



STUDENT JOURNAL OF FILM, MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES COMMUNICATION AND THEATER ARTS

Acknowledgements

Welcome to the first edition of our *Student Journal of Film, Media and Cultural Studies*! We embarked on this journal as an experiment: an experiment to see the kind of original research students are generating in the film, media, literature, digital photography and design courses they are taking at John Jay College; an experiment to see if we could make some of the best of this research available to our community; and, finally, as *an experiment to see if we could make a journal!*

One of the features of our work has been that it has allowed us to see the kind of research students are conducting at John Jay. Here, we would like in particular to thank Jay Walitalo of the English Department, Cyriaco Lopes of Art and Music and Denisse Andrade of Communication and Theater Arts, for urging their students to submit work to our project. Many of the submissions sent in by these students are presented in the pages to follow. We would also like to thank the faculty who generously agreed to proofread these essays. These are Kathleen Collins and Nancy Egan of the Lloyd Sealy Library, and Greg Donaldson, Dara Byrne and Alan Winson of Communication and Theater Arts. Thanks also to Elton Beckett, Maria Rodriguez and Lorraine Moller, who made themselves available as proofreaders but who were not called upon to serve this time around (perhaps next year?). We would also like to thank Seth Baumrin, Chair of Communication and Theater Arts, administrative assistant Olga Kirsanova and all the faculty of Communication and Theater Arts, for supporting our endeavor.

Finally, in preparing our journal we instructed our proofreaders to correct only typographical errors or glaring grammatical problems in the articles they examined. Therefore, the content and writing style of the articles featured in the pages to follow *is entirely the responsibility of the respective authors*. We, the editors, are not responsible for the veracity of the information presented and we have not had the opportunity to fact-check all essays. On the other hand, when it comes to the look of the journal, pagination errors, incorrect page numbers or other similar annoyances to the reader, these are *solely the responsibility of the editors!*

The Editors

Cover photo: *Religion + Race = Respect for All* by Derek Sokolowski (2012).

From wavelength to bandwidth, low tide to tsunami, JJ students sail off into multiple horizons. In every issue of the *Student Journal of Film, Media and Cultural Studies* curiosity and experience takes new form within!

Professor Seth Baumrin.
Chair, Communication and Theater Arts

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Media Technology: Have We Really Upgraded Our Lives?

By Sharlene Johnson

The media have had an enormous influence on my life, and the continued development of technology has only expanded their presence. I can recall the very first television I personally owned at the age of six, with its screen about the size of a laptop's; my family's first desktop computer, complete with a clunky monitor, outdated graphics, and snail-speed operation; and even my first cell phone, which was far from smart and used a rather long antennae to find a signal. It has been quite some time since the introduction of these items into my existence, and I suppose that today some of them might be so antiquated as to deserve entry into a museum featuring the media devices of yesteryear. In their wake has come a faster, stronger, more advanced group of devices that have made many aspects of my day-to-day experiences easier and more exciting. At home, we now have flat screen televisions that dwarf the TV I so admired as a child, portable PCs that allow us to consume media at warp speeds anywhere at any time, and smart phones that combine the worlds of television, music, film, social networking, and other fields that were not originally converged with one another. In general, it seems as though our lives have improved so tremendously with enhanced media that it is almost impossible to imagine how we survived with the primitive media tools we once used. Although the media, augmented by technology, benefit us in several ways, the changes we see have not come without a measurable cost to our social interactions.

Technology has made it so that I cannot live without constant access to media. Since my laptop broke several months ago, my smart phone has been the main way for me to access the World Wide Web. I am able to send and receive emails, read the latest news, play games, look up random celebrity gossip, and text back and forth with friends all on one amazingly compact device. My phone has also enhanced my music experience with Pandora Internet Radio, which continues to introduce me to new artists whom I have never heard of and whose songs I am now eager to listen to. My brother has aptly titled this innovative music service the "death of the iPod," as it is one more way for users to circumvent the need to purchase music. In addition to the effect technology has had on my music listening, it has also impacted the way I view television with the advent of the DVR. Before this device existed, there was a limit to the number of shows I could watch and I was forced to see them live (or, many moons ago, record them on VHS for later viewing). Now I am able to record twice as many shows and watch them at my leisure. Expensive trips to the movie theater have likewise been eliminated because of my family's subscription to Netflix, which we use in conjunction with the Wii gaming console to connect to our television. Such a service has given us unlimited access to hundreds of films and television series.

Clearly, the aforementioned technological advances have enabled the convergence of many media forms into single devices or services: smart phones, the DVR,

and the Netflix/Wii combination each serve as an amalgam of audio, video, and many other iterations of the union between traditional and new media. In turn, they have provided greater access to the myriad media that now exists in our modern society and have created a much richer entertainment experience.

However, instead of changing my life in a meaningful way, these devices have often hindered my social interactions. I often choose phone calls and texting in lieu of face-to-face conversations, web surfing takes up an excessive amount of time that could be spent socializing, and the number of shows and films accessed with the DVR and Netflix will likely lead to my induction into the Couch Potato Hall of Fame. I find that I am not alone in this sentiment, as other people exhibit the same attachments to the technological devices they use. So many individuals carry out their lives on a digital landscape, often forgetting to unplug themselves from the virtual worlds of Facebook, Twitter, Sims, instead of enjoying the many titillating experiences that the real world has to offer. Technology has altered the media in such a way that, in spite of our increased connections with people both locally and internationally over the Web, we are actually much more isolated from one another than we were before. Granted, the pervasiveness of new media brought on by technology has naturalized these mediums to the point where the line between the digital and the real has been blurred, and it often seems as though the two worlds are codependent. However, it cannot be discounted that before the proliferation of new media, people had no other choice but to communicate in person and get their information via traditional channels—and in doing so they managed just fine.

Last month's hurricane caused a two-day long blackout in my neighborhood, and it forced many people to go without the technological trappings upon which they have become heavily dependent. Televisions, computers, and phones were rendered useless, and the thought of not being able to watch my favorite shows or surf the Web for an indefinite period of time was almost unbearable. However, with candles and flashlights in abundance, my family dusted off the board games and commenced a once popular pastime that we had long forgotten. With the deluge of mass media temporarily kept at bay, we spent the better part of our days battling each other in fierce competitions that lasted well into the night. Of course, these games are much more advanced now than they were during my childhood (today's Monopoly comes equipped with an electronic banker and credit cards, eliminating the need for paper money, and the new Uno, dubbed Uno Attack, allows the cards to be dealt out of a machine) but, nevertheless, they served as a departure from our usual television, phone, and computer addictions. They brought us together, albeit for a brief time, in a way that does not normally occur. The technological devices that usually keep us separated from one another were gone and we were actually able to survive without them, signifying that despite the many advantages the media have produced in our lives, sometimes it is better to unplug ourselves from the digital world and connect with one another the old-fashioned way.

Psycho: Parallel Journeys Beneath the Glamour of Black and White

By Raidah Islam

I love horror movies. I love how good horror films make audiences feel a chill run up their spines, or make them jump out of their seats entirely. For me, *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960, 109 min) is one of the best films of the horror genre ever made. It has been over fifty years since this movie came out in 1960, but even with all the time that has passed this film still has the power to scare people to their very core. The first time I saw *Psycho*, I only saw part of the famous shower scene. Naturally, the images of a knife stabbing down, a woman screaming, and the shrill sounds of violins in the background scared me silly, but at the time I was too young to analyze the full story of the film. The only thoughts going through my mind back then were “Oh my God!” and “Yuck, it’s a naked woman!” Thankfully, while the film has remained unchanged, my mind has expanded from the trivial thoughts of a child and I can now analyze the film and get a better understanding of what Hitchcock wanted to convey through this now legendary movie. One of the things that I found most interesting in the film is the parallel journey that occurs between the characters of Marion Crane and Norman Bates.

In *Psycho*, Marion Crane and Norman Bates are basically two very repressed individuals who have not been given the chance to fully mature into adults. According to Bill Nichols, “Repression is the denial of the existence of certain thoughts or feelings, or the stifling of alternative gender identities or sexual orientations. Repression can be external, in the form of social pressures that encourage individuals to conform to the status quo, or internal, in the form of a psychic process that removes some thoughts and desires from consciousness by pushing them into the unconscious” (2010:511). What I love about *Psycho* is how the character of Marion and the character of Norman are so similar in that they are the two embodiments of repression, even though they end up in two completely different places by the end.

