

Department of Visual and Media Arts

# Fall 2019 Calendar



## bright lights film series

Web: [emerson.edu/brightlights](http://emerson.edu/brightlights)

 /BrightLightsEmerson

 @BrightLightFilm

 BrightLightsEmerson



All screenings are free  
and open to the public and  
start at 7:00 pm.

Paramount Center  
559 Washington Street  
Boston, MA



**Tuesday, September 17**

### Booksmart

**F W LGBTQ**

Co-presented by the Wicked Queer Film Festival and the Boston Women's Film Festival

Directed by Olivia Wilde, comedy, English, 105 minutes, USA, 2019

Academic overachievers Amy and Molly thought keeping their noses to the grindstone gave them a leg up on their high school peers. But on the eve of graduation, the best friends suddenly realize that they may have missed out on the special moments of their teenage years. Determined to make up for lost time, the girls decide to cram four years of not-to-be missed fun into one night—a chaotic adventure that no amount of book smarts could prepare them for. Discussion led by affiliated faculty Colleen Kelly Poplin to follow.



**Thursday, September 19**

### Wild Nights with Emily

**F W LGBTQ**

Co-presented by the Wicked Queer Film Festival; the Writing, Literature and Publishing Department; and the Boston

### Women's Film Festival

Directed by Madeleine Olnek, comedy, English with English subtitles, 84 minutes, USA, 2018

The poet Emily Dickinson's persona, popularized since her death, has been that of a reclusive spinster: a delicate wallflower, too sensitive for this world. In this humorous drama, Molly Shannon captures the vivacious, irreverent side of Emily Dickinson that was covered up for years—most notably Emily's lifelong romantic relationship with another woman. After Emily's death, a rivalry emerges when her brother's mistress along with editor T.W. Higginson published a book of Emily's poems. Unique and surreal, *Wild Nights with Emily* sheds new light on the life of one of our most celebrated poets. Discussion led by faculty Robin Fast, Christine Casson, and Anna Ross to follow.



**Tuesday, September 24**

### Ask Dr. Ruth

**SJ**

Co-presented with the Boston Jewish Film Festival, the Independent Film Festival of Boston, and the Center for Women's Health and Human Rights

Directed by Ryan White, documentary, English, 100 minutes, USA, 2019

*Ask Dr. Ruth* chronicles the incredible life of Dr. Ruth Westheimer, a Holocaust survivor

who became America's most famous sex therapist. As her 90th birthday approaches, she revisits her painful past and career at the forefront of the sexual revolution. Discussion led by Megara Bell, director, Partners in Sex Education, and sex educator JP Frost to follow.



**Thursday, September 26**

### Building the American Dream

**W SJ POC**

Co-presented as part of the Boston Latino International Film Festival and the Power to the People Series

Directed by Chelsea Hernandez, documentary, English and Spanish with English subtitles, 74 minutes, USA, 2019

Across Texas, an unstoppable construction boom drives urban sprawl and luxury high-rises. Its dirty secret: abuse of immigrant labor. *Building the American Dream* captures a turning point as a movement forms to fight widespread construction industry injustices. Grieving their son, a Mexican family campaigns for a life-and-death safety ordinance. A Salvadoran electrician couple owed thousands in back pay fights for their children's future. A bereaved son battles to protect others from his family's preventable tragedy. A story of courage, resilience, and community, the film reveals shocking truths about the

hardworking immigrants who build the American Dream, from which they are excluded. Panel discussion with director Chelsea Hernandez to follow.

*This program is supported in part by a grant from the Boston Cultural Council, a local agency that is funded by the Mass Cultural Council and administered by the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.*



**Tuesday, October 1**

## Hail Satan?

**W SJ**

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival and part of the Power to the People Series

Directed by Penny Lane, documentary, English, 94 minutes, USA, 2019

What is the Satanic Temple? Is it a religion? A cult? Performance art? Acclaimed filmmaker Penny Lane gains unprecedented access to this enigmatic movement, which has grown to over 100,000 members around the world in just five years. *Hail Satan?* explores the Temple's fight for equality, its focus on community, and its devilish sense of humor. In an era when founding principles and institutions can't be trusted to work on behalf of all people, these progressive Satanic crusaders advocate to save the soul of a nation. Discussion with Satanic Temple co-founder Lucien Greaves to follow.



