm and final exams will assess your ability to accomplish this goal as you consider how Federal Indian policy both feeds pop cultural representations of Indianness and requires this kind of imagery to justify policy.

- **General Grading Rubric:** This gives you an outline of what I and the course grader will be looking for when we grade your Film Response papers, any writing part of the Midterm, and the Take Home Final (if you choose to do the written one):

  An **“A” has**
  
  o a clear central focus or argument—a thesis;
  
  o Introductory sentence (for shorter assignments) or paragraph (for longer assignments) that establishes its central focus or argument;
  
  o well-developed body paragraphs, built around attentive analysis of the film (based on the cinematic techniques) and/or text (based on central ideas of the text), that is not a mere summary;
  
  o analysis of not just plot/narrative but how cinematic techniques employed by the filmmaker support or undercut the plot and main theme of the film;
  
  o analysis of how/what kind of representation of Indianness or Whiteness (in relation to Indianness) the film establishes, reinforces or undercut;
  
  o very few grammatical/spelling errors;
  
  o original ideas and distinctive insights.

  A **“B” has**
  
  o a clear central focus or argument;
  
  o an introductory paragraph that establishes its central focus or argument;
  
  o well-developed body paragraphs, built around attentive analysis of the film (based on the cinematic techniques) and/or text, that is not a mere summary;
  
  o analysis of not just plot/narrative but how cinematic techniques employed by the filmmaker support or undercut the plot and main theme of the film.

  A **“C” is** deficient in one or two of the above-listed areas.

  A **“D” is** deficient in three or more of the above-listed areas.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** More than 6 absences over the course of the term will yield a **“0” in “Attendance and Participation.”** Students who arrive to class more than 15 minutes late or who leave class more
than **15 minutes early** will be marked absent. Phoning or e-mailing to explain the absence does not excuse it. Additionally, “participation” will be evaluated on the basis of your preparation for and contributions to each class meeting. Adequate preparation for class means completing assigned readings as specified in the course schedule. Respect, attentiveness, and civility are expected of all class participants. Attentiveness includes not texting during class and using your computer **only** to take notes on the class.

**BLACKBOARD**: With this class we will use Blackboard to post assignments, additional course materials and web-links. We may also use its digital drop box, and group e-mail features. To be sure that you receive my e-mails make sure that your e-mail address is up-to-date with the university. To log into Blackboard visit [http://courses.sdsu.edu](http://courses.sdsu.edu).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**: SDSU defines plagiarism as follows “using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of information.” Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly in broader consequences. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or about proper documentation, please see me and the university’s information at: [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/htc/Plagiarism.pdf](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/htc/Plagiarism.pdf).

**LEARNING DISABILITIES**: SDSU provides accommodations for students with learning disabilities. For assistance, please contact Disabled Student Services at (619) 594-6473, visit the website at [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/dss/dss_home.html](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/dss/dss_home.html), or see me.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Aug. 25th**

*Introduction & Course Details:* How do we analyze film? What are the contexts under which American Indians have been filmed and participated in visual reproduction? What is unique about cinematic representations of American Indians?

**Reading:** *BB*, Sherman Alexie, “Vision (2)”

**PART I: POPULAR CULTURE’S DEPICTIONS OF INDIANNESS**

**Aug. 27th & Sept. 1st**

*Historical Contexts and Precedence:* What representational modes and technologies influenced the representation of Indians? Where do the notions (or tropes) of barbaric savage and noble savage come from? How do these tropes relate to historical events? How do they impact policy?

**Reading:** *NAM*, “Introduction” pp. 7 – 21; *IUP*, “Introduction” pp. 1 – 14 & “Violence” pp. 15 – 51.

**Viewing:** *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch & The Red Man’s View* by D.W. Griffith

**Sept. 3rd & 8th**

*Expectations and Conventions:* What is the relationship between expectations, representations, and stereotype? How are anomalies connected to what is expected and unexpected? What control did early Native actors have in the way that they were represented?

