

Migration, Documented
ILS 30707/LAST 30653/SOC 30043
Karen Richman, Professor
Fall 2007

Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 P.M.
September 5-October 10
DBRT 126

Krichman@nd.edu
McKenna B-9C 631-8146
Hours: M,W 12:30-1:15, W 4:30-6:00 PM

The migration of people from their homelands is as old as humanity. Yet migration is still misunderstood; emigrants are often seen as traitors and immigrants as dangerous and self-serving invaders. Film is a burgeoning medium for documenting the experience of migration for the migrants themselves, the communities they leave and the societies in which they settle. Documenting migration compels us to question the meanings of borders, the nature of identity, and the possibility of cultural pluralism and integration..

This one-credit course showcases documentary films about transnational migration. The Notre Dame and local community are invited to the film screenings. Linked to the University's Forum on Immigration, the film series will be held on Wednesdays at 7:00 P.M. There will be seven screenings starting on September 5th and ending on October 17. There will not be a film shown on the first meeting.

Course Organization and Requirements:

Class meetings include lectures by the professor and possibly filmmakers, discussions of films and assigned readings and film screenings. Short readings are assigned for each class and are available through the library's reserves. Students registered for the course are required to read assigned articles, attend all classes and submit one short (1.5) page essay each week analyzing the film in relation to the reading. Students will be asked to present their commentaries to the class.

Wednesday, August 29

First Class Meeting, No Film Screened
Introductions, Description of Course Goals and Requirements

Wednesday, September 5

"Fuerza"

Soluz Films, Directed by Goshen College Students, 2006

Film description: This documentary shows how Apan, Mexico and Goshen, Indiana are linked by transnational migration. Students at Goshen College participated in making this film. The Elkhart, Indiana area is undergoing significant change, and a large factor in this transformation is the growing immigrant population. A crackdown on immigration and illegal immigrants has led to issues of injustice, including worker exploitation and denial of rights. These events have become common for immigrant-receiving communities throughout the United States.

Readings:

Massey, Douglas 2005

Five Myths About Immigration: Common Misconceptions Underlying U.S. Border-Enforcement Policy. *Immigration Policy In Focus* 4 (6).

http://www.aifl.org/ipc/policy_reports_2005_fivemyths.shtml

Portes, Alejandro, 1978

Towards a Structural Analysis of Illegal (Undocumented) Migration. *International Migration Review* 12(4):69-84.

Wednesday, September 12

“Letters from the Other Side”

Heather Courtney, Director, 2006

A U.S. Homeland Security official watches a video of Laura, a Mexican woman whose husband died in 2003 along with 18 others in the worst immigrant smuggling case in U.S. history. "How many more deaths does it take for the U.S. government to do something?" she asks. *LETTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE* interweaves video letters carried across the U.S.-Mexico border by the film's director with the personal stories of women left behind in Guanajuato in post-NAFTA Mexico.

Director Heather Courtney interacts with her subjects through her unobtrusive camera, providing an intimate look at the lives of the people most affected by today's failed immigration and trade policies. Her use of video letters provides a way for these women to communicate with both loved ones and strangers on the other side of the border, and illustrates an unjust truth - as an American she can carry these video letters back and forth across a border that these women are not legally allowed to cross.

Readings:

Rouse, Roger, 1991

Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism. *Diaspora* 1(1): 8-23.

Wednesday, September 19

“H-2 Worker”

Stephanie Black, Director, 1990

H-2 is the immigration category for America's guest workers. This poignant film exposes the harsh exploitation of men who came from Jamaica and other West Indies nations to work on the sugar cane fields of Belle Glade, Florida. The filmmaker traces the history of sugar cane labor in Florida, which began with the immoral re-enslavement of African Americans in the 1940's. The media and legislative scrutiny of the industry's scandalous treatment of United States citizens spurred the search for an alternative source of unfree labor: guest workers from the Caribbean. Director Black elicits honest discussions from executives in the sugar cane industry, U.S. Department of Labor officials, Prime Minister and, of course, the workers themselves. The letters exchanged between the men and their female relatives back home in the Caribbean are moving documentation of the human costs of migration. The soundtrack features reggae and dub poetry hits by Bob Marley, Mutabaruka and others.