The character of Marion Crane is repressed by her circumstances in life. She is a hard working secretary who is madly in love with a man named Sam Loomis. At the very beginning of the film we see Marion and Sam in a hotel room after a very intimate meeting. During this scene the repression Marion is experiencing is that she and Sam are not able to be with each other like they truly desire to be. Their relationship is long-distance, and Sam is also under the financial burden of having to pay alimony to his ex-wife. Sam knows that taking their relationship to the next level, through marriage, is not a good idea. Marion, on the other hand, impulsively says “yes” to the idea of marriage, despite the problems that it will most definitely cause them both. Marion’s repression is showcased in the form of her maturity level, which at the beginning of the film is not very adult-like. She impulsively agrees to Sam’s rhetorical proposal of marriage; then she goes a step further and steals forty thousand dollars from one of her employer’s clients. While most adults would instantly see these actions as a bad choice, Marion is like a child in that she doesn’t

initially think about the consequences. She only thinks about what she wants, which is a life with Sam.

The character of Norman Bates is a far more extreme example of a repressed person. Where Marion is a little child-like, Norman is like a little boy inhabiting the body of a man. What represses him in the film is his truly domineering mother. Besides physically looking young and boyish, the way Norman talks about his mother shows his repressed maturity. In the scene where he and Marion are talking over sandwiches in the parlor, Norman says that a boy's best friend is his mother. Later in the film, when Lila Crane, Marion's sister, goes up to Norman's home to try and talk to Mrs. Bates, she finds Norman's room, which is filled with toys that a normal man would have long since parted with. Elsewhere in the film, Norman also acts childish, eating candy during some scenes, and chewing his thumb nail while he watches Marion's car sink into the swamp behind the motel.

What makes Marion and Norman different is that Marion is the one who manages to break free of her repression and actually mature. As I watch her come to the decision to go back to Arizona and return the money she stole, I find myself feeling a newfound respect for her. Though I sympathize with her when she initially steals the money, in my mind I am hoping that she turns around to return it at some point. In a way, Marion reaches full adulthood when she decides to go back and face the consequences for her actions. However, Marion never gets to actually carry out her plans to go back, because shortly after she makes the decision to do so, she is brutally stabbed to death in her motel room shower, in what is now an iconic cinematic sequence. At least Marion dies as an adult. The same cannot be said for Norman



Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Bates. Unfortunately for him, he never frees himself from his repressed state. Norman never gets to mature into a grown man because his memory of his mother is just too great for him to overcome. By the end of the film, the repression takes full control of Norman, and he merely fades away into the darkest recesses of the mind. In a way, Norman dies in the film, but his death is not the physical death that Marion Crane goes through. By the end of the film, Norman's body is alive and perfectly well, but the part of the psyche that was Norman is lost forever, according to the psychologist in the final scene.

What I believe makes *Psycho* such a great film is not just the black and white cinematography, the stylish way in which the film is edited, or the shock value from scenes like the famous shower sequence, but the underlying journey of the characters. If one looks past the glamour of *Psycho*, one can see the parallel journey of two repressed individuals. What I see in regard to the characters of Marion Crane and Norman Bates is ascension and descension respectively. I believe that Marion can be described as the ascender in that she rises up from the depths of her own impulsiveness and immaturity into adulthood, even though her life is snubbed out before she can act on her decision to do what is right. Norman Bates, on the other hand, is the one who descends into a dark oblivion without ever realizing true adulthood. This underlying journey of these two characters, as much as the truly visionary style of the film, is what makes *Psycho* a truly iconic film.

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Submitted: DRA106 Introduction to Film. Spring, 2011.

Should Electronic Devices be allowed in College Classrooms?

By Kathrine Ng

Technology is a huge part of our daily lives. It is used in offices, stores and even in schools. When I was younger teachers would restrict student use of electronic devices during class time, or banned it outright when there was the possibility that school district inspectors might visit. When teachers saw you using a device they would confiscate it and hold it until the end of the day or, in extreme cases, until the end of the week. Now, as a college student, there are no rules or restrictions of the use of laptops and tablets. Professors ask that cell phones be turned off in class, but no student ever complies. Cell phones and other electronic devices can be helpful during class at times, but does the use of these devices create a distraction in class, more than foster productivity? Productivity can occur with the use of these devices, but ultimately this productivity depends on the type of class, the professor and the students. My definition of productivity, for this paper, is the ability of a student to work in an effective way during class time while using technology. Examples of productivity in the classroom are such things as students participating in discussions, paying attention, taking notes and working on their assignments.

The type of class is a big factor in relation to productivity. If the content of a course is interesting, the student will more likely feel motivated to be productive in it. On the other hand, if the content is not interesting to them, then a student does not feel encouraged to participate and is less likely to be productive. Similarly, course content that is delivered by an enthusiastic professor, versus by a monotone lecturer, will hold the attention of students. When the sessions are taught by an uninspiring professor there is a higher rate of student 'zoning out' in class, with students seeking some other way to be entertained while in the classroom. Then there are the students themselves. If a student is motivated to work in class, then electronic devices can be a helpful aid. Distraction is, I believe, a choice, especially in a school atmosphere. If a student wants to pay attention then nothing can stand in the way of their learning, whereas if a student does not take the class seriously it leads to a different outcome. Motivation is a key part of college life because if you are paying tuition you may be more likely to have the strive to do well, whereas if someone else is paying for the tuition (like a parent or the government) it is possible to not care as much, since the tuition is not coming from the student's pocket. For myself, financial aid covers for my tuition but still I strive to do my best. My family motivates me to do as well as I can, but sometimes in classes that I find boring I read the textbook or look for information online, when I have the chance.

Electronic devices can certainly be useful in class. Laptops and tablets are convenient and lightweight so that you can take them and work with them anywhere; they can also be a cost effective tool, which is something we all need in the present economy. For instance, professors assign textbooks that can range from \$80 to \$100 for a book that is read only once. With online textbooks the cost is lower. Online

textbooks can cost about \$35 for a title that cost twice as much as an actual paper book. Literature courses studying Shakespeare can get his works online for free, or for at most 99-cents through Barnes and Noble's weekly deals. This also saves paper, and instead of printing a thirty-page article assigned by the professor, a student can simply read it on their tablet or laptop. Tablets and laptops also have applications and programs to highlight a certain passage or to take notes on the article without having to write down anything. They can also be helpful during lectures: If a student asks a question which the professor does not know the answer to, the student can immediately look up the answer using Google and relay the answer to the instructor.

To study the use of technology in the classroom I surveyed students from John Jay College as well as other New York City colleges. I asked students: whether they bring his/her laptop or tablet to class; what do they use electronic devices for during class; what websites do they use; what college they go to; their school rank and, lastly, if these devices should be allowed to be used in classes or be restricted in some way. The data I collected is from a small sample consisting of 20 student participants. Roughly half of the students brought their laptops/tablets to class while the other half did not. The data from the surveys showed that those students who used their electronic devices in class have been distracted in at least one class per semester. The main websites that distracted them were Facebook, other social-media networks, and YouTube. A student named Catlin, a junior at John Jay, said she uses her laptop most of the time for taking notes. The exception is her literature class, where she uses the laptop for personal use because she finds the class boring. Other students said things along these same lines. Other survey participants who use their laptops in class do pay attention, and only use these devices for personal communication during classes that they found boring. A student named Kevin, a junior at City College, found that organizing and taking notes electronically was more effective than writing by hand. One student from Baruch College said he brought in his laptop to class specifically to watch gory movies. He thought laptop use should be restricted in class, because of the way he was using his own laptop.

On the other hand, the survey group that did not bring laptops/tablets to class believed that if they did bring their devices, they would be more likely to be distracted. A sophomore student at Queens College found it distracting when the person next to her logged on YouTube. When asked why this was, she replied that it was much harder to concentrate with someone watching videos next to her. For myself, I am in the group who do not bring their electronic devices to classes. I found that when I brought mine in, I didn't pay attention to the class. Instead, would go on Facebook, play games, or start work for other courses. In my survey, I found that bringing electronic devices to class is a double-edge sword. A student who brings an electronic device may take notes and participate or they may be distracted or become a distraction to others.

In my survey I concluded that most students want laptops/tablets to be

restricted. The reason is simply that they are too much of a distraction. Maria, a senior at John Jay, stated that Internet access should be restricted at the college. Her view has pros and cons. I believe that if colleges were to restrict the Internet there would be less likelihood of students being distracted, but at the same time there are games or apps that do not require any internet access for them to be played. Kevin explained his reasoning behind restricting laptops/tablets:

“Being able to hide behind the screen in the middle of class to play games or browse the web not only distracts others around you but is very disrespectful to the professor. Of course, this isn’t the case for everyone but if one person is abusing their privilege to bring these devices to class, others are sure to follow, and thus degrading the overall learning environment. So to sum up, I believe these devices should be restricted in class.”

