II. *The Video Professor*

Each section contains a number of films related to major themes discussed in the respective chapters. Most movies address more than one theme and also serve as illustrations for themes conveyed in other chapters. The instructor may wish to select any of the recommended films and the essay assignment accompanying them as an out-of-class assignment. The instructor may also elect to show segments of the film in class and use the recommended essay question to promote a class discussion. Although sample assignments are suggested, the instructor may wish to develop his or her own assignments based on the content of any of the films listed.

**Chapter One: The Sociological Perspective**

*Functionalism, the conflict perspective, symbolic interactionism, and the sociological imagination.*

*Apollo 13* (1995). This film, starring Tom Hanks, Ed Harris, and Kevin Bacon, is an excellent re-enactment of what could have been a devastating setback to the American space program. Even though the viewer knows the ultimate ending of the near-disaster, director Ron Howard maintains a high level of suspense throughout the film. He expertly illustrates the problem-solving and amazing coordination between the stranded astronauts, NASA scientists on the ground, various support personnel, and the resources available to bring the marooned space travelers safely back to earth.


*Falling Down* (1993). Michael Douglas plays a laid-off defense worker who has the ultimate “bad day.” After playing by the rules his entire life in ritualistic fashion, he finally snaps when various members of society obstruct every goal he sets for himself, including a simple matter such as ordering breakfast at a fast-food restaurant. Douglas embarks on a violent crime spree in which he confronts members of the underground, the police, and his own family.

*Planet of the Apes* (2001). This film is a remake of one of the most popular science fiction films of all time. After being lost in space, an American astronaut finds himself trapped on a planet where the dominant population is composed of an advanced level of talking apes. Not only are humans the minority population, they are only semi-literate and do not have the ability to communicate through speech. Within the ape populations are various divisions that help illustrate the sociological concepts of status, role, and interaction.

*Roxanne* (1987). Based on the classic story Cyrano de Bergerac, this modern story of courtship shows the smitten young man using the advice and poetic words of his long-nosed friend to woo the girl who is falling for the words and not the man.

*Saving Private Ryan* (1998). This is an action-packed account of an American army squad in World War II. After surviving the Normandy invasion, a squad of G.I.’s is assigned a seemingly
impossible job of locating and returning one lone American soldier trapped somewhere behind enemy lines.

*Shrek* (2001). Using the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz this is a humorous animated tale based on the traditional theme of “they lived happily ever after”…with its own twist. This film will entertain younger and older viewers alike with its expertly done animation, unique story line, and humorous depictions of the characters.

*The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). This science fiction classic capitalized on the flying saucer hype of the late 40s and early 50s to be one of the major Hollywood blockbusters when it was released in 1951. Starring Michael Rennie, Sam Jaffe, and Patricia Neal it illustrates the world’s fear of inter-galactic terror that dominated the time. Some critics argue the threat of invaders from outer space was only symbolic for the fear Americans had for the “Red Scare” of the time period.

*The Truth About Cats and Dogs* (1996). A fun loving but plain-Jane radio personality sets up a date with a caller, but loses confidence in her own appearance, and sends her model-neighbor as a stand-in. The three-way triangle that develops between the announcer, her love interest, and the stand-in neighbor illustrates a number of concepts of symbolism as well as the perceptions about what others see and expect.

*What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?* (1994) A small-town grocery clerk must interact with the small-town realities of his attractive married neighbor, his 400-pound mother, his retarded brother, and a new girl in town who promises to break the monotony of his melancholy life.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based on your viewing of *Apollo 13* and the accompanying material in the textbook, how is the American space program an example of structural functionalism? More specifically, how was the rescue of the astronauts an example of structural functionalism?

2. Based on your viewing of *Apollo 13*, the accompanying material in the textbook, and additional investigation, how is the space program an example of the conflict perspective and a perpetuation of what C. Wright Mills calls the power elite?

3. Using the principles of symbolic interactionism, apply the principles and concepts of this sociological perspective to *Apollo 13* and the space program in general.

4. Using the principles of the sociological imagination (asking questions and questioning answers, things are not what they seem), develop an essay that illustrates this concept using any of the following films: *Falling Down, The Truth about Cats and Dogs, Planet of the Apes, Shrek,* or *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?*

5. *Saving Private Ryan* illustrates the ultimate result of conflict on the macro-level. It also displays how conflict is a part of our daily lives in its micro-level application. Address each of these with emphasis on the micro-level analysis. How can conflict be beneficial
to small groups as well as society? How can the opposition by one member of a group change the course of history?

6. How does the movie *Shrek* serve as an example of symbolic interactionism? What qualities does each character convey based on their “symbolic” meaning? What are some of the flaws of the symbolic interactionist perspective that become apparent in the movie?

Chapter Two: Culture

**Material and non-material culture, values, beliefs, mores, folkways, ethnocentrism, symbols and language, cultural change.**

*An Innocent Man* (1989). Jimmie Rainwood (Tom Selleck) had it all….a great job, a loving wife, and a beautiful home in the suburbs. But all of this is swept away as Rainwood is wrongfully accused and convicted of a major felony. He is thrust into the quagmire of the penitentiary where his world turns upside down and inside out. This new environment requires Rainwood to learn an entirely new set of standards, values, and behavior if he is to survive. This is a vivid tale of counterculture and resocialization.

*Donnie Brasco* (1997). Donnie Brasco was the alias used by Joe Pistone, the most successful undercover agent to infiltrate the New York mob. As Donnie Brasco, this law officer became one of the mob’s most trusted “wise guys.” This film illustrates the values and beliefs held by members of organized crime and how they differ remarkably from those of the mainstream culture.

*Fiddler on the Roof* (1971). This classic portrayal of the famous musical offers a rich depiction of the values and customs associated with the “old world” of Jewish life and a father’s struggle to accept change.

*G.I. Jane* (1997). Demi Moore is gutsy Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil, the first woman to be given the opportunity to earn a place in the armed forces’ elite SEAL team. Everything about her transition to a sea, air, land soldier presents a new set of challenges and obstacles that only a SEAL could understand. The military has a culture of its own, but elite units such as the SEALs are even further divided from the mainstream culture.

*Gone with the Wind* (1939). Perhaps the most famous movie of all time, *Gone with the Wind* presents a number of cultures in conflict…political, economic, social, and racial. An examination of this classic epic helps the viewer gain insight into understanding the social and political differences that exist today in these same areas.

*Last of the Mohicans* (1992). An epic adventure and passionate romance unfold in *The Last of the Mohicans* against the panorama of a frontier wilderness ravaged by war. Hawkeye, the rugged frontiersman and adopted son of the Mohicans, is caught between two cultures while the British face a major conflict against the French and their Native American allies.
**Mr. Baseball** (1992). Tom Selleck plays Jack Elliot, an arrogant and aging star of the American past time, who is traded from the New York Yankees to the Chunichi Dragons in Nagoya, Japan. Through arrogance and cultural ignorance Elliot alienates his teammates, manager, and a beautiful young lady. After seeing the error in his ways, Elliot makes amends and develops a new respect for the people of Japan and an appreciation of their cultural values.

**The Coneheads** (1993). In this spin-off of one of *Saturday Night Live’s* most popular skits, an alien family crashes to earth, and sets up housekeeping for 20 years as they await a rescue craft to arrive from their home planet Remulak. Beldar and Prymaat Conehead give the term “assimilation” a whole new meaning in their adaptation to American culture.

**The Gods Must Be Crazy** (1980). Perhaps the most enlightening comedy of all time, this film depicts the story of what happens when a Coke bottle falls from the sky (thrown from a plane by a bush pilot) to the hands of an African Bushman who takes its back to his tribe with disastrous and hilarious results.

**Witness** (1985). Harrison Ford plays a big city detective and Kelly McGillis an attractive young Amish woman in this detective tale set in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Ford seeks refuge at an Amish farm after being seriously injured by the criminals he is pursuing. As he convalesces he blends into the Amish community as one of its members. Blending in, however, is more difficult than either Ford or McGillis realize as their separate cultural values present numerous adjustment difficulties.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. In *An Innocent Man*, isolate and discuss the many differences that face Jimmie Rainwood in his new “home.” Include both the differences in material culture and non-material culture that Rainwood must master. What is the new “moral code” that Rainwood must embrace if he is to successfully adapt?

2. How does Jack Elliot (*Mr. Baseball*) create his own cultural conflict as he makes the change from being a New York Yankee to Chunichi Dragon? What are some of the racial slurs and indignities that he consciously commits? Discuss those that he commits that may be innocent mistakes. How much of Elliot’s problem can be explained primarily due to his personal shortcomings and how much of his adjustment problem can be explained by major cultural differences between Americans and the Japanese?

3. In *Mr. Baseball*, how did the Japanese practice the concept of cultural adaptation in modifying America’s national past time? How did the Japanese make baseball more compatible with their existing cultural beliefs, values, and material culture?

4. In *The Coneheads*, how do Beldar and Prymaat Conehead adapt to the Earthling way of life? What is it about their successful adaptation that can be explained by cultural relativism and cultural diffusion? How does language play a role in the Coneheads’ understanding of Earthling culture and the personal terms they develop for various
aspects of Earth culture? What norms, folkways, and mores do the Coneheads possess that are different from other members of their community and in conflict with the values held by their daughter?

5. Using any of the suggested films, develop an essay that identifies the competing cultures illustrated in the film’s story. Then develop a comparison of the material and non-material cultural characteristics between the competing cultures. Specify how these cultural differences contribute to the film’s plot and how the major characters in the film deal with these differences.

Chapter Three: Socialization

Nature vs. nurture, moral development, socialization and resocialization, agents of socialization.

An Innocent Man (1989) Jimmie Rainwood (Tom Selleck) had it all…..a great job, a loving wife, and a beautiful home in the suburbs. But all of this is swept away as Rainwood is wrongfully accused and convicted of a major felony. He is thrust into the quagmire of the penitentiary where his world turns upside down and inside out. This new environment requires Rainwood to learn an entirely new set of standards, values, and behavior if he is to survive. This is a vivid tale of counterculture and resocialization.

Analyze This (1999). This film stars Robert DeNiro as a powerful mob leader and Billy Crystal as a successful psychotherapist. Each has his distinctive views on moral development, problem solving, and the concept of “family.” Using a humorous twist, the story permits the viewer to analyze DeNiro, the gangster, from a number of perspectives.

Angels with Dirty Faces (1938). Two boys growing up in a New York ethnic neighborhood in the 1920s go their separate ways as they grow older. A classic starring James Cagney, Edmund O’Brien, and Humphrey Bogart, this film illustrates the impact of the many agents of socialization we encounter as we take life’s journey.

Big (1988). Be careful what you wish for! At a carnival, 12-year old Josh Baskin (Tom Hanks) wishes he was big, only to discover the next morning that he is! Transformed into a 30-year old body but maintaining his 12-year old mind poses many problems Josh never expected.

Forrest Gump (1994). “Run Forrest, Run!” This academy award winning film traces the life of a peculiar young man in a single-parent home in the South. As naïve as he is gifted, Forrest successfully overcomes adversity in many forms including physical and mental challenges, cultural differences, and vocational setbacks. Along the way he proves that nice guys can finish much better than last and there are values and virtues worth preserving.

Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes (1984) and Tarzan (1999). Each of these remakes of the classic Tarzan series based on the novel, offers many interesting observations on
the aspect of feral childhood and the challenge of entering “civilization.” Any of the Tarzan films from the 30s and 40s starring Johnnie Weissmuller would also serve the same purpose.

**Life Is Beautiful** (1998). Guido (Roberto Benigni) is a charming but bumbling waiter who is gifted with a colorful imagination and an irresistible sense of humor. He has won the heart of a woman he loves and created a beautiful life for his young family. But then, that life is threatened by World War II. Guido then relies upon the same strengths that made his family possible to save it from an unthinkable fate.

**Nell** (1994). This film, starring Jodi Foster, offers an excellent perspective on feral childhood. Much more believable than the classic Tarzan plot of a child being raised by apes, a doctor discovers a feral child from the backwoods of North Carolina who has chronologically progressed to early adulthood. The doctor then tries to introduce the young lady to “normal society.”

**Stand By Me** (1986). This is a story of four boys ascending into adolescence facing many challenges. Besides peer pressure, an abusive parent, and a need to prove themselves, the quartet deals with the harassment by their adolescent brothers who are arrogant and delinquent. Starring River Phoenix and Will Wheaton, and narrated by Richard Dreyfuss, this is a tale set in the late 50s when life was much simpler. The film provides a rite of passage perspective on adulthood.

**Teen Wolf** (1985). Scott Howard is an “average” teenager who wishes he could be more than average. In another, “be careful what you wish for” plot, the film illustrates the impact of peer groups, symbolic interactionism, status, roles, and the responsibilities that come with success.

**Trading Places** (1983) This classic film depicts an argument between two wealthy stockbrokers taken to extremes on the merits of the nature versus nurture controversy. A preppie “have” (Dan Aykroyd) is unknowingly and deceitfully exchanged with a “have-not” (Eddie Murphy). A supportive group of friends and associates help the unknowing subjects of the study take revenge on their experimenters.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. In *An Innocent Man*, what are the agents of socialization faced by Jimmie Rainwood as he passes from the life of a private, law abiding citizen to that of a convicted drug dealer entering a maximum-security penitentiary? How does his first period of socialization impact upon his need for resocialization? Once released from prison, what are some of the lingering effects of having been “resocialized” that Rainwood carries with him back to his old suburban neighborhood?

2. After viewing *Trading Places*, identify all the aspects of the nature versus nurture argument to the two main characters (Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy). How valid were the assumptions made by the stockbroker brothers as they pertain to each argument? Based on the content of the film and the readings in the textbook, choose which position is the most influential aspect of human development.
3. Compare and contrast the content of *Nell* with any of the Tarzan films. Is the Tarzan scenario believable? Defend your answer.

4. In *Angels with Dirty Faces*, what agents of socialization do James Cagney and Edmund O’Brien share as teenage boys growing up in New York? Where do their paths split like limbs of a tree? What new agents of socialization become paramount in their lives?

