**Comm1B  
Learning American English and Culture from Movies**

Instructor: Dee Bridgewater, PhD (Dr. Dee)  
UCLA Summer Session A  
Office: 2332 Rolfe Hall  
Office Hours: MW After Class; Friday 1-3

[dbridge@speech.ucla.edu](mailto:dbridge@speech.ucla.edu)

**Optional Texts**

Bergesen, Albert J. (2007). The Depth of Shallow Culture.  
Crothers, Lane (2009). Globalization and American Popular Culture, 3rd ed. (paperback).  
Time Magazine Editors (2013). The 100 Most Influential People Who Never Lived.  
Johnson, Lance (2015). What Foreigners Need to Know about America from A to Z.  
(**Note:** These books are not required. However, they will be on sale at the UCLA Textbook Store and would greatly enhance your understanding of the course subject matter. Go and examine the books and buy one or more of them if you would like.)

**Assigned Movies**

*Beauty and the Beast (2017)*

*Harriet*

*On the Basis of Sex*

(**Note**: In addition to these 3 assigned movies each student is required to watch 3 movies of their own choice. Thus you are required to watch a total of six movies for the class. I will be providing you with a list of 20 movies to choose from. You can watch all these movies at Powell Library’s Media Lab. Also you choose to watch other movies in theaters—experience Summer Blockbusters with American audiences!

**Course Goals & Methods**

Every course has goals—what the instructor hopes that the student will learn from the class. I believe that you are here at UCLA to learn how to: 1) understand American culture and 2) communicate more effectively with Americans. I believe obtaining these two goals involves mastering three skills: research, listening, and speaking. Listed below are the methods of how the class will help you learn these three, vital skills.

*Research:* To understand Americans, a student has to research American culture. The research for this course will consist of watching six American movies—three assigned movies and three movies of your choice. (All of these films will be watched out of class and at the your convenience.) In addition, you will go online to research a series of topics (8 for each assigned movie/24 in total). Researching these topics will help you to understand the underlying meaning of each movie and how each movie represents aspects of American culture. Research also involves going where Americans go (movies, coffee shops, amusement parks, Las Vegas, etc.) and talking with Americans in their everyday lives (inside and outside of the classroom). The instructor will be providing you with a series of handouts and emails to help explain aspects of American culture. Reading these articles will help you better understand your interactions with Americans, helping you to maximize the learning experience of each interaction.

*Listening:* To understand Americans you need to know their language (American-style English) and their background (American culture). To help you actively listen and gain a better understanding of American culture, students will fill out a series of questions for each of the three required films (20 for each of the three assigned films/60 questions in total). These questions will help you to be actively engaged while you watch the movies. This focused listening on the film will help train your ears when you are listening to Americans talk. In class we will spend all of our time talking. We will be talking about the assigned research topics and workbook questions for each film. Thus, you will know what we are talking about each day in class--that will help you to more easily understand what is being said.

*Speaking:* For me, speaking involves listening and then responding. So speaking involves having conversations. All of our classroom time will be spent having conversations with each other. What will these conversations be about? You will bring in your responses to the research topics and your answers to the workbook questions for each film. We will use your responses to these research topics and workbook questions as the focus of our conversations. Therefore, each day you will know what we will be talking about and what your fellow classmates will be talking about. That will make it easier for you to both listen and speak to your fellow students a! bout what they have learned (listening) and you have learned (speaking).

**Course Requirements:**

*Watch six American movies.* Three of these movies are those assigned for the course (*Beauty and the Beast; Harriet; On the Basis of Sex).* The other three are your choice and can be chosen from a list provided by the instructor and made available through UCLA; or, current movies in theaters.

Fill out a series of workbook questions. For each of the three films that are assigned you will answer approximately 20 questions. (60 in total).  
*Look up on a series of topics on the Internet.* You will be assigned 8 topics for each assigned film (24 in total). (The research on these topics will allow you to create your own personal textbook for the course.)

*Attend class and openly engage in conversations with the instructor and your fellow students.*

These conversations will be based on the workbook questions and the research that you have done on each of the assigned films. (Thus, each day you will know what we are going to talk about so you can come up with your own individual thoughts and feelings that you can share with the class.)

*Write a 5-page paper (double spaced)*. The topic for this paper is your choice and can be drawn from one of the films you watched; your experience here in the USA; or from life in your home country.  
*Give a 3-minute class presentation drawn from the five-page paper.* Having written the 5-page paper, you will outline it and discuss the paper with the class. (This presentation will be a chance for you to demonstrate what you have learned in the class and to tell your own personal story in English.)

**Evaluations & Grading**

Film Workbook Questions/Movie Evaluations 10%

Response to Assigned Research Topics 15%  
Class Participation/Discussion of Assigned Topics 25%

Final Student Project:

Five Page Written Essay 25%  
Three Minute Class Presentation 25%

**Syllabus**

June:  
22: Introduction of the class, the instructor, the TA, and the students. Where to visit in Southern California. The nature of movies as an international and American pop culture tradition. The history of the English language. The history of America.

24: Set up for the rest of the summer. Selection of the Blue and Gold Teams for the Class. Defining of the regions of America and the diverse groups of people that make up American culture. Demonstration on how to research articles for the class. Answer student questions about the class.  
29: Beauty and the Beast. Discuss Workbook Questions: Bring in research articles on Research Topics. Be prepared to discuss this research.

July

01: Beauty and the Beast (cont). Finish discussing Workbook Questions and Research Topic  
06: (\*Hand in Beauty and the Beast workbook questions. \*Hand in Research Articles for Beauty and the Beast. \*Hand in First Movie Evaluation)  
Harriet. Discuss Workbook Questions. Bring in research articles on Research Topics. Be prepared to discuss this research.  
08: Harriet (cont). Finish discussing Workbook Questions and Research Topics.  
13: (\*Hand in workbook questions for Harriet. \*Hand in research articles for Harriet. \*Hand in Second Movie Evaluation.)  
On the Basis of Sex.. Discuss Workbook Questions. Bring in research articles on Research Topics. Be prepared to discuss this research.!  
15: On the Basis of Sex (cont). Finish discussing Workbook Questions and Research Topics.  
20: (\*Hand in workbook questions for On the Basis of Sex. \*Hand in research articles On the Basis of Sex.) Student Final Presentations begin.  
22: Student Final Presentations (cont.)  
27: Student Final Presentations (cont.)  
29: Student Final Presentations (cont.) (Say Our Goodbyes!)

**Movie Research Topics**(**Note:** I will be bringing in example of how I have researched each of these topics so you will know what I am expecting from you in your research of each of these topics.)

**Beauty and the Beast**

Merlin & King Arthur  
The Brothers Grimm  
Hercules or Achilles  
Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar

Robin Hood

Pilgrims

Sherlock Holmes

Vikings

**Harriet**

George Washington

Abraham Lincoln  
Billy the Kid  
California Gold Rush

Transcontinental Railroad

Sacagawea or Pocahontas

Emancipation Proclamation

Huckleberry Finn

**On the Basis of Sex**

Rosa Parks  
Harvey Milk

Liliuokalani  
Cesar Chavez  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kobe Bryant

Steve Jobs

Vietnam War