Kevin makes a great argument for supporting restrictions since not only are these devices distracting to students, their use is also disrespectful to the professor. Two people wanted electronic devices to be banned completely in the classroom because they felt that if students are in school then they should pay attention. Five of the people I interviewed wanted to have colleges allow electronic devices in the classroom. These people said it was easier to organize notes on tablets/laptops and it was cost effective to be able to read required articles online.

My findings show that productivity in the classroom depends ultimately on the motivation of individual students. There is a choice as to what we, as students, do in class. We either pay attention or we don’t. Ideally, as college students, there should be no restrictions in what we do. Students are considered adults, not children who need to have their every action monitored, but at times monitoring is necessary. Anamika, a senior at John Jay, said “It really depends on the student. If a student can stop themselves from wandering off in class, then it’s an aid. But otherwise, it’s a distraction.” If we decide to go to college and pay for it, we need to get our money’s worth out of it. College courses are supposed to help students prepare for their future careers and even if a class is boring, the subject may be necessary later in life.

Submitted: SPE240 Contemporary Media in Everyday Life. Fall 2011



Rocker's Peace Florence Lau (2011)



Down the Rabbit Hole Jessica Ng (2011)



Graveyard Mark Alonzo (2012)

Too Much Online Health Information: Helpful or Harmful?

By Nazia Fyazi

Our lives have changed significantly in the last 30 years because of the advances that have been made in both technology and the health industry. Since the creation of the Internet, the ability to access medical information by both health professionals and ordinary people has increased tremendously. While most people would agree that access to health information is beneficial, some would argue that too much information on the Internet can be harmful to the untrained consumers of this information. Websites such as WebMD, run by a major corporation, as well as user-generated content such as personal blogs give consumers access to a wide variety of health information. With so much information, it is important to explore the benefits versus the potential damage done by the ever-increasing accessibility of health information.

The Internet is a platform where people from one side of the world can link up with others in another part of the world without having to leave their home. The broad reach of the Internet allows all people to access health resources and information. As the name implies, the World Wide Web is a network of plentiful information where users are able to self-educate themselves and to contribute to the vast amount of information available. According to John V. Pavlik and Shawn McIntosh Pavlik, the Internet is a powerhouse when it comes to mass communication because almost anyone can have access to it and there are no limitations on the amount of information circulated (2010).

Clearly, people use the Internet for many reasons, including professional development, academic study and personal use. This growing usage is also occurring when it comes to looking for health information. In the past, only health professionals had easy access to this information and, because only certain people were privy to health information the patient was forced to rely on the expertise of health professionals. If a person was interested in seeking surgery, he or she would have to believe the doctor who ordered the surgery. Without having alternative access to health information, many people made decisions about their health based on what others told them or by going to gather information on a particular ailment at the library. Today, people can learn what they want about their health on the Internet.

Before exploring the positive and negative factors of using online health information as a source, it is important to understand where online information is coming from. For the purposes of this paper, three types of online health information will be looked at. First, there are non-profit companies such as the Mayo Clinic, whose mission is to “empower people to manage their health.” While this site does have advertisements on it, the information featured comes from a professional team of doctors and researchers. The Mayo Clinic website appears to be a reliable source of online health information and unlike other online health sources this website

does not encourage users to self-diagnose their ailments. Instead, it serves as a secondary source of quality information. In addition to presenting health information, the site has an online community where users with similar interests can communicate. These may include surviving cancer patients or people with heart problems. The ability to relate to others is vital for it allows consumers to not only gain access to health information, but it allows for consumer reviews and support. In addition to the Mayo Clinic, MedlinePlus is a not-for-profit government operated website that does not have any ads and does not endorse any products while being free and available to the public. The information on the site is taken from current research and is constantly updated. This website is constructed through the National Library of Medicine, which is a trusted source of information.

A second type of medical website are those that make a profit, like WebMD, and which rely heavily upon advertisements from a range of companies including pharmaceutical and health companies as well as travel and leisure groups. While the information may be credible, the intent of these websites is questionable. In analyzing the overall feel of the site, I noticed there was an abundance of information that was anxiety provoking; due to the large amount of information, a non-professional who visits a site like WebMD may self-diagnose themselves inaccurately. Virginia Heffernan, a reporter for the New York Times in an article titled "A Prescription for Fear," writes, "WebMD has become permeated with pseudomedicine and subtle misinformation." While the author's tone in this article seems biased, she makes good points about WebMD's involvement with pharmaceutical companies and the overall construction of the site, which seems to create fear instead of serving as a helpful guide to better understand health. Sites like WebMD are supported by ads from pharmaceutical companies who are promoting their medications with fancy animated graphics, videos about their product, and links to their websites. Clearly these companies are targeting consumers to sell their drugs.

Finally, the last type of website that people use as a source of health information are user-generated sites, these include social networking sites, personal and professional blogs, and health forums. User-generated sites have come a long way in contributing to the amount of health information that is available. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, WordPress, Blogspot, and others give the everyday person the freedom to share professional and personal experiences and their knowledge about health information. The content of these websites may not be reliable because, though the source may be a doctor, it could also be a ten year-old child. Often, it is hard to know which health information can be trusted, as well as the motivation behind the person posting information. Sites like health magazines or TV shows may be a way for companies to promote their products, whereas the average person who creates a health blog may only be interested in informing other readers.

For the most part, user-generated sites are not checked for the quality of the content, but users can in some cases find the information they need. A major benefit of user-generated content is the power of connecting people who are interested in the same type of health information. As stated earlier, user-generated sites allow users to provide support and share experiences. One important, unintended outcome is that people use information from these sites to make medical decisions. For example,

a person may want to know how others have responded to a certain medication. Even if a doctor tells them that it okay to take the medication, a person may rely more on the opinions of the online community. According to Reuters, more than half of Americans use the Internet for health (2010). Profit and non-profit sites provide reliable sources of information, while blogs and forum sites provide a personal “narrative” point of view (Pucell 2002).

Clearly there is a need for health information on the Internet, but one negative aspect is the possibility that people will rely too much or exclusively on the Internet to get their information. Many professional sites include the original source of the information posted, but the average person is not trained to interpret the difference between information that is valuable and information that is worthless or potentially harmful to their health. In an article titled “DIY Healthcare: Consumer Self-diagnosis and Treatment” by the Hartman Group (n.d.), a woman by the name of Jenny was suffering from severe allergic reactions. In order to gain some insight to her medical condition, she used the Internet to look up information for likely solutions. After doing everything that she read on the Internet to fix her allergies, she still saw no change in her health and finally decided to see a doctor who was able to help her. This is just one example, but it is clear that consumers of online health information need to be wary of what they read. Even if professional websites and sites with user-generated content provide accurate information about a type of diagnosis, a person may misinterpret information and make harmful decisions about her health, which may include taking the wrong steps to solve the problem or by not taking the problem seriously enough.

In addition to the evaluation of the three types of websites described above,

The screenshot shows the WebMD website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home & News, Health A-Z, Drugs & Supplements, Healthy Living, Eating & Diet, Parenting & Pregnancy, Teen Health, and Pet Health. The date is April 22, 2012. The WebMD logo is prominently displayed with the tagline "Better information. Better health." Below the logo is a search bar and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar are links for "Sign in", "Sign up", and "Why WebMD?". Below the search bar are "Other search tools" for Symptoms, Doctors, and Medical Dictionary. A "What's fit for Kids?" button is also present. On the left side, there is a "WebMD Symptom Checker" with a "Go" button. Below this is a list of "Health Conditions" including ADHD, Allergies, Anxiety Disorders, Arthritis, Asthma, Back Pain, Bipolar Disorder, Cancer, Cholesterol, Cold & Flu, COPD, Depression, Diabetes, Eye Health, Fibromyalgia, Heart Disease, Heartburn/GERD, Hypertension, and Incontinence/OAB. The main content area features a large article titled "Male Beach Bodies" with a "View Slideshow" button. Below this are three smaller article boxes: "Beach Bodies" (Male muscle building and manscaping tips), "Hearing Loss" (Many common things can cause hearing loss), and "Vision Changes" (How your vision changes over time). To the right of these are two more article boxes: "22 Best Weight Loss Tips" (Make your weight loss goals come true) and "Brain Foods" (In a rut? Eat some of these "smart foods."). Below these is an advertisement for "Chronic Widespread Pain & Tenderness" with a "Learn About Possible Causes" button. At the bottom, there is a "Today's Health News & Features" section with links for "HPV Cancer Hits 8,000 Men, 18,000" and "Talking to Your Daughter About Sex".