**Thursday, October 3**

## J.R. "Bob" Dobbs and the Church of the SubGenius

**W**

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival

Directed by Sandy K. Boone and Jason Whling, documentary, English, 85 minutes, USA, 2019

The Church of the SubGenius has been called "the most aggressively preposterous theology the world has ever known!" But what is the Church? Filmmaker Sandy K. Boone explores the underground movement that has galvanized the imaginative, the artistic, the nerdy, even the deranged—to examine the simmering dystopia in their culture and do absolutely nothing about it—except, maybe, poke fun at it all. Discussion led by the Rev. St. Brother Cleveland "Do-Nit" Duncan III, Esq., Jr (Aka Brother Cleve) to follow.



**Tuesday, October 8**

## Winning Back Our Democracy

**SJ**

## Key

- F** Feminist (Bath Film Festival rating)
- W** Directed by women
- POC** Directed by or featuring people of color
- EC** Emerson College community
- D** Dealing with disability issues
- I** International cinema
- LGBTQ** Dealing with LGBTQ issues
- SJ** Social justice cinema

## About the "F-Rating"



The F-Rating is applied to all films which are directed by women and/or written by women. If the film ALSO has significant women on screen, it receives a TRIPLE F-Rating, our gold standard. The rating allows audiences to "vote with your seat" and proactively choose to go and see F-Rated films. The F-Rating is applied to films by cinemas and film festivals giving moviegoers an easily identifiable label so they can choose films that fairly represent women on screen and behind the camera. Highlighting these films sends a clear message to distributors, producers, and funders that women can and should have more than just a supporting role within the industry. For more info, go to: [f-rated.org](http://f-rated.org).

**Co-presented with the Small Planet Institute as part of the Power to the People Series**

**Directed by Hedrick Smith, documentary, English, 57 minutes, USA, 2019**

Citizen rebellions exploding all around the country. People Power taking back our democracy. People fed up with partisan warfare and gridlock in Washington. The states are now the battleground. More and more ordinary Americans realize that "It's Up to Us" to fix our broken democracy, taking on every flaw in our politics: dark money, vote suppression, gerrymandering, Citizens United, Mega-Donors, hyper-partisanship. It's a great story, but it only gets skimpy media coverage. For us, it's Topic #1. So watch our sequence—six states, six rebellions, six videos of grass heroes—ending with challenge from Florida reformers to other states: "If we can do it in Florida, you can do it in your state!" Panel discussion with director Hedrick Smith and producer Susan Gray to follow.



**Thursday, October 10**

## **Animation Show of Shows**

**W F D POC I**

**Co-presented with Sweettooth Animation**

**Various directors, animation, English and German with English subtitles, 98 minutes, US, France, Germany, Brazil, Netherlands, Spain**

The 20th Annual *Animation Show of Shows* represents the work of artists from six countries and includes six student films. Funny, moving, and engaging, the show not only has something for everyone, but is also a remarkable and insightful microcosm of our world. Fifteen thought-provoking, poignant, and very funny animated shorts from around the world. In a year when the best and worst of human nature has been on constant display, the works in this year's show remind us of both the universality of shared ideals, as well as the diverse challenges we face. Discussion led by Associate Professor Anya Belkina to follow.