5. Compare and contrast *Big* and *Teen Wolf*. How are the plots similar and different? Offer some personal insight into situations you may have wished for, but once you achieved them discovered the wish wasn’t what it was perceived to be.

6. Provide an analysis of Robert DeNero’s character (Paul Vitti) in *Analyze This*. Using readings from the text and insight gained from Billy Crystal’s (Ben Sobel’s) assessment, develop a basis for what ails the gangster and why. How are the agents of socialization for Vitti different from those of Sobel?

**Chapter Four: Social Structure and Social Interaction**

*Culture, social class, social status, roles, groups, and social institutions.*

*Antz* (1999). “Z” (Woody Allen), a worker ant, sets his sights on landing the affection of Princess Bala (Sharon Stone). Besides being a worker ant with no chance of courting a princess, Bala’s hand in marriage has been promised to General Mandible (Gene Hackman). In the process of trying to win Bala’s affection, the princess and Z end up in a race against time to save the ant colony. The film illustrates how the limitations created by status and role can be overcome.

*Beauty and the Beast* (1991). This modern animated movie masterpiece is a classic plot featuring a hideous beast, a beautiful young maiden, and a boisterous “town bully.” Two very different people overcome differences created by their class and status. Symbolic interactionism plays an important part in explaining the interaction of the Beauty and the Beast. Examine the role each character is expected to play based on status and how it impacts their relationship.

*Cast Away* (2000). Stranded on a tropical island following a plane crash, Tom Hanks finds himself alone. He salvages packages washed ashore from the downed plane and develops his own system for survival. This ultimate “Survivor” tale illustrates the social imperative and the importance of friends and family.

*Dances with Wolves* (1990). Rewarded for his heroism in the Civil War, Lt. John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) wants to see the American frontier before it is gone. He is assigned to an abandoned fort, where a Sioux tribe is his only neighbor. Overcoming the language barrier and their mutual fear and distrust, Dunbar and the proud Indians gradually become friends. This is a story with many lessons, including various aspects of culture, status, and role.
**Driving Miss Daisy** (1989). This film is a “new classic” that illustrates the statuses, roles, and relationships between an aging and affluent white woman and her wily black chauffer.

**Mr. Holland’s Opus** (1995). Glenn Holland (Richard Dreyfuss) is a passionate musician who dreams of composing one truly memorable piece of music. But reality intrudes as he reluctantly accepts a “day job” as a high school music teacher to support his family. Mr. Holland eventually comes to realize his real passion is teaching, and his legacy is the generations of young people he inspires.

**Shrek** (2001). Using the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz this is a humorous animated tale based on the traditional theme of “they lived happily ever after”…with its own twist. This film will entertain younger and older viewers alike with its expertly done animation, unique story line, and humorous depictions of the characters.

**The 60s: The Movie Event of a Generation** (1999). The 60s is an epic blend of music, drama, and real-life events that bring that decade’s most explosive events to life. Two American families, one white and one black, are torn apart by the war in Vietnam and the war in the streets. Current events are often compared to this period that initiated the civil rights movement, peaceful protests, free love, and the fear of nuclear annihilation.

**The Sting** (1973). An old black con-artist, Luther, and his young handsome white partner, Hooker, play a confidence game on the wrong person. It results in the murder of Luther. Hooker recruits the help of a master con man to avenge Luther’s death. With the help of a number of other con men, “justice” is served. The film is a good example of project management and an illustration of the games people play to become successful.

**Twelve Angry Men** (1957). Henry Ford leads a sensational cast of the late 50’s in a classic drama about status, role, and decision making. Filmed entirely in one room, a jury of twelve men must decide the fate of a teenage boy accused of killing his father. Eleven of the twelve jurors are confident of the defendant’s guilt as the foreman calls for the first verdict vote. Only one man (Henry Fonda) stands between the teenager and a death sentence. How can one man convince eleven others he is right and they are wrong?

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. In *Shrek* identify how social class affects the status and role of each of the main characters in the film and how they conform to fulfilling the roles assigned to them.

2. In *Twelve Angry Men*, stop watching the film at the point where Henry Fonda sticks the switchblade knife into the table and challenges his fellow jurors to revote on the guilt or innocence of the accused teenager. Before watching the rest of the film, have each student individually choose what order the remaining eleven jurors will change their votes from guilty to innocent. Then place the students into small groups to determine a “group” decision on the order of verdict reversal. Watch the rest of the movie and determine which decision-making process was best, that of the individual or small group.
3. After watching *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, compose an essay on the importance of family and vocation and how one can compromise the values of the other. Also include the importance of school as a social institution and the impact Mr. Holland had on his students.

4. Both *The Sting* and *Driving Miss Daisy* illustrate many aspects of the sociological imagination and how one’s status can lead to a misunderstanding of the role they actually play compared to that which they are expected to play. Using this approach, pick one of the films and develop an essay addressing that premise.

5. In *The 60’s: The Movie Event of a Generation*, how do the status and roles of the main characters change between the opening of the film when they are introduced and the concluding segments? What causes these changes? What statuses remained the same? How did this change impact life in the 80s and 90s?

6. How does *Cast Away* illustrate the social imperative and the need for social interaction? How do we create our own “societies” when we find ourselves isolated from others, either figuratively or literally?

Chapter Five: How Sociologists Do Research

*The research model, research methods, participant-observation, ethics in research*

*Awakenings* (1990). Robin Williams plays a doctor seeking an effective drug to treat Parkinson’s disease. An extraneous theme to this excellent depiction of a true incident is the actual experiment, using increased quantities of a new drug as the variable, which produced astounding results.

*Conspiracy Theory* (1997). Jerry Fletcher (Mel Gibson) is a New York City cab driver and conspiracy buff. He uses an assortment of resources and methods to investigate his personal theories on government activity and publishes them in his own newsletter. One of Jerry’s theories hits too close to revealing a true government conspiracy, resulting in the efforts of a radical government agency to silence him.

*Gorillas in the Midst* (1988). This absorbing drama is based on the life of Dian Fossey (Sigourney Weaver) who journeys to Africa in 1967 to document the vanishing breed of mountain gorillas for *National Geographic*. In the movie she transforms from diligent researcher to obsessive madwoman that may be more Hollywood than history.

*Jurassic Park* (1993). The original Spielberg directed yarn about two paleontologists (Sam Neill and Laura Dern) who accept an offer from billionaire Richard Attenborough to inspect his island dinosaur amusement park. Things go wrong when the dinos escape their restraints and wreak
havoc on the island’s human visitors. Part comedy, part thriller, part horror film, *Jurassic Park* is entertaining and enlightening in this day of clones and genetic experimentation.

*Outbreak* (1995). A techno-thriller starring Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, and Cuba Gooding Jr., *Outbreak* illustrates how a group of scientists research the cause and origin of a rare killer virus. Although the virus has the potential to result in a global biological meltdown, their efforts are hampered by high-ranking military officials who wish to preserve the virus as a possible weapon.

*The Thin Blue Line* (1988). This documentary pieces together the incidents surrounding the 1976 murder of a Dallas police officer. The interviews are the highlight of the film, with one shocking interview at the end that raises serious doubts about who actually killed the officer. The producer also uses archival data such as newspaper clippings, police reports, and court transcripts to illustrate this case study.

*Titanic* (1991). An excellent version of one of history’s greatest blunders. This documentary-style film about the supposedly unsinkable *Titanic* is told through a recreation of clippings, photos, and interviews with survivors of the disastrous voyage. Titanic’s passengers included representatives of two distinct cultures, one aristocratic and the other poor immigrants. The culture and the reasons each group has for being on the ill-fated trip are expertly portrayed. The 1997 version of *Titanic* is the one starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.

*Young Frankenstein* (1974). *Young Frankenstein* is Mel Brooks’ monstrously crazy tribute to Mary W. Shelly’s classic horror story. Summoned by a will to his late grandfather’s castle in Transylvania, young Dr. Frankenstein (Gene Wilder) soon discovers the step-by-step manual of his late grandfather explaining how to bring a corpse back to life. Assisted by the hunchback Igor (Marty Feldman) and his beautiful research assistant Inga (Teri Garr), young Dr. Frankenstein learns to embrace the work of his late grandfather that he once despised.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based on your viewing of (*Awakenings, Titanic, Thin Blue Line*) identify the types of research used to discover the truth of what happened in the film chosen. What are the strengths and drawbacks of using such methods? What alternative methods could be used?

2. In *Outbreak*, how does social research become as important as the medical research illustrated in the film? Explain how this teamwork between the two sciences is necessary in other research as well using a specific issue or disease as an example.

3. In *Young Frankenstein*, what considerations did the good doctor overlook as he embarked on replicating his grandfather’s efforts to re-create life? What are some ethical considerations the scientist must consider that are socially relevant as well as medically significant? Are today’s cloning experiments our modern day version of the Frankenstein experiment? Why or why not?
4. In *Conspiracy Theory*, what form of reasoning (inductive or deductive) does Jerry use in developing his theories? Why did you choose that answer? Using the research model, trace one of Jerry’s theories described in the film and provide a short critique of how well he accomplished each stage of the model (selecting a topic, defining the problem, reviewing the literature, and so on)?

5. In *Gorillas in the Midst*, explain how Dian Fossey utilizes participant-observation in her research. How and why does she become more participant than observer? Are there other films you have seen or real life examples of research you are aware of in which the same methods were used?

6. After viewing *Trading Places* which theory appears to be more valid, the nature or nurture argument? What are some variables that corrupt the study from being a true test of the dueling theories?

**Chapter Six: Societies and Social Networks**

*Types of societies, small groups, groups within society, group dynamics.*

**Hoffa** (1992). Jack Nicholson plays Jimmy Hoffa and Danny DiVito plays his right hand man in this convincing re-enactment of the life and presumed death of one of America’s most well known labor leaders. The development of the Teamsters and its tremendous influence are illustrated very well, as is a plausible account of Hoffa’s demise.

**Quigley Down Under** (1990). Matthew Quigley (Tom Selleck) is a world-class marksman who travels from Wyoming to Australia to take on a job of shooting prairie dogs for a rich land baron (Alan Rickman)….so he thinks. Set in the late 1800s, Quigley soon parts ways with his new boss and becomes dependent on a foraging band of aborigines. Several types of societies clash in conflict.

**Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves** (1991). The feudal period is well depicted in this re-make of the famous tale. Kevin Costner leads his band of merry men in their quest to improve the standard of society as he robs from the rich, gives to the poor, and wins the heart of the damsel in distress.

**Teen Wolf** (1985). Scott Howard is an “average” teenager who wishes he could be more than average. In another, “be careful what you wish for” plot, the film illustrates the impact of peer groups, symbolic interactionism, status, roles, and the responsibilities that come with success.

**The Glass House** (1989). *The Glass House* is a gripping and fascinating story of criminals who continue to corrupt and terrorize society even when imprisoned. Alan Alda plays a college professor placed in a maximum-security prison for manslaughter. His adjustment to prison is exceptionally difficult, being caught between the influence of a white gang leader (Vic Morrow) and the leader of the African American inmates (Billy Dee Williams).
**The Gods Must Be Crazy** (1980) and **The God Must Be Crazy II** (1990). Both the original film and its sequel made ten years later are a hilarious but accurate look at life in the African bush. The hunter-gatherers featured in the film are real natives, not real actors.

**The Longest Yard** (1974). On the street, Paul Crew (Burt Reynolds) was a star NFL quarterback admired by men and desired by women. In the penitentiary he’s just another convict until the warden (Eddie Albert) decides his guards’ football team need a “tune-up” game, at which time Crew is pressed into service to deliver an inmate team on a silver platter.

**The Right Stuff** (1983). This award winning film follows America’s space program beginning with Chuck Yeager breaking the sound barrier and concluding with the last of the Mercury missions. The film presents an interesting account of the behavior and motives of the original seven astronauts and how they fought the bureaucracy to become the world’s greatest astronauts.

**The Rocketeer** (1991). The discovery of a top-secret jetpack hurls test pilot Cliff Secord into a daring adventure of mystery, suspense, and intrigue. Cliff encounters an assortment of ruthless villains led by a Hollywood film star who is a Nazi spy (Timothy Dalton). The young naïve Secord battles the Third Reich in this action thriller that transforms an ordinary young man into an extraordinary hero.

**War Games** (1983). This film is a disturbing look at our computerized society and the possible breach of national security, even to the point of nuclear war. Nearly twenty years old, the film illustrates what still persists as a serious threat by those who make it a hobby as well as a career of hacking into “secure” computer systems.

**Witness** (1985). Harrison Ford plays a big city detective and Kelly McGillis an attractive young Amish woman in this detective tale set in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Ford seeks refuge at an Amish farm after being seriously injured by the criminals he is pursuing. As he convalesces he blends into the Amish community as one of its members. Blending in, however, is more difficult than either Ford or McGillis realize as their separate cultural values present numerous adjustment difficulties.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based upon your viewing of (**Quigley Down Under**, **The God’s Must Be Crazy I** or **II**, **Witness**), determine which types of societies are depicted in the film. Is there evidence of the sociocultural evolution in the film that makes societies more complex? Discuss the major aspects of the societies depicted and the divisions of labor that are apparent.

2. How do small group dynamics interface constructively or in conflict with the power of the bureaucracy in any of the films suggested? What are the difficulties faced by the small group as well as the advantages it has?

3. In **Hoffa**, how did Jimmy Hoffa transform his efforts to unite his fellow truck workers from being just a disorganized group of rabble-rousers to one of the most powerful
organizations in the world? What are some of the difficulties a small group must encounter when taking on the bureaucracy? Why did the Teamsters become part of the criminal element?

4. In *Teen Wolf*, what are Scott Howard’s support systems before he discovers “the wolf”? How do these change after he realizes he can control his transformation to the wolf? Listen to the words of the song at the end of the movie and comment on their content.

5. In *The Glass House, The Longest Yard* what are the group dynamics of the prison environment? You should be able to identify at least four major groups. How are these groups similar in their organization but different in their mission? In each case there is evidence of authority de jure and authority defacto. What are they?