I conducted a mini survey to further explore the public's Internet use for health information. The survey targeted both men and women above the age of 18. Of those that participated in the survey, 86.7% stated that they use the Internet for health information, whereas 13.3 % do not. When asked about the amount of times in the past year they used the Internet for health information, 40% stated 11 or more times, 26.7% stated 4-6 times, 13.3% stated 7-10 times, and 20% stated 1-3 times. When asked about whether they sought health information from a doctor or online first, 66.7% of participants responded as checking online first, then going to see the doctor. Whereas 20% stated that they would go look to their doctor first and then look online for more information. 7% of people stated that they either see a doctor or check online only. 60% of participants also stated that they trust the information from their doctor, but 40% only trust their doctor part of the time, which suggests that other resources such as the Internet are most likely used when people do not trust their doctor. When asked whether online health information was helpful, 53.3% stated that it is sometimes helpful, while 40% stated it as helpful and 6.7% did not find it to be helpful. Lastly, a staggering 86.7% of participants indicated that they trust health information found online depending on the source, whereas 6.7% either fully trusted or did not trust the Internet at all. Based on my mini survey, I conclude that in the long run health information from the Internet is more beneficial than harmful. Because of the Internet, patients have an abundance of information to make better health choices. People are no longer limited to professional advice, as online health information provides a resource hub. There are more choices available, and consumers are getting smarter about the types of information they take seriously. The Internet is a vital component to inform the public about their health, as well as the health of their loved ones. As with any information, it is up to the individual to discern what is useful and what is not. Even with all of the health information found online, consumers of this type of information cannot substitute the importance of a professional opinion from a doctor with proper training. Technological convergence including audio, video, print, and images that are available online serve as a learning tool that can not only be reliable, but also a valid source of information.

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Erle C. Kenton's *Island of lost souls* (1932)

By Edmund Ford



Island of lost souls (Erle C. Kenton. 1932)

“With great power comes great responsibility.” Although known by some today as the mantra of Peter Parker and his alter-ego Spiderman in Stan Lee’s movie *Spiderman* (2002) (it is said to Peter first by his uncle Ben, and repeated by him in the voiceover finale) this quote has been sometimes attributed to Winston Churchill; “The price of greatness is responsibility” (1943). Franklin D. Roosevelt (n.d.) has also been credited with intending to present a similar line, “Today, we have learned in the agony of war that great power involves great responsibility,” in a speech but he died before delivering it. Wielding great power, while lacking the moral and ethical responsibility associated with it has also been a theme central to numerous science fiction stories.

The *Island of Lost Souls*, directed by Erle C. Kelton in 1932, is an early example of science fiction filmmaking. Based on the novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, by H.G. Wells, it was not originally categorized as science fiction. In fact, as with other similar themed films, when it premiered in 1932 it was billed to theater going audiences as a “melodrama that hopes to make one’s blood curdle” (New York Times 1933). In a New York Times review published under the banner of The Screen, the writer states that with the film, “There is a suggestion of *Frankenstein*” (1933). This categorization of such films as *Frankenstein* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* as melodramas

was partially due to increasing censorship of the movies in the beginning of the 1930s; the producers feared that billing films as horror films would have the effect of offending the public's sensibilities.

All sensibilities aside, *Island of Lost Souls* appeals to that part of us that is lusting for god-like power. Human beings consider themselves the most powerful beings on the planet. The reason for this is that we believe that our intellect separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom. Just as our respective deities are considered infinitely more intelligent than we are, we consider ourselves equally removed with regard to the rest of the animal kingdom. This feeling of godlike superiority can be intoxicating and a justification for all types of irresponsible and uncompassionate behavior towards the rest of life on earth, as well as towards each other. For example, in the film, Dr. Moreau asks Edward, with regard to his (Moreau's) questionable scientific methods, "Mr. Parker, do you know what it means to feel like God?" (Kenton 1932) As god-like as the ability to create (or alter) life may make a person feel, it can also make for a very lonely life. Lonely because in terms of interspecies relations, ours interaction is decidedly one sided. True, we can have pets from another species, but trying to debate religion or discuss current events with them would be an extremely one-sided conversation.

Though the creation of a new intelligent species may seem like the answer to this loneliness, it creates new angst for the creator. Loneliness too has been the historical impetus for our imagining and seeking out other forms of intelligent life elsewhere. Our search for such life has and does take many different manifestations; one is how we look into the future for the possibility of one day meeting another intelligent species in a non-terrestrial scenario; the starship Enterprise's "five year mission: To explore strange new worlds; to seek out new life and new civilizations; to boldly go where no man has gone before..." (Roddenberry, 1966)

In *Island of Lost Souls*, the embodiment of our collective yearning to find others of higher intelligence is seen in the character of Dr. Moreau. However, as stated previously, in terms of motivation Dr. Moreau is less concerned with interspecies peers and more concerned (as is Henry Frankenstein,) with playing god. As has been stated, this lusting for god-like power has been a staple of the science fiction genre.

The argument that *Frankenstein* is the first example of a modern science fiction novel has been put forth by Brian W. Aldiss, the noted science fiction authority, in his book *The Detached Retina: Aspects of SF and Fantasy* (1995). "Frankenstein rejects alchemy and magic and turns to scientific research" (Aldiss 1995). Though originally categorized as melodrama, the *Island of Lost Souls* attempts to explain itself in terms of plausible scientific concepts such as surgery and evolution. Consequently, Mr. Aldiss' argument for categorizing Frankenstein as pioneering science fiction is applicable for the categorization of *Island of Lost Souls* as an early science fiction film.

Having placed the film within the science fiction genre, a question remains. In dissecting this film, which of its themes should be pursued as its primary science fiction theme? Three thematic tropes apply: First, the use of technology in the 'advanced surgical techniques' used by Dr. Moreau to achieve his results. Second,

there is the image of the altered landscape of an idyllic tropical island village populated by half human and half animal aberrations. And third, and this is the one I will focus on, there is the theme of dehumanization seen in the film. In a book written by David J. Skal titled *The Monster Show*, reviewed in the New York Times of July 20, 1993, two interesting developments emerge with respect to *Island of Lost Souls*. First, as the title indicates, Mr. Skal considers *Island of Lost Souls* part of the horror genre. Thankfully, calling movies such as *Frankenstein* and *Island of Lost Souls* ‘melodramas’ went out of fashion in TV Guide in the early 1970’s! It would be two years later, in 1995, that Brian Aldiss would put forth his argument for *Frankenstein* (and by default, *Island of Lost Souls*) being considered as science fiction. Secondly, though Mr. Skal recognizes the pervasive theme of dehumanization in *Island of Lost Souls* he erroneously attributes its making as a response to dehumanizing events occurring in World War II, which would not in fact occur until a decade after the film was made. “World War II,” Skal argues, “brought another wave of horror films, many of which turned the dehumanizing events of that conflagration into stories about werewolves (*The Wolfman*), cat people (*Cat People*) and beast-men (*Island of Lost Souls*)” (New York Times 1993). In fact, had Mr. Skal got the production date of *Island of Lost Souls* correct, he could have easily have included the film in his argument that, “horror reached a new peak during the years of the Great Depression, years that witnessed the production of four horror classics: *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932) and *Freaks* (1932)” (New York Times 1993). Although the perceptible, if unintended, metaphors of economic and class warfare that Skal discerns in these films aren’t terribly obvious to the casual observer, it’s easy enough to see how they reflected a nation’s heightened anxieties about economic emasculation and the false promises of progress.

Skal is correct in his analysis of the dehumanization seen in *Island of Lost Souls*. In the film both Dr. Moreau and his creations are dehumanized and, ironically, in repeated instances throughout the film we see the so-called beasts acting with more morality, compassion and love than Moreau, his assistant Dr. Montgomery, the rescue ship’s Captain Davies, or even the film’s protagonist Edward Parker. For instance, the beast-men, led by the ‘Sayer of the Law’ (Bela Lugosi) strive to be exemplary humans by reciting and abiding by “The Law.” In essence this set of laws admonishes the beast-men, “Not to run on all fours. Are we not men? Not to eat meat. Are we not men? Not to spill blood? Are we not men?” (Kenton, 1932.) Meanwhile we see Dr. Moreau and the other human characters have no problem eating meat, or spilling blood (see Captain Davies quick fists and Parker’s quick counter punches). Nor should we forget Dr. Moreau and his whip, which is reminiscent of a brutal plantation owner striking fear into his slaves.