**Reading:** *IUP*, “Representation,” pp. 52 – 108.

**Viewing:** Scenes from the *Last of the Mohicans* by Michael Mann

**Sept. 10th & 15th**

*Formation of a Genre:* How do individual films relate to each other to form what could be called a genre? How did cinematic representations of Indianness reiterate literary and exhibitory representations? What does the uniqueness of moving pictures add to the conventions of representing Indians?

**Reading:** *NAM*, Ch. 1, pp. 23 – 99.

**Viewing:** Scenes from *The Stagecoach* by John Ford & starring John Wayne & *The Searchers* directed by John Ford & starring John Wayne
Sept. 17th
Heights of the Genre: Why were Westerns so popular? What notions of masculinity in general and Indian masculinity in specific are promoted by Westerns? Why are Westerns no longer as popular?


Viewing: The Searchers (cont.) directed by John Ford & starring John Wayne

Sept. 22nd & 24th
Revising the Genre: How did revisionist Westerns promote the tropes Noble Savage? How they reverse, subvert, and/or reiterate the tropes of earlier Westerns? What social and political circumstances brought about these changes in the Westerns?


Viewing: Scenes from The Return of Navajo Boy directed by Jeff Spitz & Broken Arrow directed by Delmer Daves & starring Jimmy Stewart

Sept. 29th, Oct. 1st, & 6th
The Non-Western Indian Movie: How are Indians portrayed in non-Westerns? How are these portrayals tied to the expectations of the Western genre? How do they refute the notion of the “Vanishing Indian”?


Viewing: Billy Jack directed by & starring Tom Laughlin; One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest directed by Milos Forman.

PART II: ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS

Oct. 8th & 13th
Early Ethnographic Films: What makes a film an ethnographic film? What is the relationship between documentaries and ethnographic films? How ethnographic films align with or contradict Hollywood films and Westerns?

Reading: BB, Karl Heider Ethnographic Film, Ch. 1, 1 – 15 & BB, Shari Huhndorf, “Nanook and His Contemporaries,” pp. 79 – 128.

Viewing: Scenes from In the Land of the Headhunters/War Canoes by Edward S. Curtis; Nanook of the North directed by Robert Flaherty; & Nanook Revisited by Claude Massot.

Oct. 15th & 20th
Mid-Century Ethnographic Films: How do ethnographic filmmakers choose their subjects? What dimensions does ethnographic film add to ethnography? What changes with self-ethnographic filmmaking? Should these films still be considered ethnographic?

Reading: BB, Manohla Dargis, “Despair and Poetry at Margins of Society”

Viewing: The Exiles by Kent Mackenzie

Oct. 22nd
MIDTERM EXAM: Thursday, October 22nd

Oct. 27th
Making Contemporary Ethnographic Films: What is the relationship between shooting and editing? Is this connection different for ethnographic films than other genres of filmmaking?

PART III: NATIVE PERSPECTIVES & FILMMAKERS

Oct. 29th & Nov. 3rd

The Reservation On Screen: How do movies set on reservations differ from Westerns? How are Native connections to land and place communicated in these films? How do filmmakers balance the positive and negative aspects of reservation life? How do reservations movie relate to ethnographic films?


Viewing: Scenes from Powwow Highway starring Gary Farmer & Scenes from Edge of America directed by Chris Eyre.

Nov. 5th & 10th

Natives Imagining Themselves: What difference does it make to have Natives playing Natives? Do contemporary Native actors have more control over movie’s outcome than they used to? How do filmmakers balance the positive and negative aspects of reservation life? How do reservations movie relate to ethnographic films?

Reading: BB, Beverly Singer, Ch. 4 “Native Filmmakers, Programs and Institutions” pp. 33 – 60 & “Conclusion: Continuing the Legacy” pp. 92 – 100.

Viewing: Scenes from Frozen River starring Misty Upham.