Chapter Seven: Bureaucracy and Formal Organizations

*The rationalization of society, formal organizations, the bureaucracy, voluntary associations, work groups.*

*China Syndrome* (1979). This taught thriller looks at an accident at a nuclear power plant and the bureaucratic rush to cover up the incident and keep television coverage out. This tense thriller was released just prior to the Three Mile Island accident, which made art imitate life in what could have been a far greater disaster than it was.

*Citizen X* (1995). A terrific story about the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union and the interference of the KGB in the investigation of a serial killer. A dedicated Russian detective spends eight years pursuing an elusive serial killer who murdered 52 people between 1982 and 1990. The political leaders are convinced the investigation is a lost cause.

*Conspiracy Theory* (1997). Jerry Fletcher (Mel Gibson) is a New York City cab driver and conspiracy buff. He uses an assortment of resources and methods to investigate his personal theories on government activity and publishes them in his own newsletter. One of Jerry’s theories hits too close to revealing a true government conspiracy that results in the efforts of a radical government agency to silence him.

*Falling Down* (1993). Michael Douglas plays a laid-off defense worker who has the ultimate “bad day.” After playing by the rules his entire life in ritualistic fashion, he finally snaps when various members of society obstruct every goal he sets for himself, including a simple matter such as ordering breakfast at a fast-food restaurant. Douglas embarks on a violent crime spree in which he confronts members of the underground, the police, and his own family.

*Payback* (1999). Mel Gibson takes on both the bureaucracy of the law and the bureaucracy of the underworld as he tries to get back what he feels is rightfully his…. $70,000 he and an accomplice stole from the Chinese mob. In this brutal action adventure the audience cheers for the “bad guy” (at least he isn’t as bad as the other characters portrayed).
The Longest Yard (1974). On the street, Paul Crew (Burt Reynolds) was a star NFL quarterback admired by men and desired by women. In the penitentiary he’s just another convict until the warden (Eddie Albert) decides his guards’ football team needs a “tune-up” game, at which time Crew is pressed into service to deliver an inmate team on a silver platter.

The Sting (1973). An old black con-artist (Luther) and his young handsome white partner (Hooker) play a confidence game on the wrong person. It results in the murder of Luther. Hooker recruits the help of a master con man to avenge Luther’s death. With the help of a number of other con-men, Luther’s murder is successfully avenged. The film is a good example of project management and an illustration of the games people play to become successful.

Enemy at the Gates (2001). Enemy at the Gates is a true story about one of the Soviet Union’s most famous heroes in the Battle of Stalingrad and the German officer who opposed him in a daring duel of two men among thousands fighting for their lives. The emphasis of this film is on the bureaucracies each man faces and how they deal with the challenges presented them.

The Patriot (2000). Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson) is The Patriot, a reluctant hero who is swept into the American Revolution when the war reaches his home and threatens his family. Now a man of peace, Martin has already witnessed the horrors of war in the French and Indian conflicts in the prior decade.

Enemy of the State (1998). A Washington DC lawyer (Will Smith) reluctantly takes on the government bureaucracy to save his reputation and family and to avenge the murder of his former paramour. The film provides insight into how big Big Brother can be and the power of the government bureaucracy.

Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. In any of the suggested films, identify and describe the bureaucracy being challenged by the hero and/or heroine of the story. Describe the hero’s or heroine’s dilemma and why it appears they are facing insurmountable odds in their quest. How can you relate to this battle against the bureaucracy as a student or in a job you may hold?

2. In Enemy of the State and Conspiracy Theory, cite the advanced methods the government uses in keeping track of its citizens. When do such methods border unethical and even illegal activity on the part of the government? How are these methods related to the participant-observation model of research?

3. In The Longest Yard, how does the prison satisfy all the qualities of being a total institution? How do the inmates invent alternatives to the prison regulations in an effort to attain any form of individuality and recognition? How does the bureaucracy of prison become a total institution for those working within it and how does it impact upon their own behavior?
4. In any of the films suggested, describe the work groups that are illustrated, how they can share various goals and at the same time have disagreements. For example, in *Citizen X*, what is the conflict within the bureaucracy of the government? In *Enemy at the Gates*, how does the Soviet military leadership control its soldiers (both enlisted men and officers)? In *The Longest Yard*, how do the bureaucracies of the inmate subculture and that of the prison administration and guard force conflict?

5. Consider the role of government as an institution in any of the movies suggested. Discuss the social needs, values, norms, statuses, roles, and groups that make up this institution, using specific characters and scenes from the film to support your observations. In the movie selected, does the bureaucracy reflect a conflict, functionalist, or interactionist perspective?

6. In *Conspiracy Theory*, *Enemy at the Gates*, and *The Longest Yard* what is the value of a bureaucratic government in supporting an institution? What would be the alternatives without the bureaucracy?

Chapter Eight: Deviance and Social Control

*Deviant behavior, theories of deviance, crime, sanctions, stigma.*

*American History X* (1998). This is a hard-hitting drama of a young man seduced into a white supremacy movement in Venice, California. He goes to prison after committing a heinous crime where he re-thinks and modifies his racist ideology. Upon returning to the street, he embarks on a personal crusade to save his younger brother from the same life of hatred and discrimination. This film is frightening, powerful, believable, and intense. It may not be suitable for all audiences.

*American Me* (1992). This sobering film is a powerful and stunning examination of a Latino crime lord set against a backdrop of prejudice and hopelessness. Edward James Olmos stars as Santana, a youth from the streets of East Los Angeles who becomes the leader of the Mexican Mafia behind the gates of Folsom Prison. Santana rules the prison with an iron fist in a vicious cycle of violence. The film is explosive and vivid and not suggested for everyone.

*Animal Factory* (2000). This movie is a compelling drama of prison life. One inmate serving time for a simple marijuana conviction becomes the protégé of the inmate who runs the prison subculture. The film deals with the horrors of life behind bars in a matter-of-fact way. Based on a novel by an ex-con, the movie is directed by Steve Buscemi.

*Casablanca* (1942). A four-star classic with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman in war torn Morocco. Claude Rains plays the dapper police chief. The plot features a group of people trying to get out of Morocco, a beautiful country ripped apart by Gestapo occupation. Once nominated as the best Hollywood movie of all time.
Donnie Brasco (1997). Donnie Brasco was the alias used by Joe Pistone, the most successful undercover agent to infiltrate the New York mob. As Donnie Brasco, this law officer became one of the mob’s most trusted “wise guys.” This film illustrates the values and beliefs held by members of organized crime and how they remarkably differ from those of the mainstream culture.

Ernest Goes to Jail (1990). Ernest P. Worrell (Jim Varney) finds himself in prison as the result of a switch set up by an evil inmate look-alike, also played by Varney. The hokey plot is harmless and predictable but illustrates how society often reacts to who people are and not necessarily what they do.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975). This film is a four-star classic starring Jack Nicholson, Danny DiVito, and Christopher Lloyd as they were establishing themselves as Hollywood icons. In one respect the story is quite disturbing as it portrays a sane convict who is admitted to a mental ward as punishment for being an incorrigible troublemaker. On the other hand, it symbolizes the triumph of a person with no prior medical training who inspires his fellow patients to assert themselves. A frustrated and strong-willed head nurse played by Louise Fletcher becomes Nicholson’s personal nemesis when she realizes she has lost control of her ward. The film won all five top Oscars in 1975.

Pulp Fiction (1994). This film is an audacious look at honor among lowlifes, told in a somewhat radical style overlapping a handful of separate stories. Hit men, corrupt prizefighters, violence, drugs, and sodomy are just some of the issues addressed in the twisting multiple plot classic directed by Quentin Tarantino.

The Fugitive (1993). This remake of a popular series from the 60s depicts a successful doctor (Harrison Ford) wrongfully accused of killing his wife. Escaping from the officers transporting him to prison, the doctor is relentlessly pursued by Tommy Lee Jones who plays a determined U.S. Marshall. A cat and mouse game is initiated between the two strong personalities revealing the true deviants in the plot.

The Green Mile (1999). An elderly man recalls the incident that changed his life in 1935 when he supervised death row at a Louisiana state prison, and encountered a gentle black behemoth with an unusual gift. This is a well-made film with serious moments. The execution scenes can be rather traumatic, however, being as convincingly real as possible. The norms of behavior among the condemned and those who watch over them are well illustrated.

1. Based upon your viewing of (American History X, Animal Factory, American Me, or Donnie Brasco) consider the process by which the main characters become involved in deviant and criminal behavior. Is this behavior the product of learning, operant conditioning, a lack of containment, or failure of self-control? Which theory do you think best accounts for the characters’ thought processes and actions?

2. Pick any of the films and identify the agents of socialization that are illustrated that society uses to curb and correct deviant behavior. Identify the most deviant characters in
the film chosen and explain why these agents failed to work. Why was the influence that replaced the conventional agents more powerful than the conventional ones they replaced?

3. Using Howard Becker’s four typologies of deviants based on the characteristics of the actual act committed and the response by society, choose and defend which of the typologies would best apply to the following characters: Santana in *American Me* (when he was on parole), Willem Dafoe in *Animal Factory*, Johnny Depp in *Donnie Brasco*, Harrison Ford in *The Fugitive*, or Michael Clarke Duncan in *The Green Mile*.

4. Based on your viewing of *Pulp Fiction*, consider the socially endorsed goals pursued by the character played by Bruce Willis, the prizefighter. Do you consider these goals normal and desirable? What specifically happened in the story that interfered with the achievement of these goals? Using Merton’s theory of strain, determine whether the actions of the characters in the film represent conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, or rebellion. Keep in mind there may be more than one mode of adaptation based on the perspective from which each character is viewed.

5. What deviant lifestyles or behaviors do the characters in *Casablanca* represent? Using Merton’s modes of adaptation, classify the main characters and explain why you chose that particular mode.

**Chapter Nine: Global Stratification**

*Systems of stratification, social class, global stratification, colonialism, the culture of poverty.*

*Amistad* (1998). This is an account of the little known Spanish slave ship *La Amistad*, whose “cargo” broke its chains in 1839. The enslaved Africans wind up in a United States courtroom attracting the attention of ex-president John Quincy Adams. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the cast includes Morgan Freeman, Anthony Hopkins, and Matthew McConaughey.

*Angels and Insects* (1995). This fascinating, mature drama, set in Victorian England pairs an impoverished naturalist with a wealthy family. The naturalist falls in love with the wealthy family’s daughter. As the man of science studies the social order of the insect world he becomes more interested in studying the wealthy family that he finds suffering from incredible affectations and dysfunctions he wants no part of.

*Braveheart* (1995). This big booming epic tale of thirteenth-century Scottish rebel warrior William Wallace re-enacts the grass roots resistance to the tyranny of English King Edward I. A gripping personal story grows along with escalating battle scenes. The movie won five Academy Awards including Best Picture.

*Gandhi* (1982). This film is an epic story of India’s great leader Mohandas K. Gandhi. Beginning his career as a simple lawyer, Gandhi rises to power, advocating peace and understanding that would transcend the caste system. Directed by Richard Attenborough, the
movie features a talented international cast including Ben Kingsley, Candice Bergman, Trevor Howard, and Martin Sheen. It won eight Oscars.

Grapes of Wrath (1940). This old classic is unmatched in depicting the poverty experienced by migrants seeking to escape the Oklahoma Dust Bowl of the Depression era. Families travel across country with all they own in hopes of finding a better life in California where they only encounter prejudice and violence.

My Beautiful Launderette (1985). This British film provides an entertaining and perceptive examination of both race relations and the economic state in Britain. It centers on a pair of young friends, Omar (Gordon Warnecke) and Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis), and what happens when they take over a beat-up launderette.

Roots (1977). A ten part series that traces the life of an African youth and subsequent ancestry from the time he is captured and enslaved in America until present day when a descendant returns to the family birthplace. A very gripping and emotional tale that anyone can relate to, regardless of race.

The Mask of Zorro (1998). An aging Zorro passes the mantle of public protector to a younger man, who is reluctant at first, but soon relishes his secret identity with cape and sword. Great swordplay and horse action keeps the viewers’ attention and interest.

The Wild Geese (1978). A band of mercenaries are recruited by the head of English Merchant Banking to snatch a deposed and kidnapped African leader before he is executed by the corrupt dictator who overthrew him. By doing so, the mineral interests of the deposed president’s native country can be exploited. More than just “hired guns” the band of rescuers turn to doing one last moral deed when they are double crossed by the greedy government director who first hired them. The movie provides an interesting case study of several of the actors, revealing each man’s personal reasons for being a merchant of death.

Trading Places (1983) This classic film depicts an argument between two wealthy stockbrokers taken to extremes on the merits of the nature versus nurture controversy. A preppie “have” (Dan Aykroyd) is unknowingly and deceitfully exchanged with a “have-not” (Eddie Murphy). A supportive group of friends and associates help the unknowing subjects of the study take revenge on their experimenters.

Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. Consider the social stratification in Amistad, Braveheart, Roots, or The Wild Geese. Based on the views of Weber and Marx of social class, determine whether the stratification in the movie you chose represents a functionalist or a conflict view of class.

2. After viewing Trading Places, Angels and Insects, The Mask of Zorro, or My Beautiful Launderette, discuss the consequences of being from the lower socio-economic class and
the advantages of being in the upper class. What are the advantages of being from the lower socio-economic class?

3. How does *The Wild Geese* illustrate the neo-colonialism that took place in the late twentieth century and later, even though African countries had been granted their independence? How much difference is there in the stratification levels of the tribes people and their president compared to the stratification differences in the mercenaries, their commanders, and Sir Edward Matherson who financed the raid?

4. After viewing *Trading Places, Angels and Insects,* or *The Mask of Zorro* consider the nature of the social stratification between the individuals or groups of stratified people in the respective films. Are their differences based mostly on power, wealth, prestige, or a combination of these factors? How do the characters of higher status use that status to harass or take advantage of those in the lower classes?

5. How is the plight of the migrants in *The Grapes of Wrath* similar to and different from that of homeless people and migrant workers of the late twentieth century? How do the migrants of the 1930s compare to today’s homeless and migrant workers in respect to the effects of poverty, especially the culture of poverty?