Even Edward Parker, the film’s protagonist shows his animal side. When Lota (the Panther Woman) shows Parker what Moreau recognizes as real emotions, Parker first resists her feelings of love for him because he is supposedly otherwise “engaged.” Suddenly though, he then succumbs to his own animal lust and grabs and kisses her. His own self-loathing becomes immediately apparent. The total dehumanization of the island becomes complete when Dr. Moreau’s creations realize that the creator is flawed. As one of the beast-men sent to menace Parker’s fiancé,

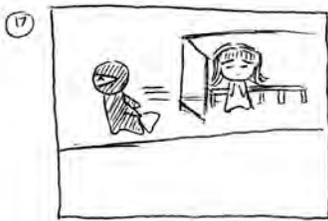
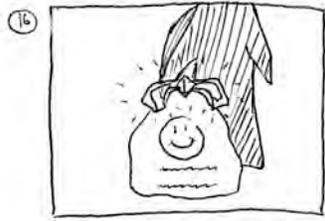
Ruth Thomas, tells the Sayer of the Law, “He told me to spill blood!” (Kenton, 1932) It is then that they realize that humans are no more moral (possibly not even as moral) or divine than they are. It is then they realize that their god (Moreau) can also bleed. The apple has been bitten; now all will know shame and now all will feel pain, including Dr. Moreau in his own house of pain.

This warped version of the Garden of Eden has been noted by science fiction scholars: As ‘Judge’ Patrick Bromley notes in the web’s DVD Verdict: Case Number 22669, “It’s not just the visuals that director Erle C. Kenton has put on the screen; there are ideas at work in *Island of Lost Souls* that terrified God-fearing, hardworking audiences around the world” (Bromley 2011). Richard Scheib notes that H.G. Wells was upset that the film was not more faithful to his original concept of, “a Frankensteinian take on the Garden of Eden myth, one where the creations take revenge on their flawed creator” (Scheib n.d.). Playing god is a theme familiar in many science fiction films. In the *z*, the noble motives that the figure of Dr. Moreau may have initially possessed are notably absent from his persona. His disdain for his creations and for humanity in general are a reminder to us that, “above all else, a god needs compassion” (Goldstone 1966).

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Submitted: LIT325 The Science Fiction Film.



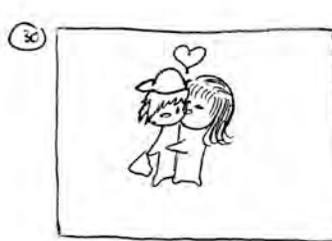
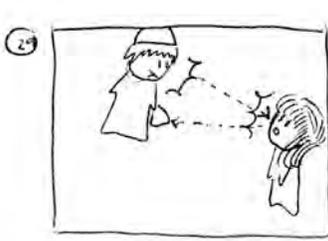
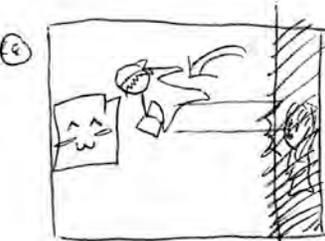
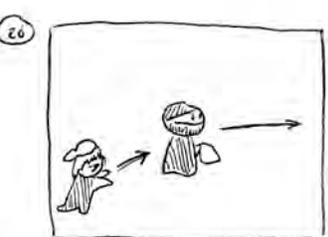
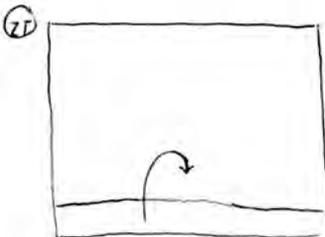
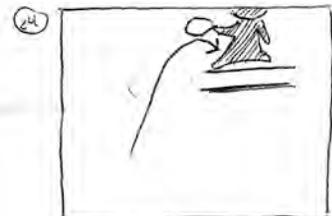
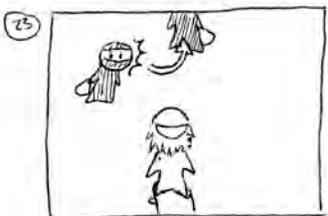
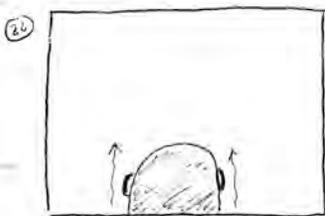
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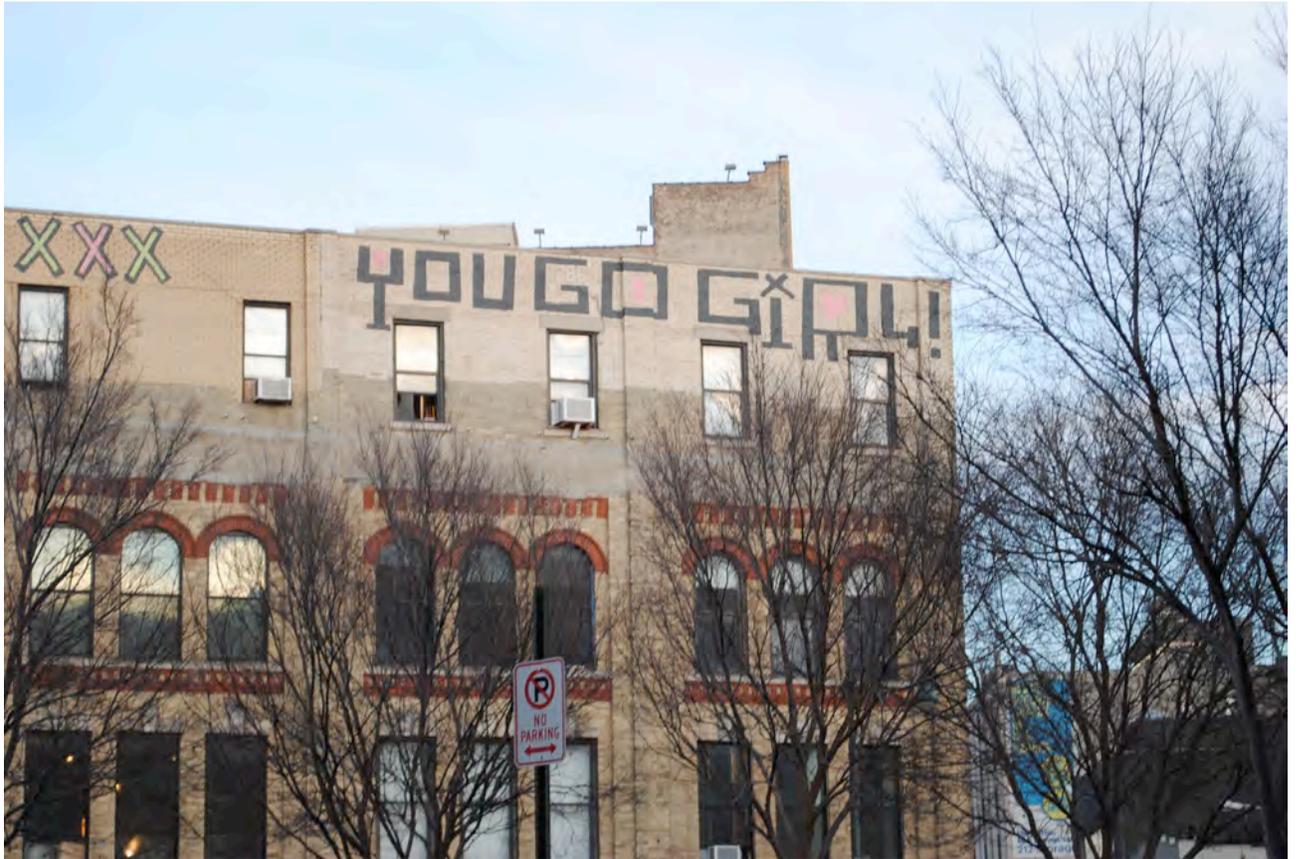


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Storyboard for *If Only*, by Nataly Yi & Brian Benavides (2011)
Use this QR-Code to view the completed video, or visit: <http://blip.tv/dra261-video-production-basics/if-only-benavides-yi-2011-5834024>





Still In City Joleen Richards (2012)



Subway train in snow landscape Chao Huang (n.d)

Hollywood Shuffle

By Sylvia Atkins

Necessity is the mother of all inventions, or so it has been said. Necessity was also the trigger that inspired Robert Townsend to write and produce the film *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987), a cleverly done social problem genre movie; “Institutional problem genres of film draw public attention to a serious public issue. They tackle institutional racism” (Nichols 2010: 331).

