Course Description: This is an interdisciplinary course that utilizes film to consider the Amazon basin, its history, peoples, and landscapes through cinematic representations. The course places the films in the context of critical theory and Amazonian history from 1500 to the present. Films range from the imaginative re-enactments of first contacts between Europeans and native Americans; rubber boom extravagances; rainforest ecology; and artistic avatars to navigate complex social interactions and threats to survival in modern Amazonia. The course examines images of Amazonia over four decades through dramatic and visual depictions, taking into consideration the Brazilian, Colombian, Argentine, North American, and European creators of the films and their visions of Amazonia, as well as audiences and markets to which the films are intended.

Course Requirements. There will be a midterm examination and a final, each accounting for 45% of the grade. Class participation, as defined by brief writing assignments, attendance, and participation in class discussion, will account for an additional 10% of the final grade. Graduate students must submit a paper as a substitute for the final exam during exam week (those students must present a proposal by 11/1).

Mini-Research Assignments are short writing assignments of approximately one page in length, to be submitted as email .doc attachments prior to 6 pm the evening before class. The goal of the mini-research assignment is to practice, in a short time frame and with limited word count, the exercise of focused research. You are expected to provide an information summary that best answers the question and is most relevant to our class, with documentation of the information conveyed through in-text parenthetic citations and a listing of sources. In fulfilling the assignment, you are encouraged to use a range of research tools and available sources. Your selection of sources should consider the reliability of the source and the author. You must indicate your sources in conventional author-date form: http://library.williams.edu/citing/styles/chicago2.php. Please label the file with your last name and a title word. Please submit via ELMs.

Required Readings
And assorted readings from chapters and articles made available through the University of Maryland Research Port and ELMs. See final pages of syllabus for full references to readings.

**Syllabus**

**Jan. 30, Part I: Introduction**

Introduction to class goals and course requirements. Introduction to Amazonia’s peoples, cultures, and landscapes. A discussion of the four themes that run through the course: Perspective, Darkness, Intertextuality, and Avatar.

Intertextuality, a term introduced into western European cultural studies by Judith Kristeva from Russian studies in semiotics and literature, refers to the processes whereby a text incorporates prior texts and is shaped by them. In this class we discuss the many influences of both texts – both written and film.

This introductory class may utilize examples from required films as well as:

- *Avatar* (James Cameron)
- *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* (Brian Martz1992)
- *Hearts of Darkness* (Eleanor Coppola)

**Part II: First Encounters: Imagination and the World Beyond Europe**

**Reading:**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Pt 1
Handout

**Feb. 6, Transformative Processes of Civilization and Domestication**

*The Mission*, set in the mid-eighteenth century, depicts the events around the so-called Guarani Wars and the eventual expulsion of the Jesuits from South America. It portrays interests of colonists to obtain access to valuable indigenous labor, the role of the Church in controlling Indian settlement, and the conflicted position of the colonial authorities.

**Reading:**

Chernela 1998 [Posted]
Saeger 1995 [Posted]
Joffé, on making *The Mission*
Handout "Guarani Wars"

**Mini-Research Assignment:** "Who are the Guarani?"

**Films:**

*The Mission* (Roland Joffé, 1986)
Feb. 13, Discussion of The Mission and readings

Mini-Research Assignment: "What happened at Valladolid in 1550?"

Sept. 20, Black Gold: The Rubber Boom

The excesses of the Rubber Boom are revisited both in product and in process in Werner Herzog's fictionalized account of an Irish merchant's dream to conquer the powerful Pongo rapids of Peru. In order to successfully convey the metaphoric message of his film, Herzog altered the documented life of Brian Sweeney Fitzcarraldo, creating a near-impossible task of hauling a riverboat over a jungle pass. The making of the film incurred the wrath of several indigenous nations, and eventually Herzog was asked to leave the country.

Reading:
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Pt 2
Peter Matthiessen, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, Pt. 1
Herzog Report, Survival International
Corrigan on Herzog
Handout: Rubber boom

Mini-Research Assignment: "What are Manaus and Iquitos?"

Films:
*Fitzcarraldo* (Werner Herzog)

Feb. 27, The Lions: The Nature of Civilization/The Civilization of Nature

Herzog regards the rainforest, and those that live there, as a source of "raw" existence. As such, both must be approached, appreciated, and feared. Herzog’s narrative of the Amazon as a metaphor of nature and of human history resonates with other depictions of the artist-film-maker as documentarian of man's fate.

