

Department of Visual and Media Arts

Spring 2020 Calendar



bright lights film series

Web: emerson.edu/brightlights

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 BrightLightsEmerson



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

Paramount Center
559 Washington Street
Boston, MA



Thursday, January 30

Knives Out

F **POC**

Co-presented with the Independent Film Festival of Boston, Frames Per Second, and the Boston Latino International Film Festival

Directed by Rian Johnson, drama, English, 140 minutes, USA, 2019

When renowned crime novelist Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer) is found dead at his estate just after his 85th birthday, the inquisitive and debonair Detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) is mysteriously enlisted to investigate. From Harlan's dysfunctional family to his devoted staff, Blanc sifts through a web of red herrings and self-serving lies to uncover the truth behind Harlan's untimely death. Discussion led by Assistant Professor and writer/director Maria Agui Carter to follow.



Tuesday, February 4

The Dead Don't Die

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival and the *Living on Earth* podcast

Directed by Jim Jarmusch, comedy,

English, 105 minutes, USA, 2019

In the sleepy small town of Centerville, something's not quite right. The moon hangs large and low in the sky, the hours of daylight are becoming unpredictable, and animals are beginning to exhibit unusual behaviors. News reports are scary and scientists are concerned, but no one foresees the strangest and most dangerous repercussion that will soon start plaguing Centerville: the dead rise from their graves and feast on the living, and the citizens must battle to survive. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Jon Honea to follow. *Selected by guest curator Herbert Nipson, Office of the Arts screening room manager.*



Thursday, February 6

All We've Got

LGBTQ **W** **POC** **SJ** **EC**

Co-presented with the Melanin Pride Festival, The Lesbians of Color Symposium (LOCS) Collective, Kirsten Porter Presents, The Honors Program at Emerson, Emerson Alumni Relations, the Boston Women's Film Festival, and the Wicked Queer Film Festival

Directed by Alexis Clements, documentary, English, 67 minutes, USA, 2019

A personal exploration of LGBTQI women's communities, cultures, and social justice work through the lens of the spaces they create, from bars to

bookstores to arts and political hubs. Social groups rely on physical spaces to meet and build connections, step outside oppressive social structures, avoid policing and violence, share information, provide support, and organize politically. Yet, in the past decade, more than 100 bars, bookstores, and art and community spaces where LGBTQI women gather have closed. In this film, Clements travels the country to explore the factors driving the loss of these spaces, understand why some are able to endure, and search for community among the ones that remain. Panel discussion with writer and director Alexis Clements '02 to follow.



Tuesday, February 11

A Vigilante

W **F** **EC**

Co-presented with the Boston Women's Film Festival

Directed by Sarah Daggar-Nickson, drama, English, 91 minutes, USA, 2018

A once-abused woman, Sadie, devotes herself to ridding victims of their domestic abusers while hunting down the husband she must kill to truly be free. *Vigilante* is a thriller inspired by the strength and bravery of real domestic abuse survivors and the incredible obstacles to safety they face. Discussion with producer and affiliated faculty Andrew Corkin to follow.



Thursday, February 13

#Female Pleasure

W I SJ

Co-presented with the Boston Women's Film Festival, Roxbury International Film Festival, the Goethe Institut, and the United Nations Association of Greater Boston

Directed by Barbara Miller, documentary, English, Japanese, and German with English subtitles, 101 minutes, Switzerland and Germany, 2019

This film portrays five courageous, smart, and self-determined women, breaking the silence imposed by their archaic-patriarch societies and religious communities. With incredible strength and positive energy, Deborah Feldman, Leyla Hussein, Rokudenashiko, Doris Wagner, and Vithika Yadav are fighting for sexual liberation and autonomy for women, beyond religious rules and cultural barriers. But their victory comes at a high price: they all have experienced public defamation, threats, and prosecutions; have been excommunicated by the society they grew up in; and even received death threats by religious leaders and fanatics. Discussion with director Barbara Miller to follow.



Tuesday, February 18

American Factory

W I SJ

Co-presented with SEIU Local 888 Emerson staff union, the Boston Asian American Film Festival, the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, and GlobeDocs

Directed by Julia Reichert and Steven Bognar, documentary, English and Mandarin with English subtitles, 115 minutes, USA, 2019

In post-industrial Ohio, a Chinese billionaire opens a new factory in the husk of an abandoned General Motors plant. Early days of hope and optimism give way to setbacks as high-tech China clashes with working-class America. Panel discussion on the state of labor to follow. *Selected by guest curator Herbert Nipson, Office of the Arts screening room manager.*



Thursday, February 20

Scandalous: The True Story of the National Enquirer

Co-presented with the Boston Institute for Nonprofit Journalism and the Boston Underground Film Festival

Directed by Mark Landsman, documentary, English, 97 minutes, USA, 2019

Sex! Gossip! Scandal! For over 60 years, the *National Enquirer* has pumped out salacious, shocking stories, stretching

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.