Hollywood Shuffle is the story of a young African American man named Bobby Taylor who dreams of becoming a famous actor like the white actors he watches on television and in the movies. Bobby soon discovers that the only roles available to African Americans are demeaning stereotypical roles such as maids, servants, farmers, slaves, mammies, pimps and prostitutes. This movie is about the evolution of a young innocent man dreaming of entering a career that is not very inviting to African Americans into a mature man who learns to make decisions based on reality. We journey with him down a tortuous road where he first assimilates and takes negative roles, dreams of getting better roles, and finally has an epiphany and makes his final decision.

We begin the movie with an innocent young aspiring movie actor, Bobby Taylor, practicing his lines in the bathroom mirror in his home. We see the gleam in his eye and the excitement exuberating from him. His younger brother Stevie sits nearby assisting Bobby with his lines. He practices his sideways pimp walk and his jive talk with hopes of becoming the next Hollywood star. He thinks to himself: this audition is the one where I’ll get my big break. So, he struggles with the lines, insuring that he gets the jive talk to perfect pitch and his pimp walk down to perfection. Why wouldn’t he? This is going to be his ticket to Hollywood, away from the trivial dead end job he has at the Winky Dinky Dog.

We journey with Bobby Taylor as he arrives at the studio for his audition. We see an actor exiting the building, who greets Bobby with the same jive talk Bobby has been practicing, with two white girls on his arms. Could this be confirmation that this is the avenue to stardom? After all, doesn’t every African American male fantasize about having a white woman on his arm? Well, at least that is the way the story goes. As we enter the studio we see the wall is lined with young African American men and women, all waiting for an invitation into a culture that rejects their ability to be serious actors. The only roles available to these aspiring actors are the stereotypical roles of hustlers, pimps, and prostitutes. Nichols refers to this practice as institutional racism, which “involves forms of discrimination built into the legalized, everyday activities of institutions” (Nichols 2010: 326). It does not matter if Bobby Taylor auditions for United Artist, 20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures or Columbia Pictures. The roles offered to him are all the same. Disparity and racism are embedded deep within the industry.

Hollywood Shuffle (Robert Townsend, 1987)



While waiting, Bobby sits next to a fellow aspiring actor who speaks to him about the negative, demeaning roles Hollywood is offering to African Americans. He says to Bobby, “This is bullshit, this is more of the white man stereotyping. Only an Uncle Tom would do this. They just looking for someone to sell out. Don’t sell out brother...” (Townsend, 1987). Bobby seems a little surprised to hear this. As he contemplates on the words he has just heard, it sets in motion a dream state that he will continue to visit throughout the film. During this particular dream state Bobby focuses on the roles that African Americans have played in the movies such as slaves, pimps, prostitutes, Uncle Toms, etc. The irony in the acting school dream is that the instructors are all white. Their job is to teach these African American students to act in the social imaginary that white folks had already assigned to them. This social imaginary, or the “arena within which members of one group picture members of another group in terms of stereotypes and clichés” (Nichols 2010: 326), was the pulse of the film industry. This scene suggests that white folks do not even have enough confidence in African Americans to portray themselves in roles they have already relegated as our natural behavior.

Later Bobby receives a call from his agent informing him that he has a callback audition. The agent informs Bobby that the producers are looking for an Eddie Murphy-type. Bobby responds by asking the agent: “Why can’t I just act?” (Townsend, 1987). I found this to be one of the pivotal moments in the movie. Yes, Bobby is excited about the callback because it may very well be the door that opens up opportunities for him, but he has concerns about the narrowing in the road he is traveling as evidenced in his dreams.

Later that night Bobby dreams about the impending follow-up audition. He dreams that he arrives in the studio as the female producer yells, “There he is; he’s the one we want” (Townsend, 1987). Bobby responds, “I just want to be me. I don’t

want to be Eddie Murphy, I just want to be me, I Just want..." and then he uncontrollably begins to speak and behave like Eddie Murphy. (Townsend, 1987). He claps both hands over his mouth in an attempt to control his behavior. He screams with agony over his inability to control how he represents himself. In a sweat, he jumps up out of his sleep. This is a foreshadowing of Bobby having to choose who will be in control of what roles he will to portray.

It is celebration time... or is it? Bobby and Lydia are in his home celebrating his being chosen for the role of Jimmy. As they lay together on the floor, after watching a detective movie in which the main character was an African American, Bobby reveals that he is nervous about rehearsal the next day. Lydia inquires as to why he is nervous and he responds by stating that he feels funny doing the kind of character he has been hired to portray. He says he wishes his role was something different. His innocence has been replaced with the realization that the role he has accepted is not complimentary to him, his idea of serious acting, or his race. He wants a role like Sam the detective. Watching an episode of the detective has left Bobby feeling complicit in his subjugating himself in a demeaning and stereotypical role. Lydia assures him that everything will be all right.

Bobby is excited when he wakes the next morning. He stumbles upon a report his little brother Stevie has written and reads it. Stevie report speaks about his love and admiration for Bobby's ability to act. Bobby is touched by his brother's report. That joy is quickly turned to sadness as Bobby overhears his grandmother talk about her disapproval of his accepting a role that adds to the negative stereotypes of African Americans. She adds that kids don't need to see that stuff. She speaks about seeing his little brother walking around the house pretending to be cool with the same jive walk and talk as Bobby's character. As we now look at the image of Bobby's face through the bathroom mirror, we see the face of a torn young man, the face of a young man who wants to follow his dream but who knows his grandmother is right. The agony and hurt shows through his eyes but what do you do when your heart is invested in something? Can you just walk away? As Bobby stands before the mirror thinking, he begins to dream again. He sees Stevie standing in front of him acting like a pimp. Stevie asks Bobby, "What's happening big brother? I want to be just like you" (Townsend, 1987).

As Bobby enters the studio this time it is not with an upbeat, jovial step. He takes slow, dragging steps with his head bent low. He is in turmoil over what to do. I surmise that he is asking himself: Should I do this role just to get myself notice or should I refuse to be a part of an industry that degrades and disfranchises the race I am a part of? On his way to his studio he witnesses a white actor and actress rehearsing their love scene. He looks enviously at them, wondering if he will truly ever have scenes like this one. He drags himself a little further down the corridor to overhear the action hero dictating what he wants for the movie deal, as he is the hero. Then, he looks up to see the only other African Americans in the area—one pimp and two prostitutes.

Bobby has come full circle. He is in the dressing room and in comes the demon—or maybe the angel—who first filled his head with the knowledge of Hollywood's portrayal of African Americans. He informs Bobby that the NAACP will

be picketing the movie because of all the stereotypes portrayed in it. This ignites another dream state for Bobby. In this dream he is confronted by members of his race who are disgusted by his role. His brother and his grandmother refuse to be associated with him and Lydia takes out a gun to shoot him. In fact, the crowd chants “Kill him!” while guns, a hammer, a machete and a noose are brought out. Bobby sits in front of a mirror in frustration for a moment and then balls up his Winky-Dinky hat. We do not know why his Winky-Dinky hat is at the studio but I theorize that it is to allude to his two worlds crashing in together. He does not want to do these pathetic, debasing, undignified roles but he does not want to return to Winky-Dinky and a dead-end job.

Bobby pushes himself to continue with the rehearsal. He enters the stage and begins to act. He looks over at his grandmother and Lydia and sees their disappointment. Even worse, he looks over at his brother and sees the disappointment in his eyes. Stevie can't watch as his role model—his hero—acts in such a disgraceful manner. Bobby tries to push on with the rehearsal but the hurt he is causing his family, along with the humiliation he is feeling is too great. It is greater than his desire to become an actor. When the other actor tells him “this is work,” he responds with the words of his grandmother: “there is work at the post office” (Townsend, 1987).

That night, Bobby sits up in his bed and thinks about the words of his Uncle Ray, who told Bobby that he could be the greatest actor ever born and to never let anyone take away his dream. Bobby sits there and in his mind's eye he sees himself playing the roles of Shakespeare, the Superhero and Rambo. He even pictures himself winning an Oscar. With this vision on his mind, he goes to sleep, feeling content.

