

## A Note on Using Films and Videos

I have found that having the class watch a film in conjunction with each chapter is an unusually effective way of getting the students involved in the topic being studied. It also motivates them to express their opinions on these controversial subjects in a free-spirited and candid manner. My thoughts on the benefit of using movies throughout the semester were reinforced when I read bell hooks's new book *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*. Ms. hooks writes in her Introduction:

Whether we like it or not, cinema assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people. It may not be the intent of a filmmaker to teach audiences anything, but that does not mean that lessons are not learned. It has only been in the last ten years or so that I began to realize that my students learned more about race, sex, and class from movies than from all the theoretical literature I was urging them to read. Movies not only provide a narrative for specific discourse of race, sex, and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these charged issues.<sup>1</sup>

You can assign films as homework or devote a class period to watching a movie, depending on the amount of class time available and your emphasis in the course. When you schedule an in-class movie, try to give some background information before students see the film and to define a few of the central words if they have not yet been encountered in the case study. Following the movie, the whole class can informally discuss and analyze the film together. Be sure to check your school policy on using films in class in order to comply with copyright considerations.

It is good to arrange for students to watch one of the films from the first chapter (culture shock) together and then fill out the Film Analysis Form as a group activity. During the rest of the semester, I usually ask students to choose a film to see outside of class and to complete the Film Analysis Form as homework. This encourages students to reconsider the topic of each chapter from a different point of view and to make connections between the case study issues and the subject of the film. If time allows, it is also helpful for the students to present an oral report and lead a class discussion on the film they have chosen.

My choices of movies and videos represent those films I recommend based on their high quality and relevance to the chapter topics. For further discussion of using films in the classroom, I suggest the following two resources:

Ellen Summerfield, *Crossing Cultures through Film* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1993) and Julia A. Williamson and Jill C. Vincent, *Film Is Content* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

1. bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.