The Bright Lights Film Series implemented an advisory last fall to notify our community about potentially disturbing content. This information will be made available for those who seek it out at emerson.edu/brightlights/content-advisory.

the limits of journalism and blurring the lines between truth and fiction. *Scandalous* is the sensational true story of the most infamous tabloid in US history, a wild, probing look at how one newspaper's prescient grasp of its readers' darkest curiosities led it to massive profits and influence. With rare archival footage and revelations as wild as *National Enquirer* headlines themselves, *Scandalous* examines our obsession with the rich, famous, and powerful, and the tabloid that has fed those obsessions for generations of Americans. Discussion with director Mark Landsman and director of photography Michael Pessah to follow.



Tuesday, February 25

Meow Wolf: Origin Story

W

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival

Directed by Morgan Capps and Jilann Spitzmiller, documentary, English, 88 minutes, USA, 2018

A group of artists in Santa Fe, NM, become a DIY collective called Meow Wolf. Their immersive, large-scale exhibitions crack open a profitable niche in the arts industry, even as their social mission is challenged by the demands of rapid success. The group's members navigate fracture and loss for years in

pursuit of their idealistic vision. When they spark the interest of George R.R. Martin and receive his support to take over an old bowling alley, Meow Wolf builds a massive exhibition with more than 140 artists working at a breakneck pace. With the wild success of the House of Eternal Return, Meow Wolf now faces its own internal turmoil as it begins to change the lives of creatives everywhere. Discussion with co-director Jilann Spitzmiller to follow.



Thursday, February 27

The Green Lie

SJ I

Co-presented with Earth Emerson, Emerson Green Collective, the Goethe Institut, the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, the *Living on Earth* podcast, and the Office of Sustainability at Emerson

Directed by Werner Boote, documentary, English, Portuguese, and German with English subtitles, Austria, 93 minutes, 2018

This documentary questions the sustainable marketing images big global players made up in the last years to get back trust from the rising crowd of skeptical customers. What about fair palm oil? Is BP really Beyond Petrol? The camera follows the two protagonists around the globe, doing research and interviews with company speakers, philosophers, and those fighting for a better and living-friendly world. Discussion led by Associate

Professor Nejem Raheem and Executive-in-Residence Michael Tucker to follow.

The Bright will be dark on March 3 and 5 for the Emerson College spring break.



Tuesday, March 10

Crescendo

F SJ I EC

Co-presented with Boston Jewish Film, the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, and the Goethe Institut

Directed by Dror Zahavi, drama, English, German, and Arabic with English subtitles, Germany, 102 minutes, 2020

When world-famous conductor Eduard Sporck accepts the job to create an Israeli-Palestinian youth orchestra, he is quickly drawn into a tempest of sheer unsolvable problems. Having grown up in a state of war, suppression, or constant risk of terrorist attacks, the young musicians from both sides are far from able to form a team. Lined up behind the two best violinists—the emancipated Palestinian Layla and the handsome Israeli Ron—they form two parties who deeply mistrust each other, on- and off-stage alike. Will Sporck succeed and make the young people forget their hatred, at least for the three weeks until the concert? With the first glimmer of hope, however, the political opponents of the orchestra show them how strong they

are. Discussion with writer and affiliated faculty Stephen Glantz and Boston Palestine Film Festival director Michael Maria to follow.



Thursday, March 12

The Lighthouse

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

Directed by Robert Eggers, drama, English, 110 minutes, USA, 2019

Two lighthouse keepers try to maintain their sanity while living on a remote and mysterious New England island in the 1890s. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Rae Shaw to follow.



Tuesday, March 17

Ham on Rye

F EC

Co-presented with the Boston Underground Film Festival

Directed by Tyler Taormina, drama, English, 85 minutes, USA, 2019

A bizarre rite of passage at the local deli determines the fate of a generation of teenagers, leading some to escape their suburban town and dooming others to remain. Discussion with director Tyler Taormina '13 and Assistant Professor Michael Ryan to follow.