By the end of the movie Bobby Taylor has evolved from that young innocent man who believed in the dream of Hollywood to a man who understands that his decisions to accept certain roles, fair or unfair as it may be, reflected on a whole race: “The assumption that individual white characters will be judged on their merits, and their successes or failures will not be chalked up as a credit or embarrassment to their race, has led to an undue burden of representation on nonwhite actors” (Nichols 1987:333). Accepting particular roles perpetuates the stereotypes that others may have of that race. For some people, their only encounter with other races is through television and movies. If African Americans voluntarily portray themselves in these stereotypical roles, they lend credence to their validity. For those who are race conscious and prideful of the roles they accept, this can cause a great hardship on them physically, mentally and financially.

Bobby is very fortunate. He is able to merge the best of both worlds at the end of the film. He takes that job at the post office. He earns a decent check and at the end of the week he can look at himself in the mirror with pride and dignity. He maintains the respect he desires from his family and most importantly, from Stevie. Bobby has learned a lesson he won't forget and, amazingly enough, Bobby gets a job doing a commercial for the Post Office. He gets to act and earn a decent living.

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The Help

By Gina Moreno

Set in Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1960s, *The Help* is a movie that focuses on the relationships between white upper-middle-class women and the black domestics who took care of them and their children. The movie employs the voices of three women (Skeeter, an emerging white liberal writer, and Minny and Aibileen, two black maids she persuades to tell their stories) to document and portray a range of emotions and experiences in the Jim Crow Mississippi of 1962. Though this movie has been criticized by Nelson George for using “candy-coated cinematography” and anachronistic, super-skinny Southern belles to buffer viewers from the era’s violence,” *The Help* is a triumph on many counts as it raises pertinent issues relating to racism in society (2011).

The Help is a useful discussion about the present because if you set this movie in modern times, in a city like Los Angeles, for example, it would be about other ethnic minorities or immigrants with regards to their poor economic conditions. It would touch on the same issues of low pay, poor treatment and unfavorable working conditions. *The Help* deals with societal attitudes that prevailed roughly a half-century ago. The fact that the same issues are faced by other subordinate groups today rather begs the question as to how much society has truly changed. Other groups, arguably, have not dealt with the full force of racism that blacks dealt with, but the undeniable presence of the underground economy and evidence indicating the dominant status of white males in society (holding top positions in the workforce, having the authority to pass legislation etc.) show us that we are far from being a race neutral society.

The Help does however, provide us with a glaring contrast with modern times in that it shows just how institutionalized racism was a few decades ago. De jure segregation was unquestioned. *The Help* drives home the point of just how ingrained such a notion was in the minds of both the black and the whites. Blacks literally had their place in society, which was a position that was always subordinate to whites. When one of the rich white ladies unflinchingly tells her black maid to use the toilet outside while it was raining, we realize that that was just the way people behaved.

The Help also brings to light, the role women played during the time. Women were made to feel weak, emotionally, financially and socially; it was instilled in them that prestige and even a sense of self-worth came from marriage. In relation to white men, white women were the subordinate group, implicitly oppressed by the dictates of a patriarchal society. Skeeter is the anomaly, in that she is fiercely determined to realize her goals in life and tirelessly defends what she believes in, something her peers did not do. Women then transferred these feelings of oppression to the black people in their lives, thereby maintaining the status quo that white men wanted. Worse, they were unaware of being used as pawns in perpetuating racism.

Besides being enjoyable to watch, *The Help* makes us ponder some issues that

seemingly belong to a bygone era but are in fact all the more relevant at a time where new groups of people are trapped under the heinous yoke of exploitation. The world would be a much better place if we had more Skeeters, with her unfailing courage and indomitable spirit. One can only hope that *The Help* sparks the impetus in young women today to stand for justice in innovative and compelling ways as Skeeter does.

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Submitted: DRA106 Introduction to Film. Spring, 2011.

Off To War

By Vipul Rana

Nearly seven years after the Saddam Hussein regime was dismantled and major combat operations ended, the United States and coalition troops were still fighting in Iraq. As the Iraqi insurgency grew, there was no force to meet the manpower needs of the conflict other than the U.S Army National Guard. Although not thoroughly trained or prepared for overseas deployment, four courageous National Guard servicemen, Matt Hertlein, Tommy Erp, Ronald Jackson and Joe Betts were set to Iraq—and their journey was recorded in the documentary *Off To War: From Rural Arkansas to Iraq* (2005), directed by Brent and Craig Renaud. For these four individuals, deployment disrupted the normal functioning of their family lives, both financially and emotionally, as they found themselves participating in combat missions while utilizing the outdated and under-armored equipment used by the National Guard.

Although there has been some acknowledgement of the psychological trauma and lack of financial stability faced by National Guard soldiers serving overseas, we often fail to acknowledge that their families are just as vulnerable. Wives and mothers experience, “Fear for their spouse’s safety, feelings as if they were on a ‘rollercoaster’ of emotions, an inability to concentrate on daily tasks, including work-related responsibilities, feelings of anxiety, and anger about their current situation” (Torres & Wheeler 2009). In the documentary *Off To War*, Betts’ wife seems the most traumatized by the situation. She explains that there are activities that she needs to perform that cannot be completed without her husband. Before his deployment, she did everything with him—driving the kids to school, going to church, and completing household matters. We can see that Betts’ deployment has impacted his wife severely, especially because she has three young children. Another pressure for her is that Betts is her second husband, and she fears not only for the safety of her husband, but for her marriage as well.

Just as wives suffer high levels of trauma during a deployment period, mothers also suffer when their offspring are deployed (Chun, Polo & Cozza 2005). Hertlein’s mother was emotionally touched with her son’s deployment. In order to keep her emotions inside, she was unwilling to witness her son’s final goodbye before he departed for training. Instead, she ignored what was happening; but she was later forced to face reality. When she speaks with her son during a Mother’s Day call, she breaks down and cries while expressing guilt for allowing her nineteen-year old son to join the National Guard. In addition, as we see in the film, many National Guard who are deployed at short notice also experience financial difficulties. For instance, Jackson’s family was forced to sell their family business, a turkey farm, and another soldier’s wife’s law school aspirations were diminished because they are not able to finance it with the family’s decreased income.

Adequate manpower and weapons are key to the safety of soldiers in the field. However, the National Guard unit filmed in the documentary was deployed

to Iraq without modern weapons; something that, ultimately, forced them to operate with outdated weapons that had been designed for the Vietnam War and use in Southeast Asia. The National Guard was created as a reserve force, mobilized only to protect, and assist in emergency situations within, America. There was little expectation that they would be deployed overseas. With the escalation of the insurgency in Iraq, the U.S. lacked the manpower and weapons that were needed (Eaglen 2008). Soldiers were forced to work with old and outdated equipment. In the film Hertlein states, "I have no idea why, you know, the United States Army would make us deploy with this old crap. And I think they're going to quickly understand that half of it breaks down on the way." We can understand the anger Hertlein feels, but there is the sense he knows he cannot do anything about his situation.

As shown in the documentary *Off To War*, the National Guard soldiers faced many hardships during their deployment, due to outdated weapons and a lack of body armor, while back home their families also experienced hardship and distress. The National Guard is still waiting for a time when it will have the modern equipment it needs; nonetheless, it continues to play a pivotal role in protecting America at home and abroad.

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Falling Out of Favor

By Yanick Savain

The contentious 1993 film *Falling Down*, directed by Joel Schumacher and starring Michael Douglas, follows the frustrated William Foster on his violent quest home on the final day of his life. From the very first scene, the overarching themes of social and legal tensions expressed throughout the film are instantly visible in several traffic symbols that serve as a visual foreshadowing of the fatal finish to Foster's journey. The quick scenic cuts—from the Christian “He Died for Your Sins” bumper sticker, to the American flag-draped busload of multi-ethnic school kids, to the “Delay” signs in the slow and noisy traffic heat—set the frenetic mood of the movie while



Falling Down (Joel Schumacher, 1993)

visibly framing the issues raised by the film. What is perhaps most controversial about these suggestive images is the implication that William Foster is a martyr in a callously bureaucratic American legal system.