Nov. 12th & 17th

Revisiting the Old West: Can you make a movie that has unexpected portrayals of Indian yet is still set in the past? How over-determining is the Western genre? What role might Indians have in new Westerns?


Viewing: Scenes from Dead Man starring Gary Farmer.

Nov. 19th, 24th & Dec.1st

Representing Indigenous Trauma: How do indigenous filmmakers represent that damage of inter generational trauma without glorifying violence? How can healing and mending be portrayed? How can cinematic notions of masculinities be re-envisioned through film?


Viewing: Scene from Once Were Warriors by Lee Tamahori & Scenes from Boy by Taiki Waititi.

NOVEMEBER 26th

THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

Dec. 2nd, 4th, & 9th

Indigenous Tradition in the Contemporary World: How do films portray indigenous traditions without falling into the Noble Savage expectation? How is tradition made meaningful in the contemporary world? What commonalities do indigenous films share worldwide?


Viewing: Whale Rider starring Keisha Castle-Hughes.
Dec. 15th  

FINAL EXAM due by 12:30 pm Tuesday, December 15th

NOTE: I, of course, reserve the right to change this syllabus when I need to, but I will, of course, let you know when I do so!

Supplemental Film List
Each student will choose one movie from these lists. You will write a Film Response Paper for the film that you select. Titles labeled MC can be found at the Love Library’s Media Center. I will explain to you how this is done. Titles labeled KV can be rented from Kensington Video (http://www.kenvideo.com/) located at 4067 Adams Ave., SD, CA 92116, (619) 584-7725. Lastly, almost all of them are Netflix-able, of course as long as you happen to be a Netflix customer.

PART I – POPULAR CULTURE’S DEPICTION OF INDIANNESS
Aug. 27th – Sept. 15th (List 1)
The Paleface (1922) KV
The Vanishing American (1925) KV
Northwest Passage (1940) KV
They Died with their Boots On (1941) KV
Fort Apache (1948) KV
She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949) MC
Apache (1954) KV
The Indian Fighter (1955) KV
Run of the Arrow (1957) KV

Sept. 17th – Oct. 6th (List 2)
Tell them Willie Boy is Here (1969) KV & MC
The Mission (1986) MC
Little Big Man (1970) KV
A Man Called Horse (1970) MC
Running Brave (1983) KV
The Last of His Tribe (1992) MC
Black Robe (1991) MC
Geronimo: An American Legend (1993/4) KV & MC
Burry my Heart at Wounded Knee (2007) KV

PART II – ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS
Oct. 8th – 27th
You Are on Indian Land (1969) MC
Geronimo and the Apache Resistance (1989) MC
Winds of Change: A Matter of Promise (1990) MC
Chief Wilma P. Mankiller (1992) MC (via ITS)
Surviving Columbus (1992) MC
Incident at Oglala (1992) KV & MC
Before Columbus: Teaching Indians To Be White (1993) MC
500 Nations (1995) MC (choose any volume 1 – 8)
Rocks With Wings (2002) **MC**
The Great Indian Wars (2005) **MC** (choose any volume 1 – 3)
We Shall Remain (2009) **Online @ pbs.org, MC** (choose any episode 1 – 5)
Miss Navajo (2007) **Netflix streaming**
Native Americans: A Tribute (2008) **MC**

**PART III – NATIVE PERSPECTIVES & FILMMAKERS**
**Oct. 29th – Dec 9th**
PBS Hillerman Series: Dark Wind (1993), Skinwalkers (2002), Coyote Waits (2003) **MC** (choose one of these 3)
House Made of Dawn (1996) **MC**
Smoke Signals (1998) **MC**
Naturally Native (1998) **MC**
The Fast Runner (Atanarjuat) (2001) **MC**
Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) **MC**
The Lesser Blessed (2012) **Netflix streaming**
Crooked Arrows (2012) **Netflix Streaming**