**Tuesday, October 15**

## **The Farewell**

**W F I POC**

**Co-presented with the Independent Film Festival of Boston, the Boston Women's Film Festival, and the Boston Asian American Film Festival**

**Directed by Lulu Wang, comedy/drama, Mandarin, English, Japanese, and Italian with English subtitles, 98 minutes, USA, 2019**

In this funny, uplifting tale based on an actual lie, Chinese-born, U.S.-raised Billi reluctantly returns to Changchun to find that, although the whole family knows their beloved matriarch, Nai-Nai, has been given mere weeks to live, everyone has

decided not to tell Nai Nai herself. To assure her happiness, they gather under the joyful guise of an expedited wedding, uniting family members scattered among new homes abroad. As Billi navigates a minefield of family expectations and properties, she finds there's a lot to celebrate: a chance to rediscover the country she left as a child, her grandmother's wondrous spirit, and the ties that keep on binding even when so much goes unspoken. Discussion led by Susan Chinsen, director of the Boston Asian American Film Festival, to follow.



**Thursday, October 17**

## **Mapplethorpe**

**F W LGBTQ**

**Co-presented with the Wicked Queer Film Festival, the Boston Women's Film Festival, and ArtsEmerson**

**Directed by Ondi Timoner, drama, English, 102 minutes, USA, 2018**

Robert Mapplethorpe is arguably one of the most important artists of the 20th century. Mapplethorpe discovered himself both sexually and artistically in New York City throughout the '70s and '80s. The film explores Mapplethorpe's life from moments before he and Patti Smith moved into the famed Chelsea hotel, home to a world of bohemian chic. Here he begins photographing its

inhabitants and his newfound circle of friends including artists and musicians, socialites, film stars, and members of the S&M underground. Mapplethorpe's work displayed eroticism in a way that had never been examined nor displayed before to the public. The film explores the intersection of his art and his sexuality, along with his struggle for mainstream recognition. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Ken Feil to follow.



**Tuesday, October 22**

### **Brooklyn Inshallah**

**POC SJ**

Co-presented as part of the Boston Palestine Film Festival with the Council on American-Islamic Relations and part of the Power to the People Series

**Directed by Ahmed Mansour, documentary, English and Arabic with English subtitles, 83 minutes, USA, 2019**

Khader El-Yateem, an Arab American pastor from Palestine, and Linda Sarsour, organizer of the Women's March on Washington, come together in the wake of President Trump's anti-Muslim policies. With Sarsour's support, El-Yateem runs for New York City Council. Will he be the first Arab American to ever win a seat in the race? The documentary follows the drama of his candidacy. Discussion with director Ahmed Mansour to follow.



**Thursday, October 24**

### **Gloria Bell**

**F I**

Co-presented with the Boston Latino Film Festival

**Directed by Sebastián Lelio, comedy/drama, English, 102 minutes, Chile and USA, 2018**

Gloria is a free-spirited divorcée who spends her days at a straight-laced office job and her nights on the dance floor, joyfully letting loose at clubs around Los Angeles. After meeting Arnold on a night out, she finds herself thrust into an unexpected new romance, filled with both the joys of budding love and the complications of dating, identity, and family. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Lindsey Beck to follow.



**Tuesday, October 29**

### **Fast Color**

**F W POC**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival and the Boston Women's Film Festival

**Directed by Julia Hart, drama, English, 100 minutes, USA, 2019**

Hunted by mysterious forces, a young woman who has supernatural abilities must

go on the run when her powers are discovered. With nowhere else to go, she flees back to her family and the farmhouse she abandoned long ago. There, while being pursued by the local sheriff, she begins to mend the broken relationships with her mother and daughter and learns that the power she needed was inside her all along. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Rae Shaw and Professor Wendy Walters to follow.



**Thursday, October 31**

### **Us**

**F POC**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival and the Boston Underground Film Festival

**Directed by Jordan Peele, horror, English, 116 minutes, USA, 2019**

Accompanied by her husband, son, and daughter, Adelaide Wilson returns to the beachfront home where she grew up as a child. Haunted by a traumatic experience from the past, Adelaide grows increasingly concerned that something bad is going to happen. Her worst fears soon become a reality when four masked strangers descend upon the house, forcing the Wilsons into a fight for survival. When the masks come off, the family is horrified to learn that each attacker takes the appearance of one of them. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Shaun Clarke to follow.



