

28 January 2022

Letter of Observation for Brian FULLER

Class Observed: ARHI354—History of Film

Date observed: Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Observation performed by: Charlotte H. WELLMAN, Assoc. Professor, Art History



This semester, Brian Fuller has prepared a course that once proved essential to Edinboro students across our campus. This course proved a crowd-pleasing staple for Distribution I. It has been renumbered (ARHI220 has become ARHI354) and revived after long dormancy. Cutbacks in the art history area suspended delivery of this course, and its resurrection offers essential preparation for our film and animation students as well as for a generation increasingly reliant on technology. They benefit from the critical tools Fuller prepares them to use to effectively analyze--and better appreciate – time-based media and, quite simply, to make better films themselves.

Fuller's organization and delivery are impressive. His reach is vast: he begins with Edison and ends with Spike Lee. He seeks to cover a sprawling industry and medium, with an international presence, radical innovation and experimentation, and complex intersectionality. Fuller's course incorporates silent film, film noir, Bollywood, 40 Acres and a Mule (Spike Lee's company), and much more—and yet no survey on film can ever be comprehensive. Fuller has proved an instructor adept at negotiating a course's organization and reception. Colleagues are already borrowing his approach to attendance and course requirements during the pandemic. He has established study pods of five students each that serve to disseminate notes and information, particularly crucial when students are compelled to quarantine. Quizzes and presentations are also flexible, offering multiple chances to choose particular assignments and have the balance of scores recalibrated should a student miss a particular deadline. Brian is also responsive to trigger issues in Higher Ed—particularly challenging since most films contain content impactful to a diverse audience. Fuller accommodates this by including an extensive list of the films screened matched to particular trigger warnings, allowing students to exercise self-care in deciding which films to screen or skirt.

Fuller delivers the History of Film in our large Doucette auditorium. He has lugged a podium to the center of the room to utterly democratize this vast space, and from this platform he delivers the class in the manner of an expert maestro and carnival barker. There are 82 students in this class, yet Fuller called on practically every participant by name, with only occasional prompts. Each response was received with enthusiastic praise ("Good one, Lindsey!!"). Fuller has not shrunk from the more controversial titles. Week Two centered on D.W. Griffith's phenomenal *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Fuller sought to promote productive conversation about a film addressing civil strife and including racist content by offering supplemental readings and a rich historical context for the film. By the close of my visit, my notes on the film's history filled the page.

Fuller is committed to teaching this course every other Spring. This course, now restored, will prove essential for our students' professional preparation.