6. Compare the stratification of African Americans in one of the first episodes of *Roots* to how African Americans are portrayed in one of the last episodes.

Chapter Ten: Social Class in the United States

*Social class, wealth and power, consequences of class, social mobility, poverty, welfare reform.*

*Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986). Rescued from drowning in the swimming pool of a *nouveau riche* neurotic Beverly Hills couple (Richard Dreyfuss and Bette Midler), a disconsolate bum (Nick Nolte) brings startling changes to the entire household. While doing so, Dreyfuss and Midler change their attitudes towards the poor.

*For Richer or Poorer* (1997). Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley play crass, filthy-rich New Yorkers whose marriage is on the rocks. Forced to take their lives on the lam when accused of tax fraud, the couple hides out on an Amish farm in Pennsylvania pretending to be the cousins of the Amishman who takes them in. Spoiled and lazy, they are forced to do hard, honest work and actually come to like it.

*Gone with the Wind* (1939). Perhaps the most famous movie of all time, *Gone with the Wind* presents a number of cultures in conflict…political, economic, social, and racial. An examination of this classic epic helps the viewer gain insight into understanding the social and political differences that exist today in these same areas.

*Hoodlum* (1997). The story of Harlem racketeer Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson as he rises from bagman to boss in a toe to toe battle with Dutch Schultz and Lucky Luciano. This is a well-
crafted multi-character gangster flick that presents three distinct levels of evil as the personal styles of Johnson, Schultz, and Luciano are closely examined.

**Mr. Destiny** (1990). James Belushi plays an average and bored salesman in a sports equipment company and Linda Hamilton his loyal and dedicated wife. Belushi blames his mediocrity in life on the fact that he struck out to end his high school state championship baseball game. In a plot reminiscent of *It’s a Wonderful Life*, Belushi’s life changes dramatically after he is granted a taste of what would have happened if he hit in the winning run.

**Original Gangstas** (1996). A comfortable blue-collar neighborhood is turned into an urban battleground when street gangs become the dominant force in a survival of the fittest environment. The decline of the city is caused by the loss of the steel industry. The plot is a bit far fetched in regards to its plausibility and execution. But, the background used, which includes the dismantling of America’s steel industry, the rise of urban violence, and breakdown of family values, is a sobering account of conditions in certain sections of the inner city.

**Salaam Bombay!** (1988). This Indian-British produced film is a disturbing account of a young country boy, Syed. Along with other abandoned street children like him, he literally works for pennies doing almost anything to survive…delivering teas, serving at weddings, and even dealing drugs. The horror of the street is surpassed by the conditions within the juvenile institution for delinquents (The Chiller Room) where many of the children are eventually sent.

**The Beverly Hillbillies** (1993). The big screen rehash of the corny 1960s TV series with the backwoods Clampett clan striking oil and moving to Beverly Hills. Although this movie version was rated less favorably than the small screen counterpart, it still provides a clash of cultures when the happy but poor Clampetts are transformed to the rich but confused residents of Beverly Hills.

**The Grapes of Wrath** (1940). This old classic is unmatched in depicting the poverty experienced by migrants seeking to escape the Oklahoma Dust Bowl of the Depression era. Families travel across country with all they own in hopes of finding a better life in California where they only encounter prejudice and violence.

**With Honors** (1994). A preppy student played by Brendan Fraser discovers a homeless man (Joe Pesci) living in the university library’s boiler room. In a halfhearted effort to help the man, the preppie student gains an understanding about the political nature of poverty and what is truly important in life.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based on your viewing of *Salaam Bombay!*, discuss the relationship between poverty and homelessness among the street children of Bombay. How do the children end up in the streets? Where are their parents? Describe the environment of “The Chiller Room” where orphaned and homeless children are sent. Is this institution preferable to the children living on the street?
2. After viewing one of the movies that depicts the truly disadvantaged poor (*Down and Out in Beverly Hills, With Honors, Original Gangstas, Hoodlum, or The Grapes of Wrath*), describe the cultural context in which the poor live. What are their norms, values, beliefs, and mores? What are some of the material culture items on which they depend? How are their attitudes and beliefs different as well as similar to the more wealthy members of society they are compared to in the movie used?

3. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the migrants have lost almost everything they own and are truly disadvantaged. How is their plight similar to and different from that of people born into poverty in the inner city and other environments?

4. After viewing one of the movies depicting poverty from the lighter side (*Down and Out in Beverly Hills, The Beverly Hillbillies, With Honors, For Richer or Poorer*), discuss how the rich and the poor are stereotyped by members of society. In any of these films, discuss social mobility and how the characters originally portrayed as being poor were transformed to the upper class and vice-versa.

5. After viewing *Gone with the Wind*, describe the consequences of class. How does Rhett Butler overcome adversity without actually being wealthy? What are some of the qualities displayed by the characters in the film that transcend the power and prestige of wealth? You may use other films to answer this last question.

Chapter Eleven: Sex and Gender

*Biology vs. culture, sex typing, sex discrimination, gender inequality, gender and violence.*

*A League of Their Own* (1992). Penny Marshall directs this comedy that has sporadic hints of the sobering reality of the time in which the film is set. A women’s baseball league springs up in the midst of World War II due to the lack of male participants because of the war. Although fiction, the film sheds light on a neglected chapter of real life sports history. The characters are played by some of Hollywood’s best talent who blend well with other well-known celebrities, such as Rosie O’Donnell and Madonna, who make major contributions to the film.

*All of Me* (1984). The soul and spirit of a crotchety millionairess (Lilly Tomlin) enters the body of a young, idealistic lawyer (Steve Martin). The film creatively depicts issues of gender differentiation and conflict while attempting to show a level of possible coexistence.

*Flashdance* (1983). Bright lights and glittering images, high energy, and an upbeat musical score will appeal to younger viewers as the plot of this film follows the life of an attractive and petite young lady in Pittsburgh, PA. Torn between two vocational interests, “Alex” (Jennifer Beals) takes a job as a welder in Pittsburgh’s steel industry by day. But she also works as an exotic dancer at night. To make matters even more complicated, she has attracted the courtship of her rich and handsome boss.
**The Ballad of Little Jo** (1993). A genteel young woman in 1866 who has a child out of wedlock flees to the American West and quickly learns that the only way to survive on her own is to do it as a man. She runs her own ranch as a man and makes the best of what would have been an impossible situation as a woman.

**The Burning Bed** (1984). This true story shows the plight of a poor battered wife, who because of her poverty and children is economically unable to leave her husband. In her desperation she kills him by setting him afire, following an episode of beating and humiliation, in order to escape her horrid circumstances. The movie was one of the highest rated TV movies of all time. Farrah Fawcett was nominated for an Emmy award for her portrayal of the battered woman.

**The Crying Game** (1992). An IRA volunteer helps capture a British soldier only to befriend him. Killed in a freak accident after escaping execution, the soldier makes a request of his IRA adversary to break the news of his death to his girlfriend. A complicated tale of romance and plot twists ensue, including the revelation that the girlfriend of the deceased soldier is really a man. The film moves quickly, sparked by periods of the development of this unusual romance and well planned action scenes. The film offers incisive perspective on one man’s struggle to accept that his affections are toward a person and not a gender.

**Thelma and Louise** (1991). This is a road trip for the girls as female friends (Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis) leave responsibility, husband, and boyfriend behind to take a short weekend get-a-way. An unexpected incident turns them into fugitives from the law. Harvey Keitel plays the dominating husband of Davis and Brad Pitt makes his film debut in a short, but significant, part. The film won an Oscar for its feminist script.

**Three Men and a Baby** (1987). Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson are three swinging bachelor roommates who suddenly find themselves custodians of an infant. The abandoned baby turns the three bachelors from career-minded egomaniacs into cooing father-figures who don’t want to give up “their” baby when called upon to do so. Directed by Leonard Nimoy, the film makes men appreciate the responsibilities and joys of child rearing and sheds light on the increasing popularity of active fatherhood.

**Tomorrow Never Dies** (1997). In his second portrayal of Agent 007, Pierce Brosnan is cast with three powerful women. Judy Dench plays “M”, director of MI-6 (British intelligence and head of the double-O section); Terri Hatcher plays the “Bond-girl,” a former love interest who is now married to villain Jonathan Pryce; and Michelle Yeoh plays Wai Lin, a crafty and lethal Chinese agent who is Bond’s equal. Without compromising any of the action, gadgetry, or Bond-wit, the addition of the multi-dimensional supporting cast of women adds a new dimension to the series.

**What Women Want** (2000). Mel Gibson plays a cocky, chauvinistic ad agency executive who magically acquires the ability to hear what women are thinking. He puts this talent to especially good use when someone else (Helen Hunt) is chosen for a promotion he was in line to receive. The film pokes fun at many stereotypes men hold of women but has the potential to be transformed into a good training aid for gender relations. When regarded as purely entertainment the movie is spontaneous and likable by audiences of both sexes.
Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. Based upon your viewing of *The Ballad of Little Jo*, consider the reasons why a woman might wish to disguise herself as a man for her entire adult life. What does this true story tell us about the differences between men and women? Are they based on physical differences or socially imposed expectations of behavior? Consider the options Little Jo would have had for survival if she retained her identity as a woman.

2. While viewing *The Crying Game*, stop the film at the point where the IRA volunteer discovers his new found love interest is actually a man. If you can assume such a startling realization in your own life, what do you think your initial reaction would be followed by your secondary reaction after dealing with the ramifications of the event? How significant are social norms in our choice of friends and lovers?

3. Present a profile of the three separate and distinct personalities of the women characters in *Tomorrow Never Dies*. How does “M” adopt her former counterpart’s “male” characteristics in order to be an effective director of an intelligence agency? Could she be as effective in this role if she were more glamorous and seductive, as portrayed by Terri Hatcher? How is Michel Yeoh a composite of the other two characters?

4. Based upon your viewing of any of the films suggested, consider the importance of gender roles in everyday interaction. To what extent do the concepts of femininity and masculinity prevail in our conversations, actions, dress, and behavior when we interact with others? What traits are traditionally considered “feminine” and “masculine”? Are some jobs best reserved for women because of their “feminine” traits (such as child rearing) while other jobs are best reserved for males because of their “masculine” capabilities (such as secret agent)? Defend your answer based on a more detailed analysis than that which is presented in any of the films.

5. Compare the plight of the women athletes in *A League of Their Own* to that of women athletes competing in sports today. What factors have changed? What has remained the same?

6. In *What Women Want*, Mel Gibson has a fascinating gift. How did this gift impact his effectiveness? What are some of the drawbacks to being able to read minds? If you had such an opportunity, would you accept it if a condition of its acceptance was that the gift was irreversible? Why or why not?

7. In *Flashdance*, how does the main character (Jennifer Beals) serve as a symbol that reinforces as well as contradicts the paradigms of the feminist movement? What is significantly different about the manner in which she conducts herself as an exotic dancer and how some of her fellow dancers behave?
Chapter Twelve: Race and Ethnicity

*Racial and ethnic groups, minority groups, theories of prejudice, intergroup relations.*

**American Me** (1992). Edward James Olmos directs and stars in this bone chilling account of the Mexican Mafia. It traces thirty years in the life of an East Los Angeles Latino family, spotlighting the life of Santana (Olmos) who rises from street delinquent to crime lord. Violence extends to all aspects of Santana’s life, especially during his sentence in a California prison. When Santana finally finds his soul he discovers it is too late. The film is quite graphic and may be offensive to some viewers.

**Amistad** (1998). This is an account of the little known Spanish slave ship *La Amistad*, whose “cargo” broke its chains in 1839. The enslaved Africans wind up in a United States courtroom attracting the attention of ex-president John Quincy Adams. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the cast includes Morgan Freeman, Anthony Hopkins, and Matthew McConaughey.

**Blazing Saddles** (1974). Mel Brooks points the finger of satire at those who take advantage of others through discrimination, profiling, and stereotypes. This saga of cowboys and imbeciles was billed as a “riotous Western spoof” and considered to be Brooks’ most successful comedy. A closer inspection of the film illustrates the insensitivity of the dominant culture and some of the ugliness in society. If not for the cast of established comedians, and the brilliant ability of Brooks as a writer and director, the film could have been considered insulting to certain groups.

**Geronimo: An American Legend** (1993). An account of the legendary Apache leader and the Army’s attempt to subjugate this proud Native American tribe. The violence and racism experienced by this tribe and their often ignored culture are well documented.

**Hoodlum** (1997). The story of Harlem racketeer Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson as he rises from bagman to boss in a toe to toe battle with Dutch Schultz and Lucky Luciano. Racism within organized crime adds additional emotion to the stirring tale. This well-crafted multi-character gangster flick presents three distinct levels of evil as the personal styles of Johnson, Schultz, and Luciano are closely examined.

**Kung Fu** (1971). The Karate focus of this movie gives it notoriety and capitalizes on the popularity of martial arts. Beneath the kicks and thrusts is a story of racism, hatred and mistreatment as told through the life of Kwi Chan Kane, a young Buddhist monk traveling through the American West in the late 1800s.

**Malcolm X** (1992). Spike Lee directs Denzel Washington and Angela Bassett in this moving biography of black activist Malcolm “X” Shabaz. Lee traces Shabaz’s life as he goes through a series of changes from street hustler to prison inmate to religious convert as he ascends to national leadership while preaching the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. The film is considered to be an excellent portrait of a controversial leader who was eventually assassinated by one of his own followers.
Men of Honor (2000). Robert DiNero plays a gutsy redneck diving instructor and Cuba Gooding Jr. portrays Carl Brashear, the first African-American to become a Navy diver in the 1950s. The film takes a number of Hollywood liberties in the screen version of Brashear’s true-life biography, but vividly illustrates the seemingly insurmountable barriers he had to overcome to enter this elite group of servicemen.

Quigley Down Under (1990). Matthew Quigley (Tom Selleck) is a world-class marksman who travels from Wyoming to Australia to take on a job of shooting prairie dogs for a despotic and rich land baron (Alan Rickman)….so he thinks. Set in the late 1800s, Quigley soon parts ways with his new boss and becomes dependent on a foraging band of aborigines. Several types of societies clash in conflict and others work effectively together to succeed in a common cause.

