

# To the Instructor: Behind the Scenes

## *Our Goals*

In writing *Seeing the Big Picture*, our primary goal has been to broaden students' awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the many cultures and subcultures in the United States today. We believe film is a splendid tool for this purpose, as it provides insights into the ways in which cultures are both similar and different—in their values, histories, and verbal and nonverbal modes of communication. Film also facilitates discussion of topics related to ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation that might otherwise seem too controversial or too sensitive.

In the process of using and experimenting with different parts of this text, we have seen both American and international students benefit enormously from an exposure to the breadth of diversity in America. Despite an increasing emphasis on multicultural education in our schools, most of our students seemed to know only a smattering about the various cultures we discussed, and they appreciated the opportunity to learn more.

In learning about others, students will, of course, reflect on their own culture, language, and worldview and use these as benchmarks for comparison. They are often surprised to discover that they suddenly want to know a lot more about their own cultural background.

We also try to help students learn to analyze and evaluate more critically what they see on film and, by extension, in the media generally. Whereas at the beginning of the course students might be tempted to believe what a film tells them about a culture they do not know, by the end, they will know how to ask probing questions. Bombarded daily by media images as we are, this skill seems indispensable to us.

Finally, we also aim to help both native and non-native speakers of English develop and refine their language abilities. The course is designed to provide students with tools to become more attentive listeners and readers, more thoughtful and articulate discussants, and better writers.

## *Our Audience*

*Seeing the Big Picture* can be used in a wide range of educational settings. We have used the materials with excellent results in different kinds of classes focusing on topics of multiculturalism and diversity—required freshmen writing courses with native and non-native speakers of English (called Inquiry Seminars at our college), ESL courses at intermediate and advanced levels, and online courses offered through the department of adult education. The titles of our courses are “Exploring American Cultures on Film” and “Diversity in American Cinema.”

We also believe the text is suitable for introductory college classes in areas such as American studies, English composition, film, communications, history, anthropology, and ethnic studies. We can envisage its use as a training tool for diversity workshops in the workplace. And we hope that instructors of English or other subjects in countries abroad might find it useful and interesting.

## *Getting Started*

To prepare your students for the cultural and cinematic journey on which they are about to embark, we advise first reviewing with them the introductory chapter **To the Students**. Here students are asked to think about what it means to be American. To what extent does American still mean white American, both in the minds of people who live within our borders and those who view us from the outside?

Students are also introduced to the concept of point of view (p.o.v.), which is a unifying theme throughout this text. In a country as diverse as the United States, we all need to gain increased understanding of how others view the world, and we need to learn how to talk with each other across lines of difference. The process is often a

bumpy one, and emotions can run high. To facilitate communication, we recommend establishing a **Respect Agreement** at the outset of the course (see Appendix A). The principle underlying this agreement is a willingness to listen respectfully to each other's views, regardless of differences of opinion. We advise introducing the Respect Agreement in the first class meeting, asking students to make changes or additions to it if they wish, and requesting that they sign on to it. They should know that it is a working document that can be reviewed and revised at any time.

Additionally, we encourage conscious use of **Discussion Roles** (see pages xiii–xiv). These show students that they do not have to make a profound remark or be an expert on the subject at hand in order to join a discussion. Rather, they can simply ask a question or request clarification. We are not suggesting that you formally assign these roles to specific students but that you draw attention to them. You can encourage your students at various times during the course to assess the discussion roles they use most frequently and try new ones. We've actually had our best success advising students on an individual basis; one very articulate young man, for example, was great at expressing his own views but rarely showed interest in others, so we encouraged him to try being more of a questioner.

## *Sequencing the Films and Allotting Time*

We usually follow the sequence of films as it is presented in the text. Of course, you can change this order or select only certain films to meet your course objectives. However, we advise handling the more sensitive material, such as the chapter on gay culture, later in the course. By then, students have become better acquainted with each other and have built trust with you and one another. Also, **Creating Community** is intended to be, and probably works best as, the concluding chapter.

We have designed this text for use in either a quarter or semester term of ten to fifteen weeks, meeting at least three hours per week. If you spend one or two class periods discussing **To the Students**, you can devote two to three weeks to each feature film and spend one final class session on the **Flashback/Flashforward** closure activity. In this way, you should be able to study four or five feature films per

quarter or semester. In a year-long course, students can immerse themselves in all the films and cultures.