**Tuesday, November 5**

**Time for Ilhan**

**POC SJ W**

Co-presented with the Boston Women's Film Festival, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the Center for Women's Health and Human Rights and part of the Power to the People Series

Directed by Norah Shapiro, documentary, English and with English subtitles, USA, 2018

On November 8, 2016, a young, hijab-wearing mother-of-three named Ilhan Omar made history, becoming the first Somali Muslim woman to be elected to state office in America. She was hailed by the *New York Times* as "one of the bright lights in the post-election darkness," and the documentary film *Time for Ilhan* intimately chronicles her hard-fought campaign for State Representative in Minnesota's Senate District 60B, home to the nation's largest Somali community. A fresh take on the old story of the American Dream, *Time for Ilhan* offers an inspiring, stereotype-busting portrait of a rising political star as she begins a bold and powerful political career. Discussion with director Norah Shapiro to follow.



**Thursday, November 7**

**We Are the Radical Monarchs**

**POC W SJ LGBTQ**

Co-presented by the Boston Latino Film Festival, the Independent Film Festival of Boston, the Wicked Queer Film Festival, the Boston Women's Film Festival, the Roxbury International Film Festival, and the Center for Women's Health and Human Rights, and as part of the Power to the People Series

Directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton, documentary, English, 95 minutes, USA, 2019

Set in Oakland, a city with a deep history of social justice movements, this film documents the Radical Monarchs: an alternative to the Scout movement for girls of color aged 8-13. Its members earn badges for completing units on social justice including being an LGBTQ ally, the environment, and disability justice. The group was started by two fierce, queer women of color, Anayvette Martinez and Marilyn Hollinquest, as a way to address and center her daughter's experience as a young brown girl. Their work is anchored in the belief that adolescent girls of color need dedicated spaces and that the foundation for this innovative work must also be rooted in fierce interdependent sisterhood, self-love, and hope. Discussion with director Linda Goldstein Knowlton to follow.



**Tuesday, November 12**

**Adam**

**F LGBTQ SJ**

Co-presented with the Wicked Queer Film Festival and part of Trans Awareness Week

Directed by Rhys Ernest, comedy, English, 95 minutes, USA, 2019

Awkward, self-conscious Adam Freeman has just finished his junior year of high school in 2006. When his cool older sister Casey suggests he visit her in New York for the summer, Adam has visions of meeting a girl and finally gaining some actual life experience. The fantasy doesn't materialize exactly as expected. Casey has enthusiastically embraced life amid Brooklyn's young LGBTQ community and invites Adam to tag along with her to queer bars, marriage equality rallies, and other happenings. When Adam falls at first sight for Gillian, a smart, beautiful young woman in this new crowd, she mistakenly assumes he is trans. Flummoxed and enamored, he haplessly goes along with her assumption, resulting in an increasingly complex comedy—and tragedy—of errors he's ill-equipped to navigate. Discussion led by the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition to follow.



**Thursday, November 14**

**Warrior Women**

**W POC SJ**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival, the Boston Women's Film Festival, the Emerson Urban Arts Gallery, and the Center for Women's Health and Human Rights and part of the Power to the People Series

Directed by Elizabeth Castle and Christina D. King, documentary, English and with English subtitles, 65 minutes, USA, 2018

In the 1970s, with the swagger of unapologetic Indianness, organizers of the American Indian Movement (AIM) fought for Native liberation and survival as a community of extended families.

*Warrior Women* is the story of Madonna Thunder Hawk, one such AIM leader who shaped a kindred group of activists' children—including her daughter Marcy—into the "We Will Remember" Survival School as a Native alternative to government-run education. Together, Madonna and Marcy fought for Native rights in an environment that made them more comrades than mother-daughter. Today, with Marcy now a mother herself, both are still at the forefront of Native issues, fighting against the environmental devastation of the Dakota Access Pipeline and for Indigenous cultural values. Discussion with co-director and co-producer Elizabeth Castle moderated by Roxbury International Film Festival director Lisa Simmons to follow.