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary, 1990, Sundance Film Festival and Best Cinematography, 1990 Sundance Film Festival

Readings: Griffith, David, 2006

American Guestworkers: Jamaicans and Mexicans in the U.S. Labor Market. University Park: Penn State Press. Introduction and Chapter 3, From Beauty to Truth.

Wednesday, September 26

“Life and Debt”

Stephanie Black, Director, 2001

In *Life and Debt*, Stephanie Black explores and explains the reasons why Jamaicans are making the difficult decision to leave their beloved homes and emigrate to North America and England. Utilizing excerpts from "A Small Place" by Jamaica Kincaid, *Life & Debt* is a woven tapestry of sequences focusing on the stories of individual Jamaicans whose strategies for survival and parameters of day-to-day existence are determined by the U.S. and other foreign economic agendas. By combining traditional documentary telling with a stylized narrative framework, the complexity of international lending, structural adjustment policies and free trade will be understood in the context of the day-to-day realities of the people whose lives they impact. Narrated by Jamaica Kincaid. The soundtrack features reggae and dub poetry hits by Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Mutabaruka and others.

Awards: 2004 Festival International Du Film Insulaire, Ile De Groix, Special Jury Prize

2004 Paris Human Rights Film Festival, Special Jury Prize

Life And Debt Was Awarded Best Documentary At The American Film Festival.

"Best Film Of The Festival," Independent Feature Project/West Los Angeles Film Festival.

Readings: Barry, Tom, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, 1984

The Other Side of Paradise. New York: Grove Press. Excerpts (All Chapters except Dominican Republic).

Wednesday, October 3

“Snakeheads: The Chinese Mafia and the New Slave Trade

Ying Chan, Peter Kwong, Jon Alpert, Directors, 1994

Filmed in China and New York, *Snakeheads* explores the complicated issues of illegal immigration and sweatshop labor framed against a background of competing global economic forces. Every year millions of impoverished Chinese men and women risk their small fortunes and their lives to place themselves at the mercy of the Chinese Mafia in order to find work in the United States. The squalid conditions under which they live once they arrive, poses thoughtful questions on the economic forces and social policies working to create such conditions. Despite the risks, there is an endless pool of Chinese who dream of making the voyage to the land they call The Golden Mountain. *Snakeheads* sheds an uncompromising light on this modern day slave trade and asks, "What solutions does the U.S., China or the international community have to offer?"

Readings:

Guest, Kenneth, 2005

Religion and Transnational Migration in the New Chinatown. In *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. Karen Leonard, et. al., eds. New York: Altamira. (145-164).

Wednesday, October 10

7-9 p.m.

“My American Girls: A Dominican Story”

Directed by Aaron Matthews, 2000

“My American Girls: A Dominican Story” captures the joys and struggles over a year in the lives of the Ortiz family, first generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic. Matthews' film captures the rewards — and costs — of conducting transnational lives that straddle national borders. From hard-working immigrant parents in New York, who imagine retiring to their rural homeland, to American-born daughters, caught between their parent's values and their own, the film encompasses the contradictions of contemporary transnational and immigrant lives.

Award for Best Documentary, San Francisco Latino Film Festival, 2001

Barry, Tom, Beth Wood, and Deb Preusch, 1984

The Other Side of Paradise. Chapter on the Dominican Republic (289-304).

Patricia Pessar, 1996

A Visa for a Dream, A: Dominicans in the United States. Chapter 5. New York: Allyn and Bacon.

Sontag, Deborah and Delia Dugger

1988 *New Immigrant Tide: Shuttle Between Worlds*. New York Times. July 19.