We realize that there are more chapters, with more material within each chapter, than you will probably use. We have never tried to use in one course all the chapters or all the exercises in any of the chapters; they are there simply to provide options for you.

One idea we have used very successfully is to give (in addition to assignments done by the entire class) one “Assignment of Choice” in each chapter. The students can choose from **Your P.O.V.** or any of the other sections, or they may follow up on a question or website from **History Flashback**. Students seem to appreciate being able to choose, and they like to share their results.

## *Using the Film Notebook*

We ask students to collect all their writing, from the roughest notes to the more formal, polished entries, in a three-ring binder. As the course progresses, the film notebook becomes a valuable resource, providing ideas for future essays, research papers, and oral reports, depending on your course requirements. Students should be encouraged to use their film notebooks not only for the written exercises in the text, but also as a place to jot down thoughts while watching the films or listening to class discussions.

We collect selections of work from the film notebooks at regular intervals. We do not promise to read every word; rather, we skim through, commenting in the margins and annotating with a checkmark (✓), plus (+), or minus (−) to indicate the degree to which thought and energy are being applied to the task at hand. Of course, you may wish to assign formal grades to the more polished pieces of writing. More than the grades, however, students seem to appreciate receiving our notes and comments.

The film notebooks are an important source of information for us as instructors. We are able to track the students’ academic progress and also to gain insight into their struggles with the emotional content of the material. Again and again, we read in the notebooks of problems and questions that simply do not surface in class discussion. Depending on the student and the issue, we can then decide how best to respond.

When we see particularly creative, interesting, well-written work—especially the sections expressing p.o.v.—we ask students to share their writings in class. This is when some of the most careful listening skills and attention to others' p.o.v.s can be developed. Also, students are often astonished by the capabilities of classmates and are inspired to do better themselves.

## *Viewing the Film*

We recommend that students view the films directly after they have read and discussed the **Sneak Preview** and before they read the **History Flashback**. In our experience, students are eager to watch the films, so we don't like to delay too long. Having seen a film, they approach the accompanying history section with more curiosity and focus. Also, the historical background makes more sense to them when they can relate it to the film.

What about the logistics involved? We have had no difficulties asking students to view the films outside of class as part of their homework. If your school or university has a media center, you can buy or rent the film and put it on reserve for students to borrow. Some students appreciate this, but others choose to share the rental cost of a video or DVD and watch with their peers in their home or residence hall. With just a few exceptions, the DVDs should be easily accessible in local video stores. Be sure to tell students in your syllabus about convenient, relatively inexpensive mail services (see suggestions on pages xxix–xxx); some students may decide to become members for the period of the course to avoid having to search for films.

Whenever possible, we try to make film-watching a weekend assignment so that students can more easily fit it into their schedules. Getting together on their own to watch the films gives them the opportunity to clarify questions and share their initial reactions immediately after viewing. This kind of informal activity outside the classroom also helps to reinforce trust and foster positive group dynamics. We've been pleased to see that many adult students watch and discuss the films with their families. In online courses, students have used the film assignment as a chance to get together.

## *Guidelines for Using the Exercises*

Most instructions are embedded within the exercises; however, some additional guidelines are offered here. We have made every effort to formulate exercises that you and your students will find interesting and instructive. They are designed to help students practice the different skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking critically, developing media literacy, and empathizing. (This last skill is developed as students become more adept at seeing different points of view.) Please be aware that not every exercise is included in every chapter; you can, however, find them all in the chapter on *Smoke Signals*.

### Setting the Scene: Freewriting and Discussion

This exercise is intended to break the ice, capture students' attention, and elicit their initial p.o.v.s. Freewriting can be done in or out of class. We try to make **Setting the Scene** a fairly quick exercise, perhaps five minutes of writing and ten minutes of exchanging ideas with a partner or group.

### Sneak Preview: About the Film, the Filmmakers, and the Actors

This section provides background information to help students to focus their "film eyes"; attune their "film ears"; and begin asking new questions about a film's credibility, importance, and p.o.v. For example, does the film break new ground in its depiction of a culture? What are the director's credentials for making a particular film? Are the actors credible representatives of the culture? Are the setting and props authentic? What do insiders and reviewers say? This section gives the students some of the tools, information, and vocabulary necessary to increase their film literacy.