The empathetic characterization of this certifiable domestic terrorist as a vigilante underdog alienated by the American legal system seems distasteful at best and dangerous at worst. Yet it is a characterization that is of increasing importance in the ever-changing socio-political American arena. Foster, in the common shirt and tie garb of blue-collar society, is representative of a group that is commonly considered the “general” American population for whom the laws are presumably designed to protect and entitle. That each mention of his description in the police department is easily matched to different law enforcement officials emphasizes the disconcerting suggestion made by his elusive identification throughout the movie: not only could William Foster be any American, but he is in fact nearly every American, right up to the exclusive governing populace represented here by the police force. If Foster's image portrays the embodiment of the American ideal of “average,” Foster's frustration then portrays the average American's sentiment. Moreover, the extreme tension

between him and the specific restrictions of the law then highlights the unsettling existence of an automatically assumed legal privilege for a specific American demographic – White middle class Americans. This assumption of White privilege is not entirely without merit, as is seen in the immediate incredulity of several officers that their city terrorist is a White man. However, the presupposition of White innocence no longer affords the legal leeway it once did and Foster is pursued despite the doubts. His plight suggests that, although once the darling demographic of American society, the White middle class is falling from its legally privileged pedestal. In a quickly changing and diversifying social landscape, White Americans are slowly losing their majority status, and with it, their legally preferential status. If Foster's self-righteous rampage across the city represents the culmination of the social ramifications of this paradigm shift, then even symbolically (violent protests and radical political activism instead of literal destruction of stores and infrastructure teams?) the potential consequences seem calamitous. His aggressively recalcitrant behavior reflects a societal reluctance to recognize that the law no longer functions as a system created by a select group to exclusively benefit a select group. There is a misperception of the purpose of the law as something meant to simply serve rather than govern.

The viewer repeatedly witnesses how Foster's persistent presumption of privilege threatens to infringe upon the rights of others, usually minorities. Yet each of his angry declarations of his legal rights (as a consumer, as a parent, as a free citizen, etc...) are invalidated by his failure to recognize someone else's legal rights and protections. His astonishment at being denied legal preference, especially where immigrants are involved, reveals the startlingly pretentious expectation that his desired liberties prevail over even the most basic rights of the minorities and immigrants he encounters. This nationalistic narcissism is most notable in the scene where Foster begins by berating the Korean cashier for his accent and ends by destroying the goods that are his means of living. Injudiciously antagonizing the shopkeeper is only the first of his many exhibits of an intensely ironic ignorance of the rights of others while he demands respect for his own rights. The provocation "You come to my country..." exposes the conceited conviction that regardless of citizenship status, America belongs to him and his. This conceit, coupled with the frequent reminiscences for the archaic American values of the United States of yesteryear (symbolized in the film by Foster's nostalgic viewing of his home movies), paint a vehemently xenophobic portrait of what is purported by this film to be the average American attitude. This xenophobic delineation of what should constitute "American," and the benefits such a distinction ought to afford, are as dangerous as they are insulting to democracy. It appears that Foster's White middle class expects that the law specifically serve them as the social majority, rather than serve society as a whole. The reaction to the realization that it will not work this way is aggressively defensive, as demonstrated by Foster's paranoid perception that he and his rights are under attack. The portrayal of average (White) Americans as being under attack leads inevitably to the identification of their attacker as anyone outside of this definition of "American" -- a warlike mentality that too closely resembles radicalism. It is no surprise that Foster's only sympathizer and "friend" on his journey is the crazed

neo-Nazi in the military store.

While it can be considered normal for the neglect of individual interests to result in dissatisfaction and anger towards a governing party, outright ethnocentric terrorism is dismissed as a fringe phenomenon. Yet the neo-Nazi's sentiments seem perfectly aligned with Foster's own expectations of legal preference over minorities. Foster's agreement with the neo-Nazi's principles is assumed by his silent acceptance of the Nazi's defense of the right to discriminate. This suggests that such abhorrently "radical" attitudes are actually quite average among Americans. This suggestion is reinforced by Foster's change from his blue-collar uniform into the neo-Nazi's military outfit. The change, rather than invalidating his status as the "average American" model, actually reinforces his position as the American archetype, given that he is subsequently identified as a more celebrated American ideal: the uniformed soldier and hero, G.I. Joe. Now a bona fide fighter for American values, Foster's paradoxical legal desires are plainly and unashamedly articulated by the like-minded neo-Nazi as he expels two gay men from the store, exclaiming "Can you believe them trying to force their rights up my ass? Imagine what those pumpkins do in private!" The contradictory desire here for the right not to witness personally detested displays of equal rights for minority groups, followed by the offensive attack on that groups' own personal right to privacy, is actually a generally shared legal desire. Indeed, the neo-Nazi belongs to the same social stratum as Foster and is more of a vision of Foster's character at a further extreme than an isolated case of radicalism. There even seems to be a warning against the propensity for extremism inherent in Foster's values shown in the fight between the two characters. Foster cryptically declares that due to gravity, giving both hands to the neo-Nazi would result in his fall – a clear caution against allowing "average" discriminatory attitudes to reshape the law in ways that destroy democracy in America. The audacious message appears to be that while minorities do deserve rights, the majority deserves more rights.

The overall tone of the film is one of lament and disbelief at the fact that all people in America have equal access to the law and the scene in which Foster is approached by thugs seems to demonize the equal rights of minorities as a criminal perversion of the law. The apparent disapproval of the equal application of the law to William Foster vilifies the bureaucracy of the legal system and at times mocks its indifference as absurd, as expressed by one officer's sarcastic assertion that "a desk can be dangerous. Watch out for paper-cuts." Foster's initial retreat from the traffic jam and home through the bushes symbolizes that social frustration with the slow, narrow lanes of bureaucracy and calls to mind the aim of "grass-roots" groups to return to older, simpler forms of government. Yet for all the disappointment in the law conveyed by this film, the depiction of the legal process should be reassuring to viewers. The law should be blind to race and social status. It should be strictly adhered to, regardless of how it may inconvenience some. This film depicts the law working the way it should, yet suggests that it should not work that way for the William Fosters of America. By portraying Foster's plight from his own perspective, *Falling Down* draws attention to the importance of understanding how the most common misconceptions about the purpose and function of the law can incite

incite politically motivated violence among the most average, even politically inactive citizens in an attempt to maintain the status quo. It is how the disgruntled Joe Six-Pack can become the Tea Party-celebrated suicide pilot Joe Stack . While viewers are assured by the events in this film that the law no longer makes concessions for William Foster's demographic, they are also alerted to the potentially dangerous retaliation to this fact, as well as to the reality of the slowly bureaucratic laws that can fail to prevent that retaliation. After all, despite his ex-wife's warnings to police, there was no legal premise for detaining William Foster until after he terrorized the city. The law, working the way it should, does not necessarily work as expected. And that goes for everyone.

Submitted: LIT315 American Law and Literature.

FILM STUDIES MINOR

@ JOHN JAY

Film Studies engages students in the study of film from theoretical, historical, and critical perspectives. A Film Studies minor thus provides coursework the history and development of film as an art form, a cultural experience, a major medium of communication and a powerful social force that both impacts and reflects social and political justice. Students develop critical skills through analyzing individual films, major film movements and genres, cinematic form and style, and the national and international cultural contexts in which films emerge and are exhibited.

Minor Coordinators: Professors Jay Walitalo, Department of English (jwalitalo@jjay.cuny.edu) or Lyell Davies, Department of Communications and Theatre Arts (ldavies@jjay.cuny.edu)

Requirements:

Part I: Required Courses Subtotal: 6 credits
 Drama 106 Film Appreciation: Introduction to Film or
 Literature 275 The Language of Film
 Drama 399 Film Criticism

Part II: Electives Subtotal 12-13 credits
 Choose four (at least one course must be at the 300-level or above)

ENGLISH and COMMUNICATION AND THEATER ARTS

FILM STUDIES MINOR

The Boat (1963) Directed by Alfred Hitchcock

FILM STUDIES
 6 credits of course work

REQUIRED COURSES:
 DR 106 Introduction to Film, CR 4. LIT 275 The Language of Film, AN 227 DR 399 Film Criticism

ELECTIVES:

AN 227 Anthropology of Film	LIT 323 The Crime Film
DR 243 Black Female Sexuality in Film	LIT 324 The Road Movie
DR 261 Video Production Basics	LIT 325 Science Fiction Film
DR 346 Documentary Film and Media	LIT 330 Alfred Hitchcock
LIT 283 New York City in Film	LIT 331 Steven Spielberg
LIT 284 Film and Society	LIT 332 Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee
LIT 285 The Rebel in Film	CR 4. DR 399 Introduction to Film, Selection, and the Director
LIT 323 The Crime Film	

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 Drama 243 Black Female Sexuality in Film
 Drama 261 Video Production Basics
 Drama 346 Documentary Film and Media
 Literature 283 New York City in Film
 Literature 284 Film and Society
 Literature 285 The Rebel in Film
 Literature 323 The Crime Film
 Literature 324 The Road Movie
 Literature 325 Science Fiction Film
 Literature 330 Alfred Hitchcock
 Literature 331 Steven Spielberg
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