Topic: "Constructing Authenticity"

Course Description: This class will discuss the relationship between literature and film, and the relationship of both art forms to cultural politics. We will focus especially on how films and literary texts—and adaptations of one into the other—invoke questions of authenticity along cultural, aesthetic, and technological lines:

1. Cultural authenticity: Why is it that "there's no place like home"—how do films and books construct our idea of "home," personally or culturally? How do literature and film go about imagining, constructing, or deconstructing an "authentic" set of shared cultural origins, memories, and values?

2. Artistry and authenticity: What techniques and devices (cinematography, editing, narrative structure, mise-en-scène, style, genre, etc.) do filmmakers and writers use to make this "authentic" cultural space seem real, true to life, or socially relevant—or to make it seem alien, fantastic, or unfamiliar?

3. Technology and authenticity: How is art affected by the technologies, or the social and economic forces, of making, reproducing, and distributing it? Does the "mechanical reproduction" of art make it inherently less authentic, and if so, is that necessarily a bad thing? How is art affected by commerce, and vice-versa—how, for example, is "popular" art coded as more or less authentic than "High" art?

Student Learning Objectives:
• To respond critically to literary texts and their cinematic adaptations;
• To understand literary and cinematic conventions, and be able to employ them in written and oral formats;
• To make connections between filmic and literary texts and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Course Objectives:
• To conduct inquisitive, in-depth research on cultural and theoretical topics related to film and literature.

Required Texts for Purchase:
- Ed Sikov, Film Studies: An Introduction (Perseus; ISBN 9780231142939)
- Fannie Hurst, The Imitation of Life (Duke University Press; ISBN 9780822333241)
- Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Norton; ISBN 9780871401700)

Recommended:
- Diana Hacker, Pocket Style Manual (Bedford; ISBN 9780312542542)

Films: You are required to watch them on your own time. They can be watched instantly on Amazon.com for $3 or $4. If you do not own a computer, you can check out a laptop from the library.

- Victor Fleming (dir.), The Wizard of Oz (Amazon link: tinyurl.com/amazonwizard)
- Stanley Kubrick (dir.), A Clockwork Orange (Amazon link: tinyurl.com/amazonclockwork)
- John Stahl (dir.), Imitation of Life (1934) (Amazon link: tinyurl.com/imitation1934)
- Douglas Sirk (dir.), Imitation of Life (1959) (Amazon link: tinyurl.com/imitation1959)
- Todd Haynes (dir.), Far from Heaven (Amazon link: tinyurl.com/amazonfarfromheaven)
- Howard Hawks (dir.), Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Amazon link: http://tinyurl.com/amazongentlemen)

Check your Islander email daily for announcements, schedule changes, assignments, etc. This is a requirement. If you'd rather use a different email address, be sure to set up automatic forwarding on your Islander account (https://distance-education.tamucc.edu/assets/forwarding_email.pdf).

Readings uploaded online via Blackboard. Online readings should be brought with you to class.
**Graded Coursework:**

**Readings/Viewings:** Be prepared to devote a considerable amount of time to reading, writing, viewing, and research. You should take careful notes as you do the readings and—perhaps even more importantly—as you watch the films. The notes you take while watching will be crucial to shaping your writing later on. In addition to film viewings, the reading load for this class will be intensive. Budget your time and plan ahead.

**Participation (15 points):** Attend each class, with readings in hand, prepared to engage in vigorous discussion. Your participation grade will comprise discussions, group-work, quizzes, in-class writing, etc. As of Day One, everyone in the class has a zero for participation; these points must be actively earned, not passively received. Simply showing up to class each day without speaking or engaging will constitute the minimum passing standard (9/15 points).

In-class work cannot be made up if missed, regardless of the reason. I will, however, drop your two lowest scores, including those missed due to absence or tardiness.

**Midterm Exam (10 points):** *Wednesday, March 6,* in class. Closed-note, closed-book. Mixture of short-answer, objective, and/or passage ID (both literary and film). You need a blank 8½” x 11” bluebook for this exam.

**Final Exam (15 points):** Same format, plus 1-2 essays. Cumulative, closed-note, and closed-book. You need to bring a blank 8½” x 11” bluebook for this exam. The final exam date is *Monday, May 13, 1:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.*

I do not give makeup exams except in severe emergencies or (for the final exam only) exam conflicts documented with Student Engagement and Success (studentaffairs.tamucc.edu). Personal travel plans and social obligations do not qualify as emergencies. Make all necessary arrangements with family, employers, transportation, etc. to make sure that you are here on the exam days.