As you see in the section **To the Students**, we encourage class members to mark up this book with questions, underlining, and marginal notes. Occasionally, you might want to remind students to read with pen in hand and interact with the text. If after some weeks their pages are looking too blank, you can give them prompts, asking them, for example, to write responses in the margins—as they read—to

questions like: *What surprised you? What did you agree with or find questionable? Did anything make you angry or upset? What did you find confusing? What would you like to know more about? What would you like to talk about in class?* We specifically like to ask them to note what it is about **Sneak Preview** that entices them to watch the film or dissuades them.

## Who's Who in the Film

We include this section so that students can become more sophisticated in their discussions and presentations, referring to filmmakers and characters by their exact names. Especially when foreign names are involved, the students can make good use of the **Who's Who** boxes.

## Terms to Know

We have provided lists of selected terms relevant to each culture. While these lists are far from exhaustive, we hope that you and your students will find them useful. You will probably want to spend extra time on the terms in the sections on gay and Muslim Americans, since many of these are unfamiliar or commonly misunderstood. Students in your classes who belong to the cultures featured in the text may be able to provide further explanations and clarifications on the terms and their usage.

## History Flashback

This section makes the statement that cultures simply cannot be understood without history. We trust that you can help your students realize that if they are to undertake the hard and important work of understanding people different from themselves, they must be willing to study the past.

In our experience, the students have very much enjoyed and benefited from these reading sections. We always worried that they were too long but that never seemed to be the case. Students seem especially pleased when parts of the films that were unclear to them all of a sudden make sense. In hindsight, they begin to pick up all kinds of small details that they missed before. Familiarity with the historical background helps

them enjoy and appreciate the film more. For example, the film *Far and Away* (1992) becomes much richer when one is informed about Irish immigration. Even students who already are quite knowledgeable about certain aspects of U.S. history have been glad to refresh their memories.

Notwithstanding the students' positive responses, we strongly suggest giving them short reading tasks or activities as incentives to study the **Sneak Preview**, **History Flashback**, and **Spotlight** sections carefully and become actively engaged. Rather than putting these instructions into the text, however, we prefer to leave it to you as to what works best for your group.

One easy, reliable task is simply to ask students to select one website from the **History Flashback** section, explore it, and write a paragraph in their film notebooks about why they chose it and what they learned from it. Another effective, simple task is to ask students to find a relevant website we didn't include and recommend it to others. A third possibility is to ask students to respond to one or more of the questions we pose within the readings. For example, in the chapter on Chinese Americans, we ask if director Wayne Wang portrays the male characters in *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) in stereotypical ways.

Additionally, generic reading tasks like these two have worked well:

1. Based on the reading, create a quiz of three to five factual or opinion-related questions for your peers to answer verbally in pairs or small groups. Be sure to make a note of the answers for yourself.
2. Respond in a focused freewrite in your film notebook to these cues: Before reading this text, I had assumed that. . . . After reading this text, I learned that. . . . The authors provoked my curiosity about. . . .\*

### Points of View: Director's, Insider's, Student's, and Poet's

These p.o.v.s run throughout the text. They are intended to give the students thought-provoking perspectives that they might not otherwise encounter and to help them realize how broad the panorama of perspectives on a given topic can be.

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\*This exercise is adapted from a similar one described in John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996), 142.



## Cultural Backpacking: Real and Virtual

This exercise has proven extremely rewarding as students discover an aspect of the culture they are studying, write about it in their film notebooks, and give a presentation on their findings. Although we allow students to do virtual exploring, we see this more as a backup than a first option, and we hope you will encourage your students to experience a new culture firsthand.

We recall how one of our students from Hong Kong was reluctant to embark on his cultural backpacking assignment to discover Mexican America, especially when he spoke absolutely no Spanish. Taking his American roommate with him for moral support, he ventured to a Mexican bakery in our small town and came back elated. Not only did he try his first Mexican dessert, but he also returned with a stack of photos. The welcoming Mexican proprietor had made him feel at home and thereby helped break down the student's stereotypes. The student returned to class with a fresh p.o.v.