**Tuesday, November 19**

## *Her Smell*

F

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival and the Independent Film Festival of Boston

Directed by Alex Ross Perry, drama, English, 134 minutes, USA, 2019

Becky Something is a '90s rock superstar who once filled arenas with her band Something She. When her excesses derail a national tour, she's forced to reckon with her past while recapturing the inspiration that led her band to success. Discussion led by Associate Professor Kristin Lieb to follow.



**Thursday, November 21**

## *Knives and Skin*

W F POC LGBTQ

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival, the Wicked Queer Film Festival, and the Boston Women's Film Festival

Directed by Jennifer Reeder, drama, English, 111 minutes, USA, 2019

*Knives and Skin* follows the investigation of a young girl's disappearance in the rural Midwest, led by an inexperienced local sheriff. The ripple of fear and suspicion among the small-town residents destroys some relationships and strengthens others. This mystical teen noir presents coming of

age as a lifelong process and examines the profound impact of grief as the teenagers experience an accelerated loss of innocence while their parents are forced to confront adulthood failures. Discussion with director Jennifer Reeder moderated by Assistant Professor Rae Shaw to follow.



**Tuesday, December 3**

## *The Favourite*

F LGBTQ I

Co-presented with the Wicked Queer Film Festival

Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, drama, English, 119 minutes, UK and USA, 2018

Early 18th century. England is at war with the French. Nevertheless, duck racing and pineapple eating are thriving. A frail Queen Anne occupies the throne and her close friend Lady Sarah governs the country in her stead while tending to Anne's ill health and mercurial temper. When a new servant, Abigail, arrives, her charm endears her to Sarah. Sarah takes Abigail under her wing and Abigail sees a chance at a return to her aristocratic roots. As the politics of war become quite time-consuming for Sarah, Abigail steps into the breach to fill in as the Queen's companion. Their burgeoning friendship gives her a chance to fulfill her ambitions and she will not let woman, man, politics, or rabbit stand in her way. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Sarah Zaidan to follow.



**Thursday, December 5**

## ***The Last Black Man in San Francisco***

**POC SJ**

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival

Directed by Joe Talbot, drama, English, 121 minutes, USA, 2019

Jimmie Fails dreams of reclaiming the Victorian home his grandfather built in the heart of San Francisco. Joined

on his quest by his best friend Mont, Jimmie searches for belonging in a rapidly changing city that seems to have left them behind. As he struggles to reconnect with his family and reconstruct the community he loses for, his hopes blind him to the reality of his situation. A wistful odyssey populated by skaters, squatters, street preachers, playwrights, and other locals on the margins, *The Last Black Man in San Francisco* is a poignant and sweeping story of hometowns and how they're made—and kept alive—by the people who love them. Discussion led by curator, filmmaker, and MassArt professor Chico Colvard to follow.

The Bright Lights Film Series is sponsored by the Department of Visual and Media Arts at Emerson College. The mission of the series is to create community through cinema and welcomes both Emerson faculty, students, and staff as well as the general public. Bright Lights seeks to create an environment where cinema is not only viewed and appreciated but where a dialogue is fostered and a community of media makers, academics, and aficionados are engaged and supported. The series is committed to screening at least 50 percent of films directed by women and crafting a diverse program including filmmakers of color, queer cinema, and films dealing with disability.

Screenings take place every Tuesday and Thursday evening during the semester with the exception of occasions when the College is closed (such as holidays, spring break, inclement weather). Sessions are always free and open to the public, and seating is on a first-come basis. This series is curated and managed by the director of programming, Anna Feder.

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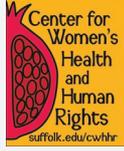


**BUFF**



**CAIR**

Council on American-Islamic Relations



**BOSTON JEWISH FILM**

The Bright Lights Film Series is implementing an advisory starting this fall to notify our community about potentially disturbing content. This information will be made available for those who seek it out at [emerson.edu/brightlightsemerson/content-advisory](http://emerson.edu/brightlightsemerson/content-advisory).