Thursday, March 19

Greener Grass

W F

Co-presented with the Boston Women's Film Festival, the Independent Film Festival of Boston, and the Boston Underground Film Festival

Directed by Jocelyn DeBoer and Dawn Luebbe, comedy, English, 97 minutes, USA, 2019

In a day-glo-colored, bizarre version of suburbia where adults wear braces on their already-straight teeth, everyone drives golf carts, and children magically turn into golden retrievers, soccer moms and best friends Jill and Lisa are locked in a passive aggressive battle-of-the-wills that takes a turn into the sinister when Lisa begins systematically taking over every aspect of Jill's life—starting with her newborn daughter. Meanwhile, a psycho yoga teacher killer is on the loose, Jill's husband has developed a curious taste for pool water, and Lisa is pregnant with a soccer ball. That's just the tip of the gloriously weird iceberg that is this hilariously demented, *Stepford Wives*-on-acid satire. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Maria Corrigan to follow.



Tuesday, March 24

Cunningham

W I

Co-presented with GlobeDocs

Directed by Alla Kovgan, documentary, English, 93 minutes, Germany, France, and USA, 2019

This film traces Merce Cunningham's artistic evolution over three decades of risk and discovery (1944–1972), from his early years as a struggling dancer in post-war New York to his emergence as one of the world's most visionary choreographers. The 3D technology weaves together Merce's philosophies and stories, creating a visceral journey into his innovative work. A breathtaking explosion of dance, music, and never-before-seen archival material. Discussion with director Alla Kovgan and Alissa Cardone, associate professor of dance at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, to follow.

The Bright will be dark on March 26 for a special College-wide event



Tuesday, March 31

Where the Pavement Ends

W POC SJ

Co-presented as part of the It's All True Documentary Showcase, the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, and the Roxbury International Film Festival

Directed by Jane Gilooly, documentary, English, 85 minutes, USA, 2018

The death of Michael Brown, shot by a Ferguson, MO, police officer in 2014, was national news after protests erupted there. But the history of Ferguson, a formerly whites-only "sundown town," and the neighboring black town of Kinloch, now semi-abandoned, is not well known. Incorporating reflections of residents of Kinloch and Ferguson (including Gillooly, who grew up in Ferguson), this film explores the relationship between these two towns. Beginning with a 1960s roadblock that divided then-white Ferguson from black Kinloch, the film depicts a microhistory of race relations in America.

The Emerson College It's All True student documentary festival will take place April 1 at 7:00 pm in the Bright Family Screening Room. This event is free and open to the public.



Thursday, April 2

The Making of Lissa

POC I SJ

Co-presented with the Roxbury International Film Festival and the United Nations Association of Greater Boston

Directed by Francesco Dragone, documentary, English and Arabic with English subtitles, 39 minutes, USA and Egypt, 2018

In December 2015, a team of US- and Canadian-based ethnographers, comic artists, and a small crew of filmmakers took

off to Cairo, Egypt, to work on the in-process graphic novel *Lissa: Still Time*. Authored by anthropologist Sherine Hamdy, from Brown University, and professor Coleman Nye, from Simon Fraser University, *Lissa* is a fictional novel based on the two academics' research on kidney failure and organ transplants in Cairo, and on BRCA genetic testing and preventive mastectomies in the US respectively. Professors Hamdy and Nye worked to transform their ethnographic research into a plausible fictional story narrating the lives of Layla, an Egyptian girl, and Anna, an American expat living in Egypt. Each of the two friends faces a medical decision that the other cannot comprehend, raising questions around ethics, global health inequalities, and religion. Discussion with director Francesco Dragone to follow.



Tuesday, April 7

Circus of Books

W LGBTQ

Co-presented as part of the Wicked Queer Film Festival with Boston Jewish Film and GlobeDocs

Directed by Rachel Mason, documentary, English, 92 minutes, USA, 2019

In 1976, Karen and Barry Mason had fallen on hard times and were looking for a way to support their young family when they answered an ad in the *Los Angeles Times*. Larry Flynt was

seeking distributors for *Hustler Magazine*. What was expected to be a brief sideline led to their becoming fully immersed in the LGBT community as they took over a local store, Circus of Books. A decade later, they had become the biggest distributors of gay porn in the US. The film focuses on the double life they led, trying to maintain the balance of being parents at a time when LGBT culture was not yet accepted. Their many challenges included facing jail time for a federal obscenity prosecution and enabling their store to be a place of refuge at the height of the AIDS crisis. *Circus of Books* offers a rare glimpse into an untold chapter of queer history, and it is told through the lens of the owners' own daughter, Rachel Mason, an artist, filmmaker, and musician. Discussion with director Rachel Mason to follow.