We have been using the cultural backpacking exercise regularly with students of different language abilities, nationalities, and ages, and they all seem to find pleasure and meaning in it. It gives them an extra little push to venture out (and you might want to emphasize that they'll need to leave their comfort zones). For some students, that might mean using chopsticks for the first time, and for others it might be more like joining the Chinese or Asian student organization on campus. You'll find that some of the ideas students come up with are surprising and ingenious. One student, for example, toured a Chinese garden, another attended a performance of a gay men's chorus, and another took a class in belly dancing.

Our adult students often take their families along on their cultural backpacking trips, so everyone explores and learns. Occasionally, but rarely, a student has an unpleasant experience. (One Anglo student who went to a Mexican party felt she was being hit on by the men, for example, but she later realized in class discussion that they were probably just being friendly.) Students are often impressed and moved by the warm and welcoming reception they receive as "tourists." So, in addition to the many other rewards, we see this as a valuable community-building effort. Please encourage and remind your students to thank verbally and in writing anyone who has been especially helpful to them in their backpacking explorations. Of course, you may decide to organize one or more class field trips rather than having students choose their own destinations.

## Diversity Detective

This activity is similar to **Cultural Backpacking** in that its success depends on students' ingenuity and resourcefulness. Most students seem to welcome the challenge of tracking things down, especially on the Internet, and, in the process of searching, they learn lots of things related to their topic.

## Spotlight

The **Spotlight** exercise presents a single theme from the respective film and culture that we want to highlight in order to raise students' awareness. Racial profiling, body image, and language/dialect prejudice are a few of the key topics. In several of these exercises, we ask students to select and show clips from the film to illustrate the point under discussion, which can make for lively classroom discussion. Whenever students show clips—in response to **Spotlight** or other assignments—you can take the opportunity to ask about, or point out, film techniques.

## What's Cooking?

This light, enjoyable exercise is an excellent way of bringing your students together for an in-class cooking session or a trip to a local restaurant. You may be able to combine **Cultural Backpacking** with **What's Cooking?**; for example, we mention in the text that if you visit a Chinatown, you can make time for a meal. We realize that finances can be a problem, and a few times we've been able to receive modest amounts of money from institutional funds. In some of our classes, we've brought samples of different ethnic snacks to pass around during breaks, and inevitably students will begin to bring snack foods from their respective cultures to share.

Many students also seem to like trying out recipes on their own—from beverages like chai (Arabic tea) and laban (a yoghurt drink) to tortilla soup and fry bread. One student reported that her fry bread was delicious, but another said hers came out a bit dense, like coasters or Frisbees, on which her children smeared peanut butter and jelly. An adventuresome student made an entire Irish dinner for her family, with steak and Guinness pie for the main course and barm brack for dessert, which she said was a big hit.

When we asked students to reflect on what they learned from the **What's Cooking?** exercises, their responses reinforced for us the unique role of food in promoting cross-cultural learning. One student said cooking allows her to journey to a new place. Another discussed the research she did to understand recipes, such as looking up the meaning of “shin of beef,” “knob of butter,” and “double cream” for Irish dishes, research that gave her insights into the culture. Several students talked about how food opens up conversation with people from other countries and ethnic groups—in obvious ways such as sharing recipes and meals, and in less apparent ways like interacting with knowledgeable people in ethnic restaurants and grocery stores. Finally, one student wrote: “Most other cultures aren’t as hung up on time and busy-ness as we are. Their food is often labor intensive and time consuming to make. Food is so much a part of culture that cooking it is sharing in the culture, even if only in a small way.”\*\*

## Lights! Camera! ACTION!

Our goal in this section is to provide students with ways to translate their knowledge into action, perhaps even resulting in their long-term involvement with something they find worthwhile. Although this is an optional exercise, we hope you’ll do some brainstorming with students and help them think of new ideas for taking action. Please add your own suggestions to ours and encourage the students to add theirs.

