

# Films on Race and Sexuality/Gender

Presented by Rita and Bill Hadden

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# 8-week Outline (key film excerpts shown in class)

- 1. The Wedding Banquet (1993)
- 2. Gran Torino (2008)
- 3. The Crying Game (1992)
- 4. The Hate U Give (2018)
- 5. American Beauty (1999)
- 6. Passing (2021)
- 7. The Danish Girl (2015)
- 6. Green Book (2018)
- QUESTIONS?

# The Wedding Banquet (1993)

## Awards / recognition:

- Premiered at the 43rd Berlin and Sundance Film Festivals, and won 15 Golden Horse awards in Taiwan. It was both a critical and commercial success, becoming the most profitable film of 1993.
- Together with *Pushing Hands* (1991) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), all showing the Confucian family at risk, *The Wedding Banquet* forms what has been called Ang Lee's "Father Knows Best" trilogy.
- Selected in 2024 for preservation in the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress for cultural relevance.

# The Wedding Banquet (2)

- **Director, producer, writer: Ang Lee**
  - Lee's work is known for its emotional charge, and exploration of repressed, hidden emotions.
  - 8 of his films have received multiple Academy Award Nominations w. 12 wins, BAFTA Award Nominations w. 14 wins, Golden Globe Award Nominations w. 9 wins.
  - Best known films include: Eat Drink Man Woman; The Wedding Banquet; Sense and Sensibility; Pushing Hands; Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon; Brokeback Mountain; Lust, Caution; Life of Pi.

# The Wedding Banquet (3)

## **Synopsis:**

Wai-Tung and his boyfriend live happily as a gay couple in New York City. Wai-Tung has not been open about his sexuality with his Taiwanese parents. He decides to acquiesce to their wish for a traditional Chinese union by marrying Wei-Wei, a struggling artist desperate for a green card.

# The Wedding Banquet (4)

**SETTING:** NY City.

## **MAIN CHARACTERS:**

- Gao Wai Tung: gay Taiwanese immigrant in his late 20's;
- Wei Wei: penniless artist from mainland China in need of a green card;
- Simon: Wai Tung's gay American partner;
- Mrs. Gao: Wai Tung's mother;
- Mr. Gao: Wai Tung's father.

# **DISCUSSION: what would you say The Wedding Banquet is about and WHY?**

- Comedy of manners?
- American stereotypes?
- Eastern & Western cultures: irreconcilable?

# The Wedding Banquet (6)

## Questions for discussion:

- How do Wai Tung & Simon relate to the world around them?
- Why is Wai Tung reluctant to agree to Simon's scheme?
- Does this film show the Confucian family at risk? Why or why not?
- What does Mr. Gao mean by: "I watch, I listen, I learn"?
- Why is the banquet a "set piece" in this film, leading everything to a hopeful ending?


(See next slide)



# The Wedding Banquet (7)

## Questions for discussion:

- Give examples of cultural differences shown in this film.
- Which character served as “the glue” that tied this family together?
- Do characters in this film conform to the stereotypes in America? How?
- What is race? Anything racial about the characters or their interactions in this film?
- What gives this film its comic resonance?



***For questions and information,  
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