Thursday, April 9

Colette

F LGBTQ

Co-presented as part of the Wicked Queer Film Festival with the French Cultural Center

Directed by Wash Westmoreland, drama, English, 111 minutes, UK, USA, and France, 2018

After marrying a successful Parisian writer known commonly as "Willy," Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette is transplanted from her childhood home in rural

France to the intellectual and artistic splendor of Paris. Soon after, Willy convinces Colette to ghostwrite for him. She pens a semi-autobiographical novel about a witty and brazen country girl named Claudine, sparking a bestseller and a cultural sensation. After its success, Colette and Willy become the talk of Paris and their adventures inspire additional Claudine novels. Colette's fight over creative ownership defies gender roles and drives her to overcome societal constraints, revolutionizing literature, fashion, and sexual expression. Discussion led by Barbara Bouquegneau, executive director of the French Cultural Center, to follow.



Tuesday, April 14

Bacurau

POC I W F

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

Directed by Juliano Dornelles and Kleber Mendonça Filho, drama, English and Portuguese with English subtitles, Brazil and France, 2019

Set in the near future, the film follows Teresa, who comes home to Bacurau, a village in Brazil's semi-arid sertão, to attend her grandmother's funeral. Upon her arrival, Teresa immediately observes signs that Bacurau is in dire straits. Basic amenities are

in short supply, mobile-phone coverage is fading, clean water supply is dammed, and the truck that brings potable water arrives riddled with bullet holes. It soon becomes apparent that the corrupt government has forsaken the village completely: not only has Bacurau been literally erased from the map, but its citizens are also under attack. As the responsible close in, the villagers must prepare an organized resistance to avoid greater damage. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann to follow. Selected by guest curator Herbert Nipson, Office of the Arts screening room manager.



Thursday, April 16

Queen and Slim

POC W F

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

Directed by Melina Matsoukas, drama, English, 132 minutes, USA, 2019

Slim and Queen's first date takes an unexpected turn when a policeman pulls them over for a minor traffic violation. When the situation escalates, Slim takes the officer's gun and shoots him in self-defense. Now labeled cop killers in the media, Slim and Queen feel that they have no choice but to go on the run and evade the law. When a video of the incident goes viral, the unwitting outlaws soon become

a symbol of trauma, terror, grief, and pain for people all across the country. Discussion led by Chico Colvard to follow.



Tuesday, April 21

Anthropocene: The Human Epoch

I SJ W

Co-presented with the Institute for Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies at Emerson, the Goethe Institut, the *Living on Earth* podcast, Emerson Dining, the Office of Sustainability at Emerson, Earth Emerson, and the Emerson Green Collective

Directed by Jennifer Baichwal, Edward Burtynsky, and Nicholas de Pencier, documentary, English, Russian, Italian, German, Mandarin, and Cantonese with English subtitles, 87 minutes, Canada, 2019

A cinematic meditation on humanity's massive reengineering of the planet, *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* is a four-years-in-the-making feature documentary film. Third in a trilogy that includes *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006) and *Watermark* (2013), the film follows the research of an international body of scientists, the Anthropocene Working Group, who, after nearly 10 years of research, are arguing that the Holocene Epoch gave way to the Anthropocene Epoch in the mid-twentieth century because of profound and lasting human changes to Earth. Panel discussion with David Corbie, Greenovate

outreach manager, and Tijana Zderic, Engagement Lab research assistant, to follow.



Thursday, April 23

Parasite

POC I F

Co-presented with the **Boston Underground Film Festival**, the **Independent Film Festival of Boston**, and the **Boston Asian American Film Festival**

Directed by Bong Joon-ho, drama, English and Korean with English subtitles, 132 minutes, South Korea, 2019

Meet the Park Family: the picture of aspirational wealth. And the Kim Family, rich in street smarts but not much else. Be it chance or fate, these two houses are brought together and the Kims sense a golden opportunity. Masterminded by college-aged Ki-woo, the Kim children expediently install themselves as tutor and art therapist to the Parks. Soon, a symbiotic relationship forms between the two families. The Kims provide “indispensable” luxury services while the Parks obliviously bankroll their entire household. When a parasitic interloper threatens the Kims’ newfound comfort, a savage, underhanded battle for dominance breaks out, threatening to destroy the fragile ecosystem between the Kims and the Parks. Discussion led by Assistant Professor Ougie Pak to follow.

From our inaugural guest curator: “Historically I have hidden in the projection booth and tried not to be noticed, because if I am noticed there is usually something wrong. I have been projecting film in the Boston area since 1971 and since then have worked in most of our local theaters present and past, as well as with film productions and stage shows. This year marks the first time since my start in the industry that anyone has formally asked me to curate part of a program. I normally gravitate toward quirky films with great cinematography and complex, nearly incomprehensible plots. For your sake, I have chosen to go against type in my choice of films you may have missed from the past year. My theme is exploitation: the first world exploiting the second world, those who have the money exploiting those who make it for them, and all of us exploiting our environment.”

–Herb Nipson, Bright Family Screening Room manager, Emerson College Office of the Arts

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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