## Your P.O.V.

The final exercises of each chapter provide students with an imaginative outlet for their learning. Depending on the talents and learning styles of your students, **Your P.O.V.** can allow for lots of creativity. Wherever possible, you can help students do real-life writing that other people read. Writing and submitting film reviews to Internet sites such as Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) and The Internet Movie Database ([www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) is a simple and often exhilarating way for students to be “published.” Of course, they can submit reviews and other writing to their student or local newspaper. One first-year student, for example, who had attended a campus performance of Latin

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\*\*Our appreciation to Charlotte Allen, Crisha Galbraith, Jami Krietzman, and Gail Wood for their contributions to this discussion.

folkloric dance, was thrilled to see her review appear in the student paper. You can also remind students to submit excellent drawings, photography, or other creative work to a student literary magazine.

Toward the end of the term, we usually ask each student to contribute one favorite piece of writing or creative work to a class album that is photocopied and distributed at the final session. (We might ask for a modest contribution from each student to cover photocopying.) This works beautifully in online courses as well by simply creating a new file for the album and having students cut and paste their entries and then print out the final product on their own.

Students gain important practice for real-life writing by sharing their written and other work with each other in class. While they may at first feel shy or embarrassed, they soon come to understand how wonderful it can be to be heard by others.

In each chapter, the final question of **Your P.O.V.** asks students to imagine that they are making a film on one of the suggested topics and to create their plan. Since this can be a relatively time-consuming group project, you might use it as a capstone assignment. Alternatively, the partial assignments suggested in Appendix D can be completed relatively quickly by individuals or small groups. Should you wish to assign research papers in this course, the topics suggested here are intended to provide ideas for you and your students.

## And Our Book Awards Go To . . .

## And Our Film Awards Go To . . .

We have selected and annotated books and films that we feel are truly exceptional. They are our personal favorites. We provide them so that your students can keep learning more about the cultures they've encountered. Most of the films we've chosen are fairly accessible, though we note in the annotations cases of a few, like *El Norte* (1983), that may unfortunately take some effort to find (but that are really worth the effort). All other things being equal, we tried to list films that your students may not know. We chose the books not only because of their importance and merit, but because we believe students will be drawn to them. They are all great reads, and most of them are relatively inexpensive.

## Flashback/Flashforward

Students like and appreciate this exercise as a way of bringing closure to the course. It helps them reinforce what they have learned as well as look to the future. Please have students complete both parts of the assignment at home prior to the final class meeting.

## *Some Commonly Asked Questions*

***I am neither a historian nor a film expert. How can I teach this course?***

Neither are we! But one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching these materials is that we continue to learn more with each new class of students. A lack of historical or film expertise should definitely not deter you from using this text. We explain to our students at the beginning of each course that this is a cooperative learning experience about cultures and about the cinema—a learning experience for all of us. Depending on your academic background, you might want to consider team teaching the course with someone whose areas of expertise supplement your own.

An indispensable reference work containing well-written historical surveys as well as charts, timelines, annotated bibliographies, and pedagogical approaches is James A. Banks's *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies* (2003). We also recommend the splendid Library of Congress Internet site on immigration at <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/introduction.html>.

***How do I find film information and reviews?***

These days the best way to find reviews and movie information is to go online, beginning with the Internet Movie Database and Amazon. Also, Google® or other search engines can be used to research specific films (by title), directors, actors, and film festivals. You and your students can also consult the Internet sites provided in Appendix E.

***How can I purchase or rent videos and DVDs?***

For rentals, services like Netflix ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)), DVD Avenue ([www.dvdavenue.com](http://www.dvdavenue.com)), and Café DVD ([www.cafedvd.com](http://www.cafedvd.com)) are available. Café DVD allows rentals of single films. For purchase, there are a number of options, including Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)), Best Buy ([www.bestbuy.com](http://www.bestbuy.com)), and Sam Goody ([www.samgoody.com](http://www.samgoody.com)). There are also

legal downloads at ifilm ([www.ifilm.com](http://www.ifilm.com)), Movieflix ([www.movieflix.com](http://www.movieflix.com)), and Movielink ([www.movielink.com](http://www.movielink.com)).

You'll also want to check out the extraordinary offerings of Facets Multimedia Center ([www.facets.com](http://www.facets.com)). You can sign up online to receive regular free e-newsletters and specialty catalogs. Their huge, inexpensive catalog listing thousands of videos, accompanied by short blurbs, that are offered for rental or purchase is a must-have.