Remember the Titans (2000). A black man (Denzel Washington) is chosen to replace a highly respected white coach (Will Patton) when two segregated schools merge in the early 1970s. Initially each coach is somewhat distrustful of the other but recognize and accept the need to break down the racial barriers that exist between them as well as between their players. Through teamwork and sacrifice, the team and its coaches form a strong bond that transcends racial differences. Based on a true story, Washington and Patton each contribute a stellar performance.

The Tuskegee Airmen (1995). Laurence Fishburne, Malcolm-Jamal Warner, and Cuba Gooding Jr. overcome racism and bigoted officers assigned to oversee them as they become members of the “Fighting 99th”, the first squadron of Black combat fighters in World War II. After battling prejudice on the home front to earn their wings, members of the squadron discover they must continue to fight prejudice and discrimination as well as the Luftwaffa when they get to Europe.

Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. Based on your viewing of American Me, consider the history of Latin-Americans in our country. What is the difference between a Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, Mexican, or Spanish person? Is the difference more significant from an ethnic or cultural perspective? Do the features of Latin-American culture (food, music, dress, language) make people of Latin descent more or less prone to prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination? Does strong ethnic identity give power to Latin races? Explain.

2. After viewing American Me and Hoodlum compare and contrast the stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination practiced against Latinos and African-Americans by the dominant culture as well as the legal authorities. How does the underworld abuse its own people? What, if any, benefit or protection does a minority have in doing business with a crime family of its own racial or ethnic background?

3. In Blazing Saddles, what are some of the various stereotypes Brooks uses in an effort to exploit racial profiling for the sake of humor? Do you find this technique acceptable as a method of entertainment? As you watched the film, which incidents could you relate to as having acted in a similar manner during a weak moment and what stereotypes have you
accepted when it was convenient? Is there a case to be made for the film being insensitive to African Americans and other minority groups? Defend your answer.

4. Based upon your viewing of Kung Fu, consider the role of Asian Americans in the history of the United States. If it is a disservice to group all Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, etc.) races and cultures together under one category, why do so many non-Asians do so? Why are Asian-Americans subjected to more positive stereotypes (being called the ‘model minority,’ studious, hard working) than other minorities?

5. After viewing Geronimo: An American Legend, consider the history of the treatment of Native Americans. Examine the evidence that suggests native “Indians” have been the most neglected, maltreated, violated, and exploited race in American history. Make a comparison between the atrocities dealt Native Americans and those dealt to African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latino-Americans. Can this maltreatment be rectified? If so, how?

6. In Tuskegee Airmen the army air cadets make the transition to fighter pilots rather quickly, but in Men of Honor it takes Carl Brashear years just to get accepted to divers’ school. Why? Is there some similar significance to the fact that none of the first seven Mercury astronauts were African-American and that it was years before an African-American ventured into space?

Chapter Thirteen: The Elderly

Aging, the graying of America, meaning of age, theories of aging, problems and dependency.

Big (1988). Be careful what you wish for! At a carnival, 12-year old Josh Baskin (Tom Hanks) wishes he was big, only to discover the next morning that he is! Transformed to a 30-year old body but maintaining his 12-year old mind poses many problems Josh never expected.

Grumpy Old Men (1993). Jack Lemmon, Walter Matthau, and Burgess Meredith are grumpy old men who are mellowed by the warmth of Ann-Margaret. Lemmon and Matthau are two mateless Minnesota retirees and rabid ice fishermen whose lifelong feud escalates when an attractive widow (Ann-Margaret) moves in across the street.

Grumpier Old Men (1996). Sophia Loren joins Ann-Margaret and the grumpy duo of Lemmon and Matthau in the sequel. Now reconciled, the longtime neighbors/nemeses argue over their offsprings’ pending wedding while a new arrival in town (Loren) turns their bait shop into a restaurant. Since Lemmon got the girl in the original, it’s Matthau’s turn to be the focus of a love interest.

Nobody’s Fool (1994). A picaresque look at a small-town gentleman (Paul Newman) who never seems to make the right choices in life. Beneath his loser image is a methodical and street-smart
survivor. The film addresses Newman’s efforts to find himself and improve his relationship with his estranged son while battling his friendly nemesis played by Bruce Willis.

**On Golden Pond** (1981). Henry Fonda plays a brilliant but crotchety retired professor angry to be 80 years old and afraid of losing his faculties. Katharine Hepburn is his devoted and all-knowing wife and Jane Fonda plays their alienated daughter. Conflicts and reconciliation take place among the three. This was Henry Fonda’s last feature prior to his death. He won an Oscar for best actor, as did Hepburn for best actress.

**Peggy Sue Got Married** (1986). A 43-year-old woman on the verge of divorce magically travels back in time to her senior year in high school and has to deal with (among other things) her boyfriend and future husband. She doesn’t lose her mentality, however, in a plot that is opposite that of *Big*. A young cast of future stars includes Kathleen Turner, Nicholas Cage, Jim Carrey, and Helen Hunt.

**Space Cowboys** (2000). Clint Eastwood, Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Sutherland, and James Garner are test pilots left over from the late 50s who never made it into the astronaut program. Regretting it ever since then, they find that fate takes a turn their way when NASA is forced to recruit them to repair a Russian satellite built with now obsolete technology only they can comprehend. Directed by Clint Eastwood the plot is barely believable. But the movie holds the viewers’ interest with quirks about the four-some’s age, feuds within the members of the team, and twists in the plot that require fast thinking, innovative problem solving, and the courage that is synonymous with having “the right stuff.”

**The Crew** (2000). Four retired senior citizens (Richard Dreyfuss, Burt Reynolds, Seymour Cassel, and Dan Hedaya) are living in Miami but yearn to relive their glory days when they were wise guys for the New Jersey mob. Bingo and ballroom dancing don’t provide the spice of highjackings and kidnappings. Life heats up when the group unexpectedly runs afoul of a Latino drug lord.

**The Graduate** (1967). Dustin Hoffman plays a spoiled young man who is as naïve as he is pampered. His entrance into adulthood is complicated when he is seduced by an older woman then falls in love with her daughter. The girlfriend, however, agrees to marry someone else. This movie marked Hoffman’s first major film role.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Consider the sociological aspects of aging as depicted by Fonda and Hepburn in *On Golden Pond*. Give specific examples from the movie that indicate the physical, psychological, and social aspects of aging. How does aging at the time this film is set differ from aging in the nineteenth century?

2. Consider the character played by Hoffman in *The Graduate*. What are some of the rites of passage through which he must pass as he enters the responsibility of adulthood? Which of these is marked by formal ceremony, which are symptomatic of age, and which are psychological transitions into a new stage in life?
3. Compare and contrast the plots of *Big* and *Peggy Sue Got Married*. How are they alike as well as different? What is the importance of each character retaining their mental state prior to their initial transformation (Hanks as a 10 year-old turned 30 and Turner as a 43 year-old married woman who becomes 17 again)?

4. In *Space Cowboys* and *The Crew*, to what references to ageism does each movie refer? What insults, slurs, and accusations are directed at the “senior citizens” by younger members in each cast? How do they respond to these zingers? How does each of these movies illustrate age to be a social construct? In *Space Cowboys*, how did the difficulties faced by Eastwood, Jones, Sutherland, and Garner compare to those faced by John Glenn when he became the oldest space traveler?

5. In *Grumpy Old Men* and *Grumpier Old Men* how is age illustrated as being a social construct? What can be said about the male characters “acting their age”? What are the realizations they must face regarding their mortality? How are they reminded of it, and how do they deal with it?

Chapter Fourteen: The Economy

*The industrial society, world economic systems, capitalism, socialism, mediums of exchange.*

*Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986). Rescued from drowning in the swimming pool of a *nouveau riche* neurotic Beverly Hills couple (Richard Dreyfuss and Bette Midler), a disconsolate bum (Nick Nolte) brings startling changes to the entire household. While doing so, Dreyfuss and Midler change their attitudes towards the poor.

*Enemy at the Gates* (2001). A Russian sharpshooter is built up to be a hero to bolster his country’s morale during the intense days of the Battle of Stalingrad. As a result, the Germans send their top marksman (Ed Harris) to pick him off, leading to a deadly battle of wits. The background in which the story is set illustrates the different socio-economic classes of the characters and the impact of total government control on the people. Based on a true story, there is a degree of Hollywood that compromises the film’s historical value.

*Hoffa* (1992). Jack Nicholson plays Jimmy Hoffa and Danny DiVito plays his right hand man in this convincing re-enactment of the life and presumed death of one of America’s most well known labor leaders. The development of the Teamsters and its tremendous influence are illustrated very well, as is a plausible account of Hoffa’s demise.

*Flashdance* (1983). Bright lights and glittering images, high energy, and an upbeat musical score will appeal to younger viewers as the plot of this film follows the life of an attractive and petite young lady in Pittsburgh, PA. Torn between two vocational interests, “Alex” (Jennifer Beals) takes a job as a welder in Pittsburgh’s steel industry by day. But she also works as an exotic
dancer at night. To make matters even more complicated, she has attracted the courtship of her rich and handsome boss.

*Norma Rae* (1979). Sally Field plays a real-life Southern textile worker who organizes factory workers into unionization. The factory’s environment includes a number of intolerable conditions. Her mother has gone deaf from the machinery noise, which is just one example. Field won an Oscar for her performance.

*Original Gangstas* (1996). A comfortable blue-collar neighborhood is turned into an urban battleground when street gangs become the dominant force in a survival of the fittest environment. The decline of the city is caused by the loss of the steel industry. Although the plot is a bit far fetched in regards to its plausibility and execution, the background used that includes the dismantling of America’s steel industry, the rise of urban violence, and breakdown of family values is a sobering view of conditions in certain sections of the inner city.

*Pulp Fiction* (1994). This film is an audacious look at honor among lowlifes, told in a somewhat radical style overlapping a handful of separate stories. Hit men, corrupt prizefighters, violence, drugs, and sodomy are just some of the issues addressed in the twisting, multiple plot classic directed by Quentin Tarantino.

*Roger and Me* (1989). This funny, but incisive documentary depicts the lives of laid-off auto industry workers in Flint, Michigan, and the transformation of a solid working class town into a ghetto. The director relentlessly interviews people being evicted, the sheriff who evicts them, the desperate “rabbit lady” who raises bunnies for pelts and meat, all in an attempt to meet the Chairman of General Motors to ask him how such a thing could happen.

*The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). This old classic is unmatched in depicting the poverty experienced by migrants seeking to escape the Oklahoma Dust Bowl of the Depression era. Families travel across country with all they own in hopes of finding a better life in California where they only encounter prejudice and violence.

*Traffic* (2000). The film is an absorbing look at the U.S./Mexico drug scene from several points of view: battle hardened cops on both sides of the border, the unsuspecting wife of a wealthy drug lord, disaffected teenagers who seek escape, and the man who has just been named America’s drug czar.

*Wall Street* (1987). A young stockholder seeks the mentorship of a famous financier, and resorts to double-dealing and insider trading in an effort to strike it rich on Wall Street. Symbolically, the young aspiring stockholder sells his soul to pursue wealth. Michael Douglas won an Oscar as the famous financier. Being directed by Oliver Stone helps add to the film’s controversial plot.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based upon your viewing of *Roger and Me* consider the realities of working in a capitalist economy. What is the importance of market demands, foreign competition, and
profit margins as they relate to the decision to order massive layoffs? Should General Motors be responsible for the people who devoted their lives to the company, only to be left destitute and homeless? Based on the information in your textbook and other sources, do you think the same situation could happen in Japan? Why or why not?

2. After watching *Down and Out in Beverly Hills, Original Gangstas, Hoodlum,* or *The Grapes of Wrath,* describe the cultural context in which the poor live. What are their norms, values, beliefs, and mores? What are some of the material culture items on which they depend? How are their attitudes and beliefs different as well as similar to the more wealthy members of society they are compared to in the movie used?

3. In *The Grapes of Wrath,* the migrants have lost almost everything they own and are truly disadvantaged. How is their plight similar to and different from that of people born into poverty in the inner city and other environments? Does the “culture of poverty” as defined by Oscar Lewis apply to the disadvantaged migrants in this film? Why or why not?

4. In *Flashdance,* why does “Alex” work two jobs, one as a welder and one as an exotic dancer? How does her choice of dual vocations differ from that of her friends who also work as dancers?

5. How does the subculture of the lowlifes in *Pulp Fiction* compare to the subculture of the stockbrokers and financiers in *Wall Street?* Which group would you personally feel safer dealing with if you were required to?

6. In *Enemy at the Gates,* why does the German army have the initial advantage at the Battle of Stalingrad only to lose it to the much less prepared and poorly armed Soviet forces? What are some elements of industrialization that impacted the failure of the German army and the success of the Soviets?

7. What are the similarities and differences in the reasons drugs are so popular in *Traffic,* which is set in Mexico, and *Original Gangstas,* which is set in an American inner city? What are the values, beliefs, norms, and mores shared by the general public regarding the drug industry and its use in Mexico compared to the values, beliefs, norms, and mores shared by the general public in the United States?

8. After viewing *Norma Rae* and *Hoffa,* what were the alternatives available to Norma Rae if she did not organize the textile workers? How do her efforts compare and contrast to the efforts of Jimmy Hoffa in organizing the teamsters?

Chapter Fifteen: Politics

*Power and authority, types of government, the U.S. political system, war and terrorism.*
**All Quiet on the Western Front** (1930). Lew Ayers and his classmates are naïve schoolboys overcome by the hype of their schoolmaster to join the German army in WWI and proudly serve their homeland. The story that unfolds is moving and vivid, serving as a master example of why we should “give peace a chance.” Made over 70 years ago and depicting a war that began nearly a century ago, *All Quiet on the Western Front* has not lost its power or poignancy in driving its point home on the horrors of war. The film won an Oscar for Best Picture in 1930.

**Bullworth** (1998). Warren Beatty directs and stars in this audacious political satire about a California Senator running for re-election in 1996. He solves his personal crisis of conscience by telling the truth that embraces his constituency. The movie is unsettling at times with trenchant observations on the political process and the plight of the poor.