Readings:
Les Blank, *The Burden of Dreams: the Making of Fitzcarraldo*
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Pt 3

Mini-Research Assignment: "Who is Werner Herzog?"

Films:
Les Blank, *The Burden of Dreams: the Making of Fitzcarraldo*
March 6, Historic Fiction and Magical Realism: *Embrace of the Serpent*

**Readings**

www.nap.edu/read/11807/chapter/19  
www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/photo-find-715988/?no-ist  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhIWMgHWk5Y

**Mini-Research Assignment:** Find and review one online interview with director and/or actors of this film.

**Film:**  
*Embrace of the Serpent* (Ciro Guerra)

March 13, New Class: You should have completed *Heart of Darkness* by this time.

March 20 Spring Break

March 27, MID-TERM EXAM

April 3, The Reality of Fiction: the Sublime

*At Play in the Fields of the Lord* is a moving adaptation by Argentine director Hector Babenco of Peter Matthiessen's book by the same title. It depicts life in Amazonia through the intersecting lives of Protestants, missionaries, a Catholic Priest, indigenous villagers, and several renegade characters, to an explosive conclusion.

**Readings:**
Matthiessen, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (complete by today)  
Escorel 1991  
Lenke 2010  
Patteson 1979

**Short Writing Assignment:** Who is Yo-yo?

**Films:**  
*At Play in the Fields of the Lord*

April 10, A Changing Planet

A number of American films have fictionalized the threats to the preservation of the Amazon. Filmmaker John Boorman allegorizes potential destruction of the rainforest and the integrity of the people who live in it in *The Emerald Forest*, a story of a Western boy growing up among indigenous peoples. The film contrasts the inhumanity of supposed civilization with the life of the forest peoples.
Readings
www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/16/belo-monte-brazil
Philip Fearnside 2016

Mini-Research Assignment: What is Tucurui? Who are the Parakanas? What is Belo Monte?

Film:
The Emerald Forest (John Boorman, 1985)

April 17, Historic Fidelity and Documentary Drama: The Xingu National Park

Readings
http://pib.socioambiental.org/en/povo/xingu/1539
http://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol3/iss1/8/
http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=11375

Film
Xingu (Cao Hamburger, 2011)

In 1943 the Villas Boas brothers Orlando and Claudio worked in Brazil’s "March to the West," intended to open up the 'empty,' 'undiscovered' Amazon basin of Brazil for colonization. They found instead, a land not only inhabited, but owned. The Villas Boas brothers spent the next thirty years reforming indigenous policy in Brazil and creating the largest indigenous protected area in the world, the Xingu National Park. This documentary drama reconstructs those events in the actual locations where they occurred, with indigenous peoples portraying the generations of their parents and grandparents. Director Cao Hamburger strives to adhere to known historical facts, using the characters and actions in his film in historic documentation such as memoirs, correspondence, film footage, and recorded interviews with the brothers.

April 24, Ethnography and Advocacy of Indigenous People: Kayapo and Xavante

The contemporary indigenous peoples of Amazonia manage representations of the powerful and dangerous Indian to fortify their standing as a separate and respected ethnicity within the Brazilian state. Since the 1980s the Kayapo and the Xavante have been faced with incursions by goldminers, loggers, ranchers, and export agriculture. Through political acumen in which they use indigenous symbols to garner international support, the Kayapo were able to ward off a hydroelectric dam that would have brought disastrous flooding to their villages. Today the Xavante face pollution of the rivers on which they rely for food and drink. The film, Owners of the Water, incorporates
indigenous video and cinematography into the final film product to document protests by the Xavante in defense of their lands and livelihoods.

**Readings:**
Chernela, Janet 1989, 2005 [Posted]
Zanotti, Laura 2009 [Posted]
Zimmerman, Barbara 2009 [Posted]
Graham at: www.culanth.org/fieldsights/563-screening-room-owners-of-the-water

**Films:**
"Out of the Forest" (Terence Turner, Granada);
"Owners of the Water" (Laura Graham, DER, 2006)

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**May 1, Filming for Education: Capturing “Authenticity” through Ethnography**

Film-makers and anthropologists collaborated in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, to create documentaries for educational use. The subjectivity in these attempts has been the subject of heated debate in the anthropological academy. The series of films by the anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon and the ethnographic film-maker Timothy Asch, among the Yanomami, exemplify this genre. We will compare their attempts at visual dydacticism with the spontaneous film made by Ken Good with his Yanomami wife, Yarima, and by the visual reporting of their son, David Good.