Other important distributors include:

1. California Newsreel [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)
2. Filmmakers Library [www.filmmakers.com](http://www.filmmakers.com)
3. Home Box Office [www.hbo.com](http://www.hbo.com)
4. National Geographic <http://shop.nationalgeographic.com>
5. NAATA/Crosscurrent Media [www.naatanet.org](http://www.naatanet.org)
6. PBS Video [www.shoppbs.org](http://www.shoppbs.org)
7. Third World Newsreel [www.twn.org](http://www.twn.org)
8. Women Make Movies (WMM) [www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com)

***Will the language of the films be too difficult for my ESL students?***

Certainly the culturally rich words, phrases, and expressions will be challenging but no more so than the language your students encounter every day outside the classroom—on the street, on the radio, or on television. So far our ESL students and our native speakers alike have enjoyed the linguistic challenges of the films. Sometimes, our international students are assisted by native-speaking culture partners in order to tackle unfamiliar phrases and idioms. Although it is not our intention in this text to provide traditional language exercises, you could select specific film clips for the purpose of focusing on those grammatical structures, vocabulary words, or idioms that you wish to highlight for your students.

All students tend to work hard on their own to understand the films. We have witnessed, for example, non-native English speakers repeatedly replaying and transcribing parts of films or film clips, sometimes with the assistance of native-speaking friends or culture partners, in order to hear, and come to grips with, unfamiliar phrases and idioms. In this sense, film viewing offers practice similar to a language lab. Native speakers also come to understand the value of repeated viewings of certain scenes or entire films. The unfortunately rapidly vanishing VHS tape is much better for the purpose of rewinding and replaying than DVDs.

***What are culture partners?***

Culture partners participate in our ESL classes to facilitate small-group discussions and contribute to cross-cultural exchanges. They are usually native speakers of English—students or volunteers from the community. Some Culture Partners receive regular or internship credit for the course.

***What are cultural informants?***

We often invite guests or speakers as cultural informants. For example, our students have been greatly moved by student visitors from The Oregon School for the Deaf, and some have gone on to take classes in American Sign Language as a result. Cultural informants do not need to be experts or specialists. Clearly, students in your class will be able to serve as informants about their own cultures, but they should not automatically be expected to do so. Some students may not feel that they know enough about a specific topic to act as a resource person, and some may have personal reasons for declining this role (such as a gay student not wanting to come out). Students of color and international students in particular are often placed in the role of representative, or ambassador, and they may not (at least initially) feel comfortable with this extra responsibility and expectation; they may even resent being asked. On the other hand, students who enroll in this type of course usually welcome the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences from their own cultural backgrounds. If approached with tact and respect, those who are at first hesitant or reluctant will generally become more open, especially once trust has been established in the group.

***What if my students have already seen a film?***

Many of our students have already seen one or more of the films, but they do not seem reluctant to watch them a second time. We explain that our viewing goals in this class are very different from watching films for entertainment. In fact, most of our students comment on how the readings, exercises, and discussions help them to look at the films from a new viewpoint. They learn to develop their film eyes and ears and focus on aspects of culture and communication they might otherwise have overlooked.

***How does the chapter on Muslim American culture differ from the other chapters?***

It provides a change of pace for both you and your students. Instead of analyzing one feature film in its entirety, students in pairs or small

groups can choose a film from among the selection of six, and then each group can present a meaningful clip to the class. (Or, if you wish, you can ask that all students view the same film.)

However you choose to proceed, please be aware that *House of Sand and Fog* and *The War Within* need to be debriefed carefully. In both cases, we recommend asking students to write or talk about their emotional responses before they begin any type of intellectual analysis. Because most students are likely to find these two movies upsetting or depressing, it's important that they have a chance to express their feelings.

When we moved to in-depth discussions of *House of Sand and Fog*, we found that students wanted to focus on who was to blame. We asked them to try to put the question of blame aside in an attempt to understand and empathize with each person's p.o.v. We also found it useful to ask them to identify points in the film when certain actions or decisions could have led to reconciliation rather than to destruction. And we found it important to ask them to identify characters' prejudicial statements or discriminatory actions.

The DVD extra feature should be useful to you in preparing your debrief of *The War Within*.