**Casablanca** (1942). A four-star classic starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman set in war torn Morocco. Claude Rains plays the dapper police chief. The plot features a group of people trying to get out of Morocco, a beautiful country ripped apart by Gestapo occupation. Once nominated as the best Hollywood movie of all time.

**Conspiracy Theory** (1997). Jerry Fletcher (Mel Gibson) is a New York City cab driver and conspiracy buff. He uses an assortment of resources and methods to investigate his personal theories on government activity and publishes them in his own newsletter. One of Jerry’s theories hits too close to revealing a true government conspiracy that results in the efforts of a radical government agency to silence him.

**Crimson Tide** (1995). Produced and directed by the same duo that brought *Top Gun* to the silver screen, the two Hollywood masters take their talents beneath the sea in a macho power-play saga aboard a Navy nuclear submarine. Tensions run high when the United States is pushed to the brink of war with Russia, especially when veteran submarine commander (Gene Hackman) starts showing “Captain Queeg” tendencies and his new lieutenant (Denzel Washington) tries to assert himself. The film vividly illustrates a “what if” scenario and raises the question of how plausible is the plot.

**Dr. Strangelove** (1964). Directed by Stanley Kubrick, this British made picture uses a wide range of American talent including George C. Scott, James Earl Jones, and Slim Pickens. A fanatical general launches a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union. The plot appears to be foiled and order is restored, except SAC can’t account for one B-52, piloted by Slim Pickens. The black humor of the plot can be quite sobering, especially because the Soviets once discussed the potential to build such a “Doomsday Device” as depicted in the film.

**Enemy of the State** (1998). A Washington DC lawyer (Will Smith) reluctantly takes on the government bureaucracy to save his reputation and family and to avenge the murder of his former paramour. The film provides insight into how big Big Brother can be and the power of the government bureaucracy.

**JFK** (1991). Directed by Oliver Stone, the film takes a number of liberties in suggesting conspiracy theories to explain the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Presented as an account of New Orleans District Attorney James Garrison’s obsession with the assassination,
Stone may have gone too far in planting facts to support his theories. Not be confused with being a documentary, the film certainly presents the core of the sociological imagination in suggesting all Americans continue to “ask questions and question answers” regarding the tragic death of this beloved president.

**Rules of Engagement** (2000). Tommy Lee Jones is a retiring Marine Corps lawyer and Samuel L. Jackson a dedicated line officer facing a general court martial and possible life in prison. After leading a squad of combat Marines to save the family of America’s ambassador to a Middle Eastern country, Jackson is made a scapegoat of the system. The focus of the film is the honesty of government officials more than the courtroom skills of Jones.

**The Day of the Jackal** (1973). A hired professional assassin stalks Charles De Gaulle as his next victim. The movie almost qualifies as a “how to” film as it shows the painstaking detail the assassin goes through to complete his mission.

**The Jackal** (1997). A remake of the 1973 version (**The Day of the Jackal**) finds Bruce Willis as the inventive and treacherous assassin. Although the basic plot is the same, the specifics of who’s the target and how he will meet his demise is radically different. Richard Gere and Sidney Poitier help this version move more quickly than the original. A message in this version addresses the difficulties government agents face in successfully protecting political celebrities and how anyone may be successful prey if the assassin is willing to sacrifice himself.

**The Patriot** (2000). Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson) is *The Patriot*, a reluctant hero who is swept into the American Revolution when the war reaches his home and threatens his family. Now a man of peace, Martin has already witnessed the horrors of war in the French and Indian conflicts in the prior decade.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. After viewing *Conspiracy Theory, Enemy of the State, JFK*, or **Rules of Engagement** describe how the government compromises the rights of private citizens as well as those who work for the government in various agencies or the military. How does this violate the Constitution and if, in fact, it does violate the Constitution why are these practices permitted to continue? Is there a greater good that excuses or even necessitates violating the individual rights of some for the good of the greater number?

2. How does *All Quiet on the Western Front* serve as a model for pacifists and peace movements? Even though the movie was made over 70 years ago and lacked the computerized special effects in today’s films, why is it still so successful in driving the anti-war message home? Even though many people hail the film as a being a boost to peace movements, does it also convey the message there are issues worth fighting for? Defend your answer. How can this film be compared to the anti-war movement against the Vietnam conflict in the late 1960s?
3. Compare **Bullworth** to the presidency of William Jefferson Clinton. How do you think the scandals that plagued Clinton would have turned out if he actually told the truth (or at least what many people believe to have been the truth)?

4. In **Dr. Strangelove**, how does the possibility of mutually assured destruction affect the Americans and the Soviets? What are the ideologies presented by each government in response to that possibility? Is Slim Pickens obsessed with completing his mission or just dropping his nuclear bomb? How does **Crimson Tide** compare to Dr. Strangelove in motive and plot? Why is the captain of the *Alabama* stopped from delivering his nuclear weapons but Slim Pickens succeeds?

5. How does **The Patriot** compare to **All Quiet on the Western Front** in respect to the reasons each group goes to war? What are the underlying reasons why each group chose war as the option to deal with their situation?

**Chapter 16: The Family**

*MARRIAGE, FAMILY, COURTSHIP, CHILD REARING, DIVERSITY IN U.S. FAMILIES, FAMILY TRENDS, DIVORCE.*

**A Night at the Roxbury** (1998). They’re corny and uncoordinated brothers who cruise the hottest nightspots looking for good times and fast babes. They’re the Butabi Brothers played by Will Farrell and Chris Kattan of *Saturday Night Live* in their first feature film. Molly Shannon, another *SNL* standout, plays a presumed love interest of Farrell. Shannon breaks the brothers’ bond as she cleverly woos Farrell into matrimony. Although zany and predictable, the story carries a few lessons to illustrate endogamy and courtship.

**Big** (1988). Be careful what you wish for! At a carnival, 12-year old Josh Baskin (Tom Hanks) wishes he was big, only to discover the next morning that he is! Transformed into a 30-year old body but maintaining his 12-year old mind poses many problems Josh never expected. The importance of family becomes clearer as Josh gets further committed to his new lifestyle.

**ET: The Extra-Terrestrial** (1988). A young Drew Barrymore and Henry Thomas befriend a visitor from another planet in this four-star classic. After being stranded by his crew, the alien creature finds acceptance and love among the children who hide and protect him from the authorities. A bond develops that brings the entire family closer together.

**Father Goose** (1964). This 1964 film stars Cary Grant and Leslie Caron. Grant is a recluse coast watcher on a South Seas island who finds himself providing for a band of schoolgirls fleeing the Japanese. Caron, who serves as the girls’ guardian, is initially at odds with Grant over a host of issues. But eventually they win each other’s trust.

**Home Alone** (1990). An eight year-old boy is left home by mistake as the family takes a Christmas vacation to France. The crafty and innovative lad fends off bumbling burglars who have earmarked his home for invasion. In the process of defending his turf, he brings aid and
comfort to an older misunderstood gentleman in the neighborhood with family problems of his own. The film illustrates that what initially appears to be a dysfunctional family is more “normal” than expected.

**Home Alone 2** (1993). The sequel to the original takes Macaulay Culkin to New York City as his family again flies off to France. Culkin finds himself battling the same two crooks that attacked him back home, but this time it’s in New York’s Plaza Hotel. More violent than the original, the yarn still emphasizes family bond and a mother’s unconditional love.

**Indecent Proposal** (1993). Robert Redford is a wealthy multi-millionaire who offers one million dollars to a financially struggling couple to sleep with the beautiful wife (Demi Moore). The husband (Woody Harrelson) regrets the decision after agreeing to the deal and the marriage is wrecked.

**Life Is Beautiful** (1998). Guido (Roberto Benigni) is a charming, but bumbling waiter who is gifted with a colorful imagination and an irresistible sense of humor. He has won the heart of a woman he loves and created a beautiful life for his young family. But then, that life is threatened by World War II. Guido then relies upon the same strengths that made his family possible to save it from an unthinkable fate.

**Meet the Parents** (2000). A male nurse (Ben Stiller) meets his girlfriend’s parents to ask the father (Robert DiNero) for her hand in marriage. A combination of stress and bad timing combined with the overly protective fatherly instincts of DiNero turns the good intentions of Stiller into one disaster after another.

**Mrs. Doubtfire** (1993). Robin Williams is a frustrated husband divorced by his wife (Sally Field) after 14 years of marriage. In order to gain access to his children he masquerades as a nanny and persuades the unsuspecting wife to hire him. Lessons can be learned about family role and gender.

**One True Thing** (1998). Renee Zellweger is forced to temporarily move back home with her parents (Meryl Streep and William Hurt). The mother becomes terminally ill and in the process of preparing for her loss, Zellweger learns to appreciate her mother’s dedication and talents. At the same time she re-evaluates the qualities of her father, whom she always admired. Excellent acting makes this a rather fast moving and believable drama.

**Ordinary People** (1980). This is a highly recommended story of an affluent family that is torn apart after the suicide of the elder son. It is told mostly from the point of view of the guilt-ridden brother who is left to bear the burden of his parent’s perceived expectations.

**Stuart Little** (1999). Pets are often considered members of the family, but a mouse? Adopted by a human family, Stuart Little (the mouse) is loved by everyone except the jealous housecat. The film portrays Little as one of the family more so than a pet.

*Suggested Essays and Discussions*
1. Based upon the family or family setting featured in any of the films, consider the role of the family unit in society. Use specific examples from the movie to illustrate a family of orientation, a family of procreation, a family by marriage, and evidence of kinship or an extended family. Does the interaction of family members in the movie support a functionalist or conflict perspective of the family unit? Use specific examples (dialogue, characters, scenes) to support your contention.

2. Based upon your viewing of A Night at the Roxbury, Big, or Meet the Parents describe the role of romantic love in the characters’ lives. Is their love indicative of loyalty, emotional support, and marital commitment? Or is it more indicative of possession, control, and sexual convenience?

3. In One True Thing, Zellweger does an about face in her opinion of each of her parents. Why? Are there certain things children should never know about their parents’ behavior and simply accept their parents unconditionally? Explain your position.

4. How is the infidelity in Indecent Proposal different and the same as what occurs when spouses stray from their vows and cheat on one another? Whereas the relationship between Redford and Moore extends beyond the original deal of one night, what does this suggest about the condition of Moore’s marriage to Harrelson in the first place?

5. What are the positive impacts ET makes on the family that adopts him? How does he serve as the father figure the children lost when their father abandoned them and their mother?

Chapter Seventeen: Education

Education in early society, education in the global perspective, cultural transmission, teaching knowledge and skills, hidden curriculum, problems in education.

Animal House (1978). Every college has one fraternity that stands out. At Faber College it is Delta Chi, a group of zany misfits who at best are gross underachievers and at worse a bunch of immoral, beer-guzzling delinquents. Set in the 60s the movie pokes fun at every popular aspect of college life when taken to extreme. Capitalizing on the time in which it is set, the story line adapts social conditions of the time to give it perspective.

Dead Poets Society (1989). An unorthodox English teacher played by Robin Williams opens the students’ minds at a New England prep school. He inspires their love for poetry and an appreciation for intellectual freedom.

Fast Times at Ridgemont High (1982). A newspaper reporter goes undercover to see what high school kids really do and think about. The answer is rather obvious. They hang out at the mall and think about sex. Several actors destined for successful careers make their screen debuts.
including Nicholas Cage, Forest Whitaker, Eric Stoltz, and Anthony Edwards who are joined by Sean Penn and Jennifer Jason Leigh.

**Higher Learning** (1995). Laurence Fishburne plays a political science professor who tries to help a young black athlete (Omar Epps) make sense out of the injustices of society. The turbulence depicted in the fictional college includes date rape, racism, sexism, peer-pressure, drugs, Neo-Nazism, and elitism. Although overwhelming at times, it tries to fit all the stress and pressures faced by new college students into one two-hour flick.

**Lean on Me** (1989). The true story of “Crazy” Joe Clark (Morgan Freeman), a controversial, but ultimately successful principal from Patterson High School, New Jersey. Clark uses unorthodox methods, such as carrying a baseball bat and bullhorn to “encourage” students into complying with school policy. The story offers an exploration of the radical, controversial, and ultimately successful overhaul of an inner-city high school that was ravaged by drugs, gangs, and corruption.

**Mr. Holland’s Opus** (1995). Glenn Holland (Richard Dreyfuss) is a passionate musician who dreams of composing one truly memorable piece of music. But reality intrudes as he reluctantly accepts a “day job” as a high school music teacher to support his family. Mr. Holland eventually comes to realize his real passion is teaching, and his legacy is the generations of young people he inspires.

**October Sky** (1999). Based on the true story of NASA engineer Homer Hickman Jr. In 1957 Americans are shocked when the Soviets launch Sputnik. The Soviet achievement insults a feeble American space effort and strikes fear in the West. Hickman dedicates his young life to being instrumental in the US space program. He enlists the help of school chums to build and launch rockets in their West Virginia mining town. The movie is an excellent case study of how Hickman overcame technical challenges in his quest to learn about rocketry, how he met his resource needs, and how he overcame the opposition he had from his father who worked in the local mines as a foreman.

**Scent of a Woman** (1992). Chris O’Donnell plays Charlie, an honest, hardworking, but timid student who finds himself economically outclassed as he attends a high priced east-coast prep school. Charlie finds himself in a precarious situation with the school’s headmaster and his classmates. To his aid comes Al Pacino, a retired, blind Army colonel who exposes the motives of the headmaster and restores dignity to the school.

**Stand and Deliver** (1988). Edward James Olmos plays an electronics engineer who gives up his high paying job in order to take a job as a high school math teacher. He teaches the most disadvantaged students calculus, a course they need to prepare for a state Advanced Placement Test. His genuine dedication to the students turns their lives around.

**The Paper Chase** (1973). John Houseman is Kingsfield, an unbending, callous, insensitive professor at Harvard Law School. Timothy Bottoms plays an aspiring freshman in Kingsfield’s class who deals with the adversity of the professor while trying to maintain a social life that
includes dating his daughter. The plot of the movie focuses on the obsession overachievers can place on grades.

Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. Based on your viewing of *Stand and Deliver*, consider the role of education in the lives of young Americans. In the movie, did you see evidence of a commitment to mass education, or evidence of a utilitarian institution designed to control and accredit students? Examine the formal structure of the school as depicted in the film, and give examples of both the latent and manifest functions of the school system.

2. In *Animal House, Higher Learning*, and *Lean on Me* the administrative forces use various techniques to control unruly students. Compare and contrast the styles in each situation. Could the techniques used by “Crazy” Joe Clark in *Lean on Me* be a viable option today in a dysfunctional inner city school? Why or why not?

3. In *Dead Poets Society, Mr. Holland’s Opus*, and *The Paper Chase* what are some of the sacrifices students make in pursuit of academic excellence? What are some of the disturbing ramifications of setting unattainable goals? What are the lessons to be learned about this situation?

4. Is the drive and dedication displayed by a young Homer Hickman in *October Sky* evident today in students in the middle school and high school? How have conditions changed both within our school systems and internationally that make the Hickman story less likely to repeat itself today?

5. Compare situations in your university to those that were depicted in *Animal House*. Are there fraternities and sororities on your campus such as those that exist at Faber? What are some of the issues students deal with at your school that were depicted at Faber?

Chapter Eighteen: Religion

*Religious perspectives, rituals, beliefs, the world’s major religions, types of religious groups.*

*Battle Hymn* (1957). Dean Hess (Rock Hudson) turns to the ministry following his duty as an Army-Air Force fighter pilot. But he finds his work in the ministry lacking in fulfillment. After being recalled to the military to train South Korean pilots during the Korean War he finds a new ministry and makes amends with the demons that have haunted him since World War II.

*Bedazzled* (2000). Brendan Frazier is Elliott, a frustrated nerd-like computer geek who means well but alienates his co-workers and finds himself yearning for the affections of a co-worker. To his rescue comes Elizabeth Hurley (the Devil) who grants him seven wishes in exchange for his
soul. After expending six of them trying to win the affection of his love interest, Elliot realizes the deal isn’t foolproof.

**Dogma** (1999). A young lady who has lost her faith is chosen to save humanity. Outcast angels battle out their differences in this comedy that features an impressive cast including Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Linda Fiorentino, and Chris Rock.

**Gandhi** (1982). This film is an epic story of India’s great leader Mohandas K. Gandhi. Beginning his career as a simple lawyer, Gandhi rises to power, advocating peace and understanding that would transcend the caste system. Directed by Richard Attenborough, the movie features a talented international cast including Ben Kingsley, Candice Bergman, Trevor Howard, and Martin Sheen. It won eight Oscars.

**Malcolm X** (1992). Spike Lee directs Denzel Washington and Angela Bassett in this moving biography of black activist Malcolm “X” Shabaz. Lee traces Shabaz’s life as he goes through a series of changes from street hustler to prison inmate to religious convert, ascending to national leadership while preaching the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. The film is considered to be an excellent portrait of a controversial leader who was eventually assassinated by one of his own followers.

**Stigmata** (1999). An *Exorcist* clone, this film is about a young lady who suddenly suffers attacks and hallucinations without apparent medical explanation. The Vatican sends a priest to investigate. The concept of demonic possession takes a few twists but isn’t as “inspirational” as the original that it mimics.

**The Apostle** (1998). This film was the personal effort of Robert Duvall who wrote, directed, produced, and starred in it. After committing a violent crime, a Pentecostal minister (Duvall) goes on the lam spreading the word of Jesus. He finally settles in a small Southern town where he brings hope and religious fulfillment to a community looking for spiritual direction.

**The Exorcist** (1973). The classic film depicting demonic possession and the response of the Catholic church to fight it. Linda Blair is a normal 12 year-old in a somewhat dysfunctional family whose body is taken over by Lucifer. When the church gets involved, it turns into a battle between good and evil.

**The Last Temptation of Christ** (1988). This is a movie that has been characterized as both a “thought provoking and deeply felt drama” and “an unorthodox portrayal of the final days of Jesus Christ.” It suggests Jesus experienced indecision, self-doubt, and a type of mid-life crisis when he realized his divine mission on earth. The movie raises doubt as to Jesus being the true Son of God. The presentation of Jesus being very human, including sexual trysts with Mary Magdalene, was highly offensive to Christians and caused numerous protests at theaters.

**The Scarlet Letter** (1995). Demi Moore is cast as Hester Prynne, the main character in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s classic novel. Though more labeling than religious the film indirectly deals with the Puritan fundamentalism that caused Prynne to be ostracized.
**The Ten Commandments** (1956). This film, directed by Cecil B. DeMille, is a four-star classic featuring some of the finest actors of the day. This Biblical epic traces the life of Moses (Charlton Heston) and his impact on the development of Christianity. Nearly four hours long, the film moves rather quickly due in part to Oscar-winning special effects, an excellent cast, and great cinematography.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Consider the type of religion as depicted in any of the suggested films. Does the religion suggest simple supernaturalism, animism, theism, or transcendent idealism? According to the text, what are the history and basic tenets of this religion? Do you think the movie accurately portrays people of such a religion, or does it present an extremist or biased view for the sake of entertainment?

2. What do the main characters in *Battle Hymn, Gandhi, Malcolm X, and The Apostle* have in common that gives religious significance to their work? How do any of these movies support the concept that religion is based on people and not ritual? How does this compare with the issue Durkheim raised as to the purpose of religion?

3. *Bedazzled* and *The Exorcist* portray the Devil quite differently. If you were to do an objective analysis of Lucifer in each film, which version of the Prince (Princess) of Darkness would be the most threatening? Why?

4. In either *The Apostle, The Scarlet Letter, or Gandhi* determine whether the institution in the movie represents an ecclesia, a denomination, a sect, or a cult. Based upon Durkheim’s and Marx’s views on religion, does the religious institution in the movie indicate a functionalist or conflict perspective? Is there evidence of fundamentalist or political influence in the religion, either to support it or oppose it? Give specific examples to support your position.

5. In your opinion, does the efforts of Hollywood in creating movies such as *The Ten Commandments* and other Biblical epics help the layman to more fully understand religion or does it create confusion? Compare the story line in *The Last Temptation of Christ* to the one in *The Ten Commandments.*

6. How is the concept of the devil portrayed differently in *Malcolm X, The Scarlet Letter, Bedazzled, and The Exorcist*? Develop a generic definition of evil and the devil that would apply to any religious movement using a set of paradigms that transcend each religion’s individual characteristics.
Chapter Nineteen: Medicine

_Perspectives on medicine, physical and mental health, issues in health care, threats to health._

_Awakenings_ (1990). Robin Williams plays a doctor seeking an effective drug to treat Parkinson’s disease. An extraneous theme to this excellent depiction of a true incident is the actual experiment, using increased quantities of a new drug as the variable, which produced astounding results. Robert DiNero plays a patient who is awakened after being in a coma for 30 years and enjoys life as an adult for the first time.

_Er: The Series Premier_ (1995). Perhaps the most watched medical drama made for TV, this pilot for the series offers a brilliantly realistic recreation of the stress and trauma associated with saving lives in a big city emergency room. Good acting, dramatic plots, and believable story lines full of human interest have preserved this as a long running series that will live for years in syndication. For the purposes of the recommended essays and discussion, other episodes of the series may be substituted with a little adjustment.

_Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling_ (1986). Richard Pryor directed and starred in this story based on his autobiography. It documents Pryor’s early life and first encounters in show business, then progresses to illustrate the pitfalls of success. After suffering severe burns in a drug related accident, Pryor is forced to examine his life and make hard decisions about his future.

_Medicine Man_ (1992). Sean Connery discovers a cure for cancer as he conducts research in the Brazilian rain forest. Unfortunately, he cannot duplicate it.

_One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest_ (1975). This film is a four-star classic starring Jack Nicholson, Danny DiVito, and Christopher Lloyd as they were establishing themselves as Hollywood icons. In one respect the story is quite disturbing as it portrays a sane convict who is admitted to a mental ward as punishment for being an incorrigible troublemaker. On the other hand, it symbolizes the triumph of a person with no prior medical training who inspires his fellow patients to assert themselves. A frustrated and strong-willed head nurse played by Louise Fletcher becomes Nicholson’s personal nemesis when she realizes she has lost control of her ward. The film won all five top Oscars in 1975.

_Outbreak_ (1995). A techno-thriller starring Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, and Cuba Gooding Jr., _Outbreak_ illustrates how a group of scientists research the cause and origin of a rare killer virus. Although the virus has the potential to result in a global biological meltdown, their efforts are hampered by high-ranking military officials who wish to preserve the virus as a possible weapon.

_Patch Adams_ (1998). Robin Williams plays a doctor who throws out the medical manuals in favor of treating patients like people. His unorthodox methods create problems for him, but they also help reach people who would have otherwise given up hope. Based on a true story, the plot
is somewhat exaggerated from the actual accounts of what transpired in this tale of good Samaritanship. Nonetheless, it is inspirational for anyone who must deal with others in bureaucratic institutions.

*Philadelphia* (1993). Several different plots make *Philadelphia* an excellent choice for discussion. Tom Hanks won an Oscar for his portrayal of an aspiring young attorney who is fired for bogus reasons by his Mainline Philadelphia law firm after he contracts the HIV virus. In the process of looking for a lawyer to represent him, he is forced to chose Denzel Washington, a man who dislikes gays. The story addresses several different issues including homophobia, how Hanks deals with his HIV infection and pending death, the power of the bureaucracy, and equal treatment of the sick and infirmed.

*The Doctor* (1991). Considered as a “must-see” for anyone wishing to enter the medical profession, this film is based on a true story. A doctor finds out his sore throat is actually cancer, which mandates the cranky, callous, and insensitive doctor must unwillingly become a patient. He finds out what it is like to be subjected to the impersonal, dehumanizing treatment of an overburdened medical system.

*The Omega Man* (1971). Charlton Heston has his hands full as he single-handedly battles a band of zombies created by a mutated virus. To make matters worse, he believes he may be the last normal man alive. He is the only person who has been inoculated by the vaccine to ward off the disease, a vaccine he developed as an Army medical officer. After finding a pocket of other normal humans, they band together to repopulate the earth if necessary. But the zombies stand in their way.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. In *Outbreak*, how does social research become as important as the medical research illustrated in the film? Explain how this teamwork between the two sciences is necessary in other research as well using a specific issue or disease as an example.

2. Based on your viewing of *Philadelphia*, consider whether the HIV virus, based upon what we know about it from medical research, is dangerous enough to constitute a contagious disease concern in the workplace. Should there be mandatory testing of high-risk people for the disease? If you answer yes, define “high-risk people” and the issues associated with “mandatory” testing. If you answer “no,” defend your answer.

3. After viewing *ER: The Season Premier, Patch Adams*, or *The Doctor* address how symbolic interactionsim is used in regards to the doctor-patient relationship as well as the other symbols we associate with the medical field, such as hospitals, white coats, titles, prescriptions, and so on. Compare and contrast *The Doctor* with *Patch Adams* in this regard.

4. Based on your viewing of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* or *Jo Jo Dancer: Your Life Is Calling* consider the medicalization of mental illness. To what extent in our
society is behavior that is inconvenient, aggressive, bizarre, or unusual classified as “mental illness”? Is the categorization of common maladies (such as depression or short temper) with medical diagnoses just a means of controlling behavior with drugs, perhaps because drugs are cheaper than therapy or because there is a push to use drugs for the financial rewards reaped by the pharmaceutical companies?

5. After viewing Outbreak or The Omega Man, consider the evil and horror of using biological weapons compared to using conventional or nuclear weapons. What are the advantages of developing and using the biological weapon option? Are nuclear weapons more “humane” than biological weapons? In your opinion, what conditions, if any, would ever justify the use of either of these weapons?

6. Durkheim stated that any dysfunctional event that plagues society for an extended period provides a functional purpose for that society. One example of this is crime. Another is disease. Using any of the suggested films, how does the presence of disease actually support society? Be creative and take this thought to the extreme, examining what Malthus added on preventive and positive checks on population growth.

Chapter Twenty: Population and Urbanization

World population growth, urbanization, models of urban growth, city life, urban problems and social policy.

Angels in the Outfield (1994). The film is billed as a comedy where angels, led by Christopher Lloyd, respond to the wishes of an 11 year-old foster child praying for a father and the resurrection of his favorite professional baseball team, the California Angels. When examined more deeply, it demonstrates the problems abandoned children face and how one person can make a difference in their lives. The story line follows two boys in foster care through their daily routine emphasizing their love of baseball and a deep desire to be a family. It also offers insight into the problems they face and their personal disappointments they must endure.

Boyz ’N the Hood (1991). The ravages of urbanization are seen in this film set in south central Los Angeles. In a single-parent household, a divorced father tries to raise his son to accept traditional values and self esteem in a neighborhood where graffiti, garbage, police tape, blood stains, and bullet holes are all part of the physical environment. The cast includes Laurence Fishburne, Cuba Gooding Jr., Ice Cube, and Angela Bassett.

Crooklyn (1994). Spike Lee co-wrote and directed this semi-biographical account of a family’s life growing up in Brooklyn in the 1970s. The film focuses on the relationship of Troy (Zelda Harris) with her parents and brothers. The film offers insight into life in the inner city, its culture, and people.

Flashdance (1983). Bright lights and glittering images, high energy, and an upbeat musical score will appeal to younger viewers as the plot of this film follows the life of an attractive and petite young lady in Pittsburgh, PA. Torn between two vocational interests, “Alex” (Jennifer Beals)
takes a job as a welder in Pittsburgh’s steel industry by day. But she also works as an exotic dancer at night. To make matters even more complicated, she has attracted the courtship of her rich and handsome boss.

_Hoodlum_ (1997). The story of Harlem racketeer Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson (Laurence Fishburne) as he rises from bagman to boss in a toe-to-toe battle with Dutch Schultz (Tim Roth) and Lucky Luciano (Andy Garcia). This is a well-made multi-character gangster flick that presents three distinct levels of evil as the personal styles of Johnson, Schultz, and Luciano are closely examined.

