

Department of English & Writing Studies  
Film Studies Program

**Film 3330F (001)**  
**National/Transnational Cinemas—Family Melodrama**  
Fall 2023

**Screenings:** Asynchronous online viewing

**Prerequisites:** At least 60% in Film Studies 1020E or Film Studies 1022 or special permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Content on OWL

To find the weekly lecture slides, clips and readings for the course, click on the **Resources** button found on the menu column on the left of the course Home Page in Owl. Click on the appropriate week to find the lecture slides, recordings of Lecture/Discussion sessions, and readings for each film title. **Firefox or Chrome are the optimal browsers to use when accessing OWL.**

Virtual Screenings

**Asynchronously** via licensed Weldon Streaming sites  
<https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/audioandvideoresources/video>

and the **Lumière** collection at University of California, Berkeley (links to all Lumière collection screening titles are listed below with weekly titles in the Course Schedule).

Additional screenings may be streamed via Western's **McIntyre platform** accessed at this link:

<https://stream-mcintyre-ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/westernu2020/title/21739>

The above link will take you to ***Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*** at the top of the page; all other titles for the course available on McIntyre may be found by scrolling below the streaming window at the top of the page and at the individual title links listed below in the weeks we will be viewing our films via McIntyre.

**URL links should be copied from the syllabus and pasted into your browser.**

**Communications:** Check your OWL Email before Screenings and Lectures

### Course Description

Students will interrogate the genre of the family melodrama through critical readings and the screening of films across Hollywood and four other national cinemas. For Louis Althusser, the Family along with the Church works as an Ideological State Apparatus interpellating good subjects for the State. The family's work of forming subjectivities is visible in popular culture representations such as the Hollywood family melodrama genre, a form that has transnational resonances both in its inflection of other cinemas and those cinemas' reception, consumption and reworking of the genre. Genre will be considered as components of what Stephen Neale calls the mental machinery of cinema: "a machine for the regulation of the orders of subjectivity" (Neale 1980, 19). Tracing a trajectory of family representations ranging across such divergent formations of melodrama as, *Now Voyager* (USA, Irving Rapper, 1942), *Mildred Pierce* (USA, Michael Curtiz, 1945), *All That Heaven Allows* (USA, Douglas Sirk, 1955), *Far From Heaven* (USA, Todd Haynes, 2002), *Fear Eats the Soul/Angst essen Seele auf* (West Germany, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1974), *Muriel's Wedding* (Australia, P.J. Hogan, 1994), *Todo sobre mi madre/All About My Mother* (Spain, Pedro Almodóvar, 1999), and *Parasite* (South Korea, Bong Joon Ho, 2019). Students will investigate, through discussion, essay writing, and reader responses to critical essays, the interrelationships of race, gender, class, sexuality and the nation as these concepts are performed through the family and through the lens of genre.

Thomas Elsaesser describes the family melodrama as a genre where plots revolve around the powerless, and their victimization by a corrupt social order as this is represented through family relationships (Elsaesser 1974, 514-15). A genre that tailors "ideological conflicts into emotionally charged family situations" (Elsaesser 1974, 516), the popular family melodrama "facilitates conflict and negotiation between cultural identities" (Gledhill 1987, 37). Family melodramas negotiate the space between the home and the community, and the family's classed, raced and gendered positions within these two spheres. Drawing on the work of Cook, Gledhill and Kleinhans, Hayward has suggested, in melodrama the family becomes the site of patriarchy and capitalism and therefore reproduces them (Hayward 1996, 200). With an emphasis on questions of genre, the course will pay close attention to cinematic constructions of the home, site of the family, as a symbolic structure of identity, its *heimlich* (canny, homely, familiar) and its *unheimlich* (uncanny, alien, unknown) properties. Relationships between the family, domestic space and the space of the national/transnational, will frame our investigation of family melodrama.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course successful students will:

- Understand "national/transnational cinemas,' and its interrelationships with 'melodrama,' 'genre,' 'ideology,' 'parody,' 'pastiche,' and 'postmodernism,' " as critical terms in Film Studies, and be able to apply these terms effectively to a diverse body of films, critical prose and oral discussion.
- Have insights into the diversity and psychosociology of the cinematic family as this construct is marked by class, race, gender/sexuality. national/transnational and genres.
- The above will be acquired by students through developing a capacity for argument, research, judgement and analysis that will be fostered by essays, presentations and other assignments, and by in-class small-group and whole-class discussion on family melodrama, genre, national/transnational and ideology.

## Course Materials

### Required Course Readings:

- A package of photocopied readings **CP**
- The course pack is available from the UWO campus Book Store as is the E-Version:
- [https://bookstore.uwo.ca/search/products?search=E9340&sort=search\\_api\\_relevance%20DESC](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/search/products?search=E9340&sort=search_api_relevance%20DESC)
- PDF Readings of some assigned readings available on **OWL**. **See the schedule below to determine where the weekly readings may be found**

## Methods of Evaluation

Midterm and Final Exam on OWL.

### Take-Home Midterm:

- The midterm-exam will be posted to the course OWL Page **10 October** before it is due to be submitted for assessment on **17 October** You will submit your responses to the mid-term questions via OWL Assignments by midnight on **17 October**.
- **Your responses *must* be submitted as an MS Word file. PDF files will not be accepted.**
- **Midterm responses not uploaded to OWL Assignments by midnight on 17 October will not be graded unless accommodation is sought and granted through your Dean's office.**

### Take-Home Final Exam:

- The final exam will be posted to OWL 48 hours before it is due to be submitted for assessment via OWL Assignments. The date of the final exam will be circulated once the exam timetable is published.
- The final exam is comprehensive, but it will be weighted towards the material from the second half of the course. In addition to multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions, the final exam will also feature a longer essay response based on the course content. The short essay questions may also include a close analysis of a screening clip.

## Course Requirements

All students will attend virtual screenings and lectures prepared to **participate** in discussions based on the week's assigned readings and screenings. Lectures will be recorded posted to OWL. Notes should be taken immediately following all screenings. Come to class with questions or comments that have arisen from your readings, the lecture and screening. Make notes during the lectures, and class discussions, with a view to challenging or developing some of the points expressed.

### **TERM WORK**

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|---|------------|
| • Tutorial Participation  | 05%        |
| • Reader Responses <b>To be posted to OWL Assignments</b>                         | 25%        |
| • Mid-term <b>Posted 10 October Due 17 October</b>                                | 20%        |
| • Essay <b>28 November</b>  | 20%        |
| <hr/>   |            |
| • <b>TOTAL TERM</b>   | <b>70%</b> |
| • <b>FINAL EXAMINATION</b> <b>Posted 24 hours before the scheduled exam slot.</b> |            |
| • Response submitted by midnight of the day of the                                |            |
| • scheduled Exam via OWL Assignments  | <b>30%</b> |