**Mini-Research Assignment:** Who are Ken Good, David Good, and Yarima?

**Films (a selection of):**
The Feast (Chagnon and Asch)
A Man Called Bee (Chagnon and Asch)
Ken and Yarima (National Geographic)
Video Memoirs of David Good

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**May 8, Last class, review: Return to themes: Perspective, Intertextuality, Darkness and Avatar**

Intertextuality, a term derived from Russian studies in semiotics and literary criticism, and introduced into western European cultural studies by Judith Kristeva, refers to the processes of “structuralization” whereby a text incorporates prior texts and is shaped by them. In this class we discuss the many influences that link texts – both written and film.

**If Time: Indigenous Film Makers: Video in the Villages, Cineastas Paraná**

**Reading**
www.gieff.de/discussions/articles/vincent-carelli-framing-themselves-the-making-of-indigenous-cinematographic-tradition.html

**Films:**
It's Now or Never, Mari Correa and Vincent Carelli
Cineastas Paraná

*This syllabus may be subject to change if necessary

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS**

*Blank, Les.

Chernela, J.

*Chernela, J.*
2005. The Amazon Listening: Collaboration between International Environmental NGOs and Local Traditional People in the Amazon Basin of Brazil. *WorldWatch* January/February


Corrigan, Timothy

Cowell, Adrian (1990) *The Decade of Destruction*. The Crusade to Save the Amazon Forests.


Fearnside, P.M.

Goulding, Michael

Hecht, Susanna and Alexander Cockburn
1990 *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers and Defenders of the Amazon*. *Hemming, John*

*Hemming, John*

Herzog, Werner

ISBN: 0940242044
Holdstock, Robert, Rospo Pallenberg, and John Boorman
1986 Johnson, Randal
1987 *The Film Industry in Brazil: Culture and the State*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
Langfur, Hal
2014 *Native Brazil: Beyond the Cannibal and the Convert*. University of New Mexico Press. Selections.
*Matthesen, Piotr
Raffles, Hugh
Schmink, Marianne and Charles Wood
Slater, Candace
Turner, Terence
Zanotti, Laura
Zimmerman, Barbara

**Films referred to in this class:**

*Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (Werner Herzog, 1972)
*At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (Hector Babenco, 1991)
*Burden of Dreams* (Les Blank, 1982)
*Bye, Bye, Brazil* (Carlos Diegues, 1979)
*The Charcoal People* (Nigel Nobel 1999)
*Como Era Gostoso Meu Frances* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971)
*Decade of Destruction* (Adrian Cowell, 1988) 1 and 2
The Emerald Forest (John Boorman, 1985)
The Feast (Napoleon Chagnon, Timothy Ash 1968)
Fitzcarraldo (Werner Herzog, 1982)
Hans Staden (Luiz Alberto Pereira, 1999)
Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse (Eleanor Coppola, 1991)
Iracema (Jorge Bodanzky, 1976). The Invisible People (Michael Balson 2006)
The King: Out of the Forest (Granada: Michael Beckham, Terry Turner, 1989)
The Mission (Roland Joffe, 1986)
Xingu (Cao Hamburger, 2011)

GUIDELINES

+ Students are expected to have read assignments and be prepared to engage in discussion of material for which no reading is assigned.
+ Exams will be organized in the following manner: 1) Short answer questions, such as identification of names, matching, and multiple choice; 2) Essay questions requiring a general answer as well as discussion of specific matter covered in course.
+ Students may be required to turn in short research papers on a director or specific film. These constitute homework assignments, and must be typed in double-spacing with proper citations in social science format. All site addresses must be provided.
+ Students are also required to view all videos assigned. The videos will be shown in class or will be made available in Hornbake Library, Non-Print Media Section, Ground Floor.
+ Disabilities: Students with disabilities should provide documentation as soon as possible.
+ Dates assigned to exams or other projects will be observed strictly. No make-up exams will be given without a written medical excuse.
+ Although attendance is obligatory, it is not sufficient to obtain a good grade. Oral participation is absolutely crucial for the overall performance of each student. Unless special arrangements are made ahead of time, three or more unjustified absences will result in a grade reduction and three tardy will result in an unjustified absence.
+ Academic integrity is a foundation for learning. The University has approved a Code of Academic Integrity available at http://www.inform.umd.edu/jpo/. The Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. The Code is administered by a Student Honor Council.
+ The professor reserves the right to make any changes on the syllabus.
+ It is the intention that all points be perfectly clear. If you have difficulty understanding anything whatsoever, please ask. If you have questions, doubts or concerns, do not wait until the last minute to seek help. Good luck, and work hard!