Five Blackboard postings (5 points apiece = 25 points total): 700-word analytical responses to specific prompts about a film, literary text, and/or theoretical essay, posted to a forum on Blackboard. Postings are designed to help develop ideas for the final research paper through close textual reading—including, as relevant, analysis of literary or filmic technique. These needn't be full-fledged essays with intro, conclusion, etc., but they do need to be well-written, to push beyond class discussion, and to remain grounded in analysis of specific examples. Postings that are too short by ≥ 100 words will receive no more than one point.

As the schedule reflects, you have seven opportunities to post; hence you may omit two postings without penalty. (If you submit all seven, your best five will count.) As one of your five required postings, all students must submit the posting due on April 3rd, which will consist of a proposal for the final research project (see below).

*** Blackboard postings will not be accepted late. (Again, everyone gets to omit two freebies. Plan ahead.)

**Final Research Paper (30 points):** An essay of 2100-2700 words engaging with a historical, theoretical, or textual problem, using outside research to substantiate and frame your own original argument. You are welcome to use writing or ideas from your own Blackboard postings as fodder for your essay. Before the final paper we will have a library workshop to develop a direction for your research; this workshop is required, and failure to attend it will result in a penalty to the paper grade. Papers must be written in proper MLA format.

Late papers will be penalized 3 points per day late (including weekends). I do not grant extensions except in severe medical or family emergencies, documented with Student Engagement and Success. No exceptions. Printer/computer problems do not excuse late work. Back up your files and plan ahead.

**Policies:**

Overall: Be nice; be on time; get your work done on time; don't make excuses; and stay focused while you're here. Mostly, I ask that you treat this class like a job—a pleasant job, I hope, but one that demands your engagement and respect. When in doubt about course policies or requirements, reread your contract (a.k.a. the syllabus).
I cannot reverse time: once a deadline has passed, it's passed; once an assignment is done, it's done; once you've been absent, you can't be made un-absent; etc. Don't ask me to reverse something that's already happened. Be in touch early, rather than later, if a problem arises.

Equal Opportunity: All students will be treated fairly and equally regardless of race, sex, religion, nationality, age, disability, sexual/affectional orientation, or socioeconomic status. Hate speech or harassment, on these or any other grounds, is not acceptable in this class. Students should feel free to express controversial views; we simply need to respect the diversity of the classroom, as you would in a professional environment.

Email/Office Hours: You are welcome to email, to visit office hours, or to set up an appointment at any time. Office hours are there for your use—take advantage of them. Stop by anytime to discuss course materials, papers, reading/writing/analysis skills, etc. Emails are best for short questions; detailed ones should be addressed in person. For example, I do not discuss grades over email, but will happily do so in office hours.

Please leave at least 48 hours for me to respond to emails; I can't always guarantee a response sooner than that (especially over weekends). I also ask that you read the syllabus, or relevant assignment sheet, prior to emailing with a policy question. This will make it easier for me to respond to questions that aren't already answered.

Please treat emails as professional communications (tinyurl.com/emailprof). Include a salutation ("Hi, Prof. Epstein" is adequate) and a sign-off ("Thanks, [your name]!"; write respectfully; say "please" and "thank you"; write complete sentences; no OMGLOL text-speak, ALL CAPS, etc.

Attendance: Each student is given three free absences—no questions asked, no excuses needed. Each absence after the third will result in a deduction of one point from your final grade. Please note: I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absence. As in the workforce, either you're here or you're not. Exceptions are made only for religious holidays, for emergencies documented with the Division of Student Engagement and Success, or for documented TAMUCC commitments (debate, ROTC, etc.).

If you miss class, you should contact a classmate for notes, assignments, schedule changes, etc. Please do not email me to ask what you missed/will miss. Contact a classmate first.

Academic Misconduct: Any incident of academic misconduct, no matter how "minor," will result in an automatic zero for the assignment, and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. A second offense, no matter how "minor," will result in an automatic F for the course, and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs with a recommendation for formal disciplinary action. All assignments are subject to this policy, whether graded or ungraded, formal or informal, from the smallest quiz or posting to the biggest paper. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating, falsifying sources, resubmitting work from other classes, writing papers for someone else (or vice-versa), forging graded work for additional credit, or colluding with others in committing a violation.