***What do you do if students become angry, upset, or argumentative?  
What if conflicts arise in the class?***

The subject matter and nature of this class are such that emotions can run high. We are reminded frequently that, for the most part, the current generation of students has not experienced the struggles of the civil rights movement except in abstract ways, perhaps in high school history books. Because the medium of film brings this history alive for them, Anglo American students can feel shock and dismay—or sometimes defensiveness and denial—and U.S. students of color or international students can become upset or angry. Some international students feel they are fulfilling a dream by coming to the United States, and then all of a sudden this class seems to burst their bubble: America is not what they thought it was. Other students from abroad can see their worst fears about the United States confirmed. Depending on their age and educational background, adult students, too, often struggle with the material and can find themselves becoming angry, hurt, or defensive.

While this generation of American students may not be fully informed of the issues treated in the text, they do have the experience of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath, as part of their emotional



life, and this is a powerful point of reference. International students inevitably have their own sets of harsh realities on which to draw as they explore in some depth the painful aspects of the American past and present.

As instructors, we make every effort to keep students working together in a constructive environment. When you review the Respect Agreement in Appendix A at the outset of the course, spend some time preparing your students for the possibility of anger, hurt, or disagreements with others. They need to know that this is normal. But they also need to know that their challenge is to remain respectful of others at all times. You might want to alert students to the fact that they need to be prepared to apologize if they offend or hurt someone, or if they violate the Respect Agreement.

Unfortunately, the atmosphere of political correctness that has pervaded American life for the past twenty years has worked against opportunities to talk with each other in authentic ways across ethnic, cultural, and religious lines. We simply have not learned how to do so, and we have few opportunities to practice.

For us, this course offers a wonderful opportunity to practice intercultural and interracial communication in a relatively safe environment. As we tell our students, what better place to make mistakes than in a classroom? At the same time, we make it very clear that grades do not depend on saying the supposedly right thing. We use the phrase *authentic and sensitive* throughout the course to remind students that the objective here is to express authentic views, ideas, and questions, even if they are not popular, in a way that shows as much sensitivity as possible. If each student does that, we will create an extraordinary learning environment.

Because of the nature of the material, we find it important to balance hot topics with lighter ones. The cooking exercises in each chapter, for example, offer a perfect way to build rapport and ease tension, as do many of the **Cultural Backpacking** ventures. Chapter 9, which centers on the delightful film *What's Cooking?* has proved to be an uplifting way of concluding the course.

### ***How does Chapter 9 differ from the other chapters?***

This is a shorter chapter that is intended to be a wrap-up. Of the five main cultures portrayed in *What's Cooking?*, we have already given histories of three (Mexican American, African American, and gay) in previous chapters. Rather than providing two additional histories here

(Vietnamese and Jewish American), we leave it to you and your students to research the information and supply what is desired.

*Do you ever use the Extra Features on DVDs?*

Certainly! Some of the extra features, especially the commentaries provided by directors, were extremely valuable in the preparation of this text. A great assignment is to ask students to select and show clips that illustrate aspects of the filmmaking process as explained in the extra features.

*What should I do if a website becomes defunct?*

We specifically tried to include reliable websites sponsored by organizations that will be likely to last. But not all websites are forever, and sometimes web addresses change. If a website fails, we suggest first trying to search from the website's root menu (i.e., [www.\[website\].com](http://www.[website].com)) for the specific topic discussed, and, if this yields no results, simply consulting a search engine (like Google®) to locate another site. Your students will likely enjoy finding good replacements.

*How should I use the demographic donut charts?*

Our students have found these charts invaluable in visualizing the changing face of multicultural America. We have used them to give both an overview of current demographics and to complement specific information provided in the **History Flashback** sections. For example, you can refer your students to Appendix F (Race and Ethnicity in the United States) when discussing the current Native American population in *Indians Today* or the browning of America in *Mexican Americans Today*. You can direct your students to Appendix G (Latino Population by Place of Origin) and Appendix H (Asian American Population by Place of Origin) to help students understand the diversity within each broader group. Additionally, in mock competition, we have quizzed students on U.S. demographics early in the course. They have enjoyed using the donut charts to check their answers—and have often been surprised by their findings. Other students have commented on the usefulness of the charts for in-depth research projects. The statistics have been compiled from multiple sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, and reflect survey information gathered as recently as 2004.