



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?

Gran Torino (2008)

- **Awards / recognition:** GRAN TORINO is Eastwood's second highest-grossing film to-date.

- **Director (30+), Producer, Actor:** Clint Eastwood.

- Eastwood won Best Director and Best Picture for his Western film Unforgiven (1992) and his sports drama Million Dollar Baby (2004).

- Eastwood's accolades include four Academy Awards, four Golden Globe Awards, three César Awards, and an AFI Life Achievement Award. In 2000, he received the Italian Venice Film Festival's Golden Lion award, honoring his lifetime achievements. From France, he received the Commander of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1994, and the Legion of Honour in 2007.

- Eastwood has contributed to 50+ films as actor, director, producer, and composer.

Gran Torino (2)

• Actor and Director: Clint Eastwood

- Clint Eastwood's best known films include:
 - Bridges of Madison County (1995); The Mule (2018)
 - Cry Macho (2021); Gran Torino (2008)
 - Where Eagles Dare (1968); Escape from Alcatraz (1979)
 - Hang 'Em High (1968); The Outlaw Josey Wales (1976)
 - Heartbreak Ridge (1986); In the Line of Fire (1993)
 - Pale Rider (1985); Every Which Way but Loose (1978).
- Eastwood's work has made him an enduring cultural **icon of American masculinity**. His frequent exploration of ethical values has drawn the attention of scholars, who have explored his portrayal of justice, mercy, suicide and the angel of death.

Gran Torino (3)

Synopsis:

Retired auto worker and Korean War vet Walt Kowalski fills emptiness in his life with beer and home repair, despising the many Asian, Latino and black families in his neighborhood. Walt becomes a reluctant hero when he stands up to the gangbangers who tried to force an Asian teen to steal Walt's treasured car. Walt slowly learns he has more in common with his neighbors than he thought.

Written by: Nick Schenk.

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Gran Torino Themes (4)

- Masculinity;
- Emotional detachment from family;
- Immigrant poverty and ethics;
- Role of Catholic Church;
- Crime and consequences;
- Sacrifice and generosity.

Gran Torino (5)

SETTING: Highland Park, Detroit, Michigan.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

- Walt Kowalski: recently widowed veteran, alienated from his family and angry at the world;
- Father Janovich: Walt's Catholic priest;
- Thao Vang Lor: Walt's teenager Hmong neighbor;
- Sue Lor: Thao's older sister;
- Fong "Spider": Thao's cousin.

Gran Torino (6)

Hmong People and Culture:

- The Hmong are an ethnic group of people with specific language and culture. The Hmong originally came from China with over 4,000 years of history. Some Hmong left China to go to Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar beginning in the early 1800's.
- There are 12 million Hmong worldwide, 10M of whom live in China and 1.2M in Vietnam, with the remaining 800,000 spread across Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and now the United States (370K), France and Australia.
- Looking directly into the face or direct eye contact is considered rude to traditional Hmong. Sitting too close to the opposite gender while talking is inappropriate.

DISCUSSION: what would you say Gran Torino is about and Why?

- Culture clash?
- Gang tactics and violence?
- What makes a man?
- Self isolation?
- What is family?
- Prejudices and never being too old to learn?
- Americans of different races becoming more open to one another in the new century?

Gran Torino (8)

Questions for discussion:

- What ethnicities are shown in this movie? What races are shown?
 - Why was Walt angry at the world?
 - What do men do in this movie? What do women do?
 - What other gender stereotypes are mentioned in this movie?
 - What changed Walt's disdain towards Thao?
 - What brought about Walt's transformation?
- (See next slide)

Gran Torino (9)

Questions for discussion:

- Do you think Walt's last act was realistic? Why or why not?



***For questions and information,
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