Plagiarism refers to the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas. All such uses must be properly cited, whether you are paraphrasing an idea or using someone's phrasing, in which case you must put the borrowed words in "quotation marks" and identify the source. If you are ever in doubt about what you are doing, consult me before submitting the assignment. Uncertainty about the rules is not an excuse for violating them. Keep in mind that the university may suspend or even expel students for flagrant or repeat violations.

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 361.825.3466.

Reminder to English Majors: As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors will submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres completed for their college classes. To help prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.
Veterans/Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at 361.825.5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance. Remember, again, that I cannot reverse time; this means (regrettably) that I cannot accommodate you retroactively if you fail to produce documentation in advance. Please provide all necessary documentation ASAP.

Assessment:

Grades: Your final point total will be graded as follows: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 0-59 = F. In order to be fair to all students, I stick to these numbers in all cases. I do not give extra credit. Please don't ask.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss strategies for improving your work, though I do not negotiate grades. Feel free to speak with me during office hours or by appointment.

Grade Appeals: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Division of Student Engagement and Success.

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**Schedule (subject to change, with advance notice):**

Readings, viewings, and assignments are to be completed before class on the days indicated. 
(x) = Reading uploaded to Blackboard. These readings must be printed out and brought with you to class.

- **Wed., 1/23:** Introductions
- **Fri., 1/25:** By 5 p.m. on 1/25: take the Syllabus Quiz on Blackboard. Retake it until you get 100%.
- **Mon., 1/28:** Watch *The Wizard of Oz* before class; read Sikov (xi-23) 
- **Wed., 1/30:** Discuss *The Wizard of Oz*; read Sikov (24-54). Blackboard posting 1 due before class.
- **Mon., 2/4:** Read Baum (all).
- **Wed., 2/6:** Baum and Fleming. Sikov, 55-88.
- **Mon., 2/11:** Baum and Fleming, cont. Read Sikov 89-115, 158-68; Stuart Culver, "What Manikins Want" (x).
- **Wed., 2/13:** Read Benjamin, "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (x). Blackboard posting 2 due before class.
- **Mon., 2/18:** Read Burgess, 1-100.
- **Wed., 2/20:** Burgess, 101-40.
- **Mon., 2/25:** Finish Burgess by class today.
- **Wed., 2/27:** Watch Kubrick before class; read Sikov 129-42. Discuss Kubrick and Burgess. 
- **Fri., 3/1:** Blackboard posting 3—due by 5 p.m.
- **Wed., 3/6:** Midterm Exam

**Spring Break**

- **Mon., 3/18:** Hurst, *Imitation of Life* (read as much as possible—at least through p.200).
- **Mon., 3/25:** Hurst, *Imitation of Life* (finish).
- **Wed., 3/27:** Watch *Imitation of Life* (1934) prior to class. 
- **Fri., 3/29:** Blackboard Posting 4 due by 5 p.m.
- **Mon., 4/1:** Watch *Imitation of Life* (1959) prior to class.
- **Wed., 4/3:** *Imitation of Life* cont.; Blackboard Posting 5 due before class: required for all students.
- **Mon., 4/8:** *Imitation of Life* cont.; read Lauren Berlant, "National Brands/National Body" (x).
- **Wed., 4/10:** Research Presentation from Librarian Jennifer Anderson (subject to change!).
- **Mon., 4/15:** Watch *Far from Heaven* before class.
- **Wed., 4/17:** Discuss *Far from Heaven*. Blackboard Posting 6 due before class.
- **Mon., 4/22:** Read Loos (all). Discuss.
- **Wed., 4/24:** Watch Gentlemen Prefer Blondes before class. Discuss Loos and Hawks.
- **Fri., 4/26:** Blackboard Posting 7 due before class.
- **Mon., 4/29:** Discuss Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. Read Mulvey, “Unmasking the Gaze” (x); Sikov (170-85).
- **Wed., 5/1:** Discuss Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.
- **Mon., 5/7:** Final Paper due by class time; upload to SafeAssign on Blackboard. Final Exam review.

**Final Exam:** Monday, May 13, 1:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.