_Michael_ (1996). William Hurt and Robert Pastorelli are reporters from a sleezy tabloid sent to investigate reports that a true-life angel named Michael (John Travolta) is living in the Midwest. Accompanied by Andie MacDowell who is posing as an “angels expert,” the trio discovers the story of the millennium. Opposed to flying, Michael insists the trio take him to New York by car. Along the way, the foursome stops by every small town and tourist trap along the way.

_Original Gangstas_ (1996). A comfortable blue-collar neighborhood is turned into an urban battleground when street gangs become the dominant force in a survival of the fittest environment. The decline of the city is caused by the loss of the steel industry. Although the plot is a bit far fetched in regards to its plausibility and execution, the background used that includes the dismantling of America’s steel industry, the rise of urban violence, and breakdown of family values is a sobering account of conditions in certain sections of the inner city.

_Salaam Bombay!_ (1988). This Indian-British produced film is a disturbing account of a young country boy, Syed. Along with other abandoned street children like him, he literally works for pennies doing almost anything to survive...delivering teas, serving at weddings, and even dealing drugs. The horror of the street is surpassed by the conditions within the juvenile institution for delinquents (The Chiller Room) where many of the children are eventually sent.

_The Towering Inferno_ (1974). Irwin Allen directed this film starring a talented cast lead by Paul Newman as the architect who builds the tallest building in the world and Steve McQueen as the fire chief who has to put out the fire when it goes ablaze. Billed by some critics as just another segment in Irwin’s long line of disaster flicks, the movie moves quickly and is a tribute to the sacrifices firemen make every day to protect the public.

_Waiting for Guffman_ (1997). _Waiting for Guffman_ is a dark comedy about a small Missouri town and its residents. The town’s residents include a teenager who feels blessed to be working at the Dairy Queen, a travel-agent couple who have never been outside their town, a Jewish dentist who wants to break into show business, and a former New York dancer. Christopher Guest plays the main role as a frustrated director who organizes the town’s limited talent into a show that he hopes will take them all to Broadway.

_Suggested Essays and Discussions_

1. Based on your viewing of _Salaam Bombay!_, discuss the relationship between poverty and homelessness among the street children of Bombay. How do the children end up in
the streets? Where are their parents? Describe the environment of “The Chiller Room” where orphaned and homeless children are sent. Is this institution preferable to the children living on the street?

2. In *Angels in the Outfield*, how do Roger and PJ deal with the frustrations of being in foster care? Compared to the daily routine boys from a traditional family would have, how is their routine different? How well does society provide for their needs?

3. In *Waiting for Guffman*, how does the film depict the limitations of small town life? Why don’t the residents of small towns like Blaine, Missouri, resort to selling drugs, gang violence, and a wholesale destruction of the neighborhoods as shown in *Original Gangstas* and *Boyz ’N the Hood* where the opportunities are also limited? This is not to suggest small towns are totally free of such problems. How are the cultural values and environmental conditions in Blaine, Missouri, similar and different than those of the inner city in the other two films?

4. In *The Towering Inferno*, how does the building of the “glass tower” serve as an alternative for developers who are trying to maximize profits, even if it means compromising the safety of the general public? What are some other examples of this effort by developers as we see farmland turned into developments and the swelling of suburbia?

5. Compare and contrast the people, opportunities, and cultural activities in Pittsburgh as shown in *Flashdance* with those of Brooklyn as depicted in *Crooklyn*. What reasons can you suggest for the differences?

6. In *Michael*, compare and contrast the various illustrations of Americana as the four travelers motor their way to New York. What are the obvious differences in the people and environment when comparing rural and urban America?

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**Chapter Twenty-One: Collective Behavior and Social Movements**

*Theories of collective behavior, forms of collective behavior (riots, panics, rumor, fad, fashion, urban legends) social movements (types, tactics, stages), why people join social movements.*

*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Lew Ayers and his classmates are naïve schoolboys overcome by the hype of their schoolmaster to join the German army in WWI and proudly serve their homeland. The story that unfolds is moving and vivid, serving as a master example of why we should “give peace a chance.” Made over 70 years ago and depicting a war that began nearly a century ago, *All Quiet on the Western Front* has not lost its power or poignancy in driving its point home on the horrors of war. The film won an Oscar for Best Picture in 1930.

*American Graffiti* (1973). A high school class of young men and women with distinctly different interests come of age following graduation from high school in the early 60s. The fads
of the time period are well illustrated, as well as insight into the reasons for the collective
behavior of the time. Directed by George Lucas, *American Graffiti* featured a cast of aspiring
young actors including Richard Dreyfuss, Harrison Ford, Ron Howard, Cindy Williams, and
Mackenzie Phillips.

*Braveheart* (1995). This big, booming, epic tale of thirteenth century Scottish rebel warrior
William Wallace re-enacts the grass roots resistance to the tyranny of English King Edward I. A
gripping personal story grows along with escalating battle scenes. Wallace single-handedly
unites the Scots and leads them to freedom from oppression. The movie won five Academy
Awards including Best Picture.

*Good Morning Vietnam* (1987). Robin Williams is Adrian Cronauer, a slaphappy military misfit
assigned to Armed Forces radio in war torn Saigon as a disc jockey. The story is a paradox of
story line. On one hand, it is a hilarious comedy and on the other an account of the horrific
reality of the war. As he learns more about the people of Saigon, Cronauer begins to understand
the war from a perspective not afforded most of his military peers, especially the ones in charge.

this convincing re-enactment of the life and presumed death of one of America’s most well
known labor leaders. The development of the Teamsters and its tremendous influence are
illustrated very well, as is a plausible account of Hoffa’s demise.

biography of black activist Malcolm “X” Shabaz. Lee traces Shabaz’s life as he goes through a
series of changes from street hustler to prison inmate to religious convert as he ascends to
national leadership while preaching the teachings of Elijah Muhammad. The film is considered
to be an excellent portrait of a controversial leader who was eventually assassinated by one of his
own followers.

*Mandela* (1987). Danny Glover and Alfre Woodard play Nelson and Winnie Mandela, South
African natives who have spent their lives fighting the apartheid government of the Union of
South Africa. Nelson spent most of his life in hiding or in prison for political crimes, but the anti-
apartheid movement he introduced was eventually successful.

*Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977). Episode IV was the original *Star Wars* film, being
followed in sequence by episodes five and six in 1980 and 1983, then returning to episode one in
1999. Although it starts half way through the series, this episode provides the clearest example of
the social movement begun by Princess Leia as she leads the Rebel Alliance in their fight for
freedom from the evil imperial forces of the Galactic Empire.

*The Final Option* (1982). The Peoples’ Lobby is a social movement organization whose only
goal is to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The means they take towards this end are radical, but
predictable. The plot of the film demonstrates how many social movements can be international
in scope. As the ambition of the movement escalates, so does the need for a more sophisticated
network that includes financial support.
The Patriot (2000). Benjamin Martin (Mel Gibson) is The Patriot, a reluctant hero who is swept into the American Revolution when the war reaches his home and threatens his family. Now a man of peace, Martin has already witnessed the horrors of war in the French and Indian conflicts in the prior decade.

The 60s: The Movie Event of a Generation (1999). The 60s is an epic blend of music, drama, and real-life events that bring that decade’s most explosive events to life. Two American families, one white and one black, are torn apart by the war in Vietnam and the war in the streets. Current events are often compared to this period that initiated the civil rights movement, peaceful protests, free love, and the fear of nuclear annihilation.

Suggested Essays and Discussions

1. In American Graffiti, what fads of the early 60s are depicted in the film? Have any of these become fashionable and are still in existence today? How were they modified through time? Why have some of the fads, such as drive-in theaters, evaporated from the American culture?

2. In All Quiet on the Western Front, what theory of collective behavior best explains the obsession developed by the young German schoolboys for the war? How could the schoolmaster have served as an instrument for the failure of the war movement without appearing to be a traitor or unpatriotic? Do the citizens of a country “owe” their nation a period of service whether it is in the military service, Peace Corp, or Vista? What if nobody volunteered for these programs? What are your views of being drafted for them?

3. After watching Good Morning Vietnam, describe how the Vietnam War was a social movement by the Vietnamese people. What type of movement was it? How did the politics associated with the movement affect its image to the American people? Note that Ho Chi Minh tried to gain American support for a free Vietnam several times between 1920 and into the 1950s. America rejected this request in favor of supporting France, which had taken a colonial presence in the country following World War I. What comparisons can be made between the Vietnam War and the American War for Independence?

4. After watching Hoffa, The Final Option, or Mandela describe the resources necessary to make the social movement depicted in the film successful. After reaching its original goals, what direction can a movement take?

5. After viewing All Quiet on the Western Front, Good Morning Vietnam, The Final Option, or Mandela, describe the impact government has on a social movement. How does government support seem to assist a social movement, but may actually be harmful to its overall effectiveness? How does the polarization phenomenon affect the platform of a social movement that is linked to a government’s ideology?

6. After viewing Braveheart, Hoffa, Mandela, The Patriot, Malcolm X, or Star Wars, describe the importance of a charismatic leader to the success of a social movement. In
the movie you chose, what are the major contributions this charismatic leader makes to the cause? What tactics do they use to gain the emotional and personal support of the group? How can this type of leadership be a problem for a social movement as well as an asset?

Chapter Twenty-Two: Social Change and the Environment

Social revolutions and social movements, geopolitics and ethnic conflicts, cultural evolution, environmental problems.

A Civil Action (1998). When people begin to wonder why members of their neighborhood suffer high incidents of disease and birth defects they seek legal help from a Boston injury lawyer (John Travolta). The health problems are traced to a polluted water supply caused by two industrial juggernauts. Travolta is over his head and outclassed as he and his small firm take on the corporate giant and their army of legal eagles who have unlimited resources and clout.

Armageddon (1998). The world is at the brink of destruction. All that stands between an asteroid the size of Texas and a sure collision with earth is Bruce Willis and a band of red neck, macho oil drillers recruited by NASA. Although the scenario of how the band of rough necks saves the planet is mostly unbelievable, such a collision has actually occurred in the distant past. If the situation should repeat itself with a chunk of rock less than half the size of the asteroid in the movie, school is out for everybody!

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery (1997) and Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (1999). In both the original and sequel, Austin Powers (Mike Myers) is a swinging 1960s secret agent. After saving the world in the 60s he is cryogenically frozen, but must be thawed out and again inducted into the service of his country to battle a megalomaniac of the late 90s known as Dr. Evil. The differences in the culture of the 60s and that of the pre-millennium 90s are one of the focuses of the agent’s efforts in carrying out his mission.

Chernobyl: The Final Warning (1991). This documentary film takes a hard look at the worldwide environmental impact of the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. It also examines a family affected by the disaster.

Mr. Baseball (1992). Tom Selleck plays Jack Elliot, an arrogant and aging star of the American past time, who is traded from the New York Yankees to the Chunichi Dragons in Nagoya, Japan. Through arrogance and cultural ignorance Elliot alienates his teammates, manager, and a beautiful young lady. After seeing the error in his ways, Elliot makes amends and develops a new respect for the people of Japan and an appreciation of their cultural values.

Peacemaker (1998). One missing nuclear warhead forces the super powers to cooperate with each other to stop a renegade Russian general and Serbian terrorists looking to make an international statement in New York City. The story line is timely in today’s unsettling state of world affairs. It also provides insight into the ethnic differences that instigate terrorism and the response of the authorities to prevent an environmental disaster.
**Rainbow Warriors** (1994). This is a true story of the 1985 bombing of a Greenpeace boat in New Zealand. The investigation which followed was complex and raised more questions than it answered.

**Silkwood** (1984). In an Oklahoma nuclear plant, workers are being exposed to plutonium radiation. Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) is a union activist who is determined to go public with the problem and demand changes that will protect workers from continued harm. Silkwood is mysteriously killed before she can make the changes she envisions, but her legacy was carried out in a successful court battle against the firm.

**The Burning Season** (1994). This is a highly recommended story of Brazil’s environmental activist Chico Mendez (Raul Julia). A poor rubber-trapper, Mendez opposes the corporate giants who wish to clear-cut the forest to make way for cattle grazing country. Mendez is eventually murdered as he fights to protect his people and his way of life.

**Things to Come** (1936). Written by H.G. Wells, this 1936 futuristic drama visualizes the future in which a horrific war, lasting more than 30 years, is followed by plague and rebellion. Raymond Massey plays the leader of the new world who opposes a despotic wartime ruler.

**Suggested Essays and Discussions**

1. Based upon your viewing of **The Burning Season** and information from your textbook, consider the plight of the Amazon rain forest. Explain how the availability and control of natural resources in preindustrial societies, combined with population issues, pits developers against the populous. What is the long-term impact of the rainforest destruction on the world’s ecological balance?

2. After viewing **Mr. Baseball**, compose a list of the aspects of baseball the Japanese changed after adopting it. How did they change the rules, the way the game is played, concessions, and other elements to be more “Japanese”? If the Japanese did not make these changes how popular would the sport be in Japan?

3. In **Things to Come**, H.G. Wells makes predictions about the future. How close was he to predicting the future accurately, providing events can be viewed figuratively and not necessarily as specific incidents? If you were to make a set of predictions for the state of the world in 2075, what would your prediction include?

4. In the **Austin Powers** films, develop a list of terms, behaviors, and styles popular in the 60s that are totally out of context in the late 90s? Why did these trends elapse in use and popularity? Try to identify some popular styles and behaviors of today that may be viewed quite differently 30 or 40 years from now. What are some of the underlying reasons for the changes in our language, behavior, and perspectives?

5. What do **A Civil Action**, **Silkwood**, and **Chernobyl: The Final Warning** have in common in depicting threats to both people and the environment? In each case, why was it so
difficult to trace the problem to its roots and correct the threat? Are there issues of
national security that overshadow the public’s right to health and safety? Under what
conditions would they exist?

SOURCES FOR THE VIDEO PROFESSOR


Boston: Allyn and Bacon.


Putnam Inc.