

## **Violence Inc.: America and the Film Industry**

Spring 2021

Mondays 5:30-7:50 Zoom

Professor Julie Tharp  
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Office Hours by arrangement

### **Course Description**

Violence has always been a staple feature of American film, but in the last two decades that violence has escalated at an unprecedented rate. Increased violence among American youth and the high rate of domestic and sexual violence, in spite of thirty plus years of the women's movement, suggest that the culture has crossed into new territory. Psychologists have long questioned the relationship between media violence and personal development. Sociologists look at the ways in which media conditions our responses to the environment and to one another. Filmmakers decry censorship. Film producers claim that if Americans did not want it, it would not sell. At a time when U.S. films are being exported all over the world, it seems crucial to ask ourselves just what sort of world we might be creating.

### **Texts**

Readings on Canvas  
*Screening Violence*, Ed. by Stephen Prince (Rutgers UP), 1999.

### **Films**

We will analyze two full-length films together as a class. *Bonnie and Clyde* marked a turning point in the depiction of film violence. We will analyze it as emblematic of the crime genre but also as a watershed moment. In the latter half of the course we will analyze *Thelma and Louise* as a more contemporary take on the genre but with several interesting shifts. Students will also be analyzing films outside of class for two different group presentations. We will also be watching and analyzing segments of films in class.

### **Assessment**

- 1) Admission tickets: Whenever there is an assigned reading, students must write a one-page, double-spaced response to the reading which is due at the beginning of class. Each ticket is worth a potential 10 points.
- 2) 2 Class Presentations—These will be done individually or in pairs. Each presentation is worth 25 points.
  - The first presentation will focus on one film genre: martial arts, westerns, horror, sci-fi, crime, film noir, or action. Students will work together to arrive at a deeper understanding of the features of this genre and the role that violence plays within it. They will also find representative clips. Emphasis will be on the evolution of the genre over time, e.g. *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein* to *Scream*.
  - The second presentation will focus on detailed analysis of one film for the ways in which it makes use of violence. Students will be encouraged to employ the various angles of approach developed throughout the semester.

- 3) 2 Take-home Essay Exams—These essays will offer the student opportunities to synthesize film analysis and the various disciplines' ways of looking at film.
- 4) Class participation is strongly encouraged.

### Late Work Policy

As in the “real world,” late work will jeopardize your position in the class as well as make you unprepared for class discussions. You are allowed two late admission tickets. Any further delays should be documented with a doctor’s excuse, police citation, court order, obituary or other relevant paperwork.

### Attendance Policy

According to Woody Allen, “Seventy percent of success in life is showing up.” If he’s right, regular attendance should at least help you get into the “C” range.

### Course Outline

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment Due</i>
1/25	Introduction to course Historical Overview of Film Violence	
2/1	<i>The Mean World Syndrome</i>	Reserve Readings #1 Screening Violence pp. 1-45 <b>Admission Ticket #1</b>
2/8	Bonnie and Clyde as culture heroes? <i>Bonnie and Clyde</i>	SV, pp. 47-61 + <b>AT</b>
2/15	“ “ Discussion Group Work	pp. 62-75 + Group Work
2/22	<b>Student Presentations on Genre</b>	
3/1	How does media violence affect viewers? <i>Generation M</i>	SV, pp. 205-236 + <b>AT</b> Reserve Readings #2
3/8	How does media violence affect children?	Reserve Readings #3 + <b>AT</b>
3/15	How does violence affect gender role socialization? <i>Tough Guise 2</i>	SV, pp. 125-174 + <b>AT</b>
	<i>SPRING BREAK WEEK—Get Caught Up!!</i>	
3/29	Does media violence influence social relationships? <b>First essay exam due</b> <i>Dreamworlds 3</i> (abridged version) Rise of Ultraviolence	SV, pp. 79-109
4/5	<i>Thelma and Louise</i>	Reserve Readings #4 + <b>AT</b>

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- 4/12 *Thelma and Louise* Discussion  
Student Work Day
- 4/19 **Student Presentations on Individual Films**  
Does media violence affect crime rates? SV, pp. 237-266 + **AT**
- 4/26 Video Game Violence  
*Returning Fire*
- 5/3 How does U.S. Film influence the rest of the world? Reserve Readings #5 + **AT**  
Why do Film Scholars Ignore Movie Violence? Reserve Readings #6
- 5/10 Final Essay Exam Due by Exam Period

Secret Code:

SV= *Screening Violence*

AT= Admission Ticket

## **Canvas Readings for English 277—Violence Inc.: America and the Film Industry**

- 2/1 “ABA Joins Medical Organizations in Advocating Steps to Curb Gun Violence”  
“Examining School Safety and Gun Violence in America”
- 3/1 “The Effects of Media Violence on Society”  
“Guns, Lies, and Video”  
“Does Violence in the Media Cause Violent Behavior?”
- 3/8 American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on Media Violence  
“Violence in Children’s Television Programming: Assessing the Risks”  
“Associations between Community Violence, Television Violence, Intimate Partner  
Violence, Parent–child Aggression, and Aggression in Sibling Relationships of a  
Sample of Preschoolers”
- 4/5 “Seduction and Betrayal in the Heartland: Thelma and Louise”
- 5/3 “Pix Provide Escape Route”  
“The Changing Role of Hollywood in the Global Movie Market”  
“Hollywood Goes Global to Cash In”  
“Why do Film Scholars Ignore Movie Violence?”