

Moral conundrums are not something human beings tend to run short of easily. There are always those whose viewpoint opposes someone else's, and the resulting conflict often does lead to a productive resolution. That it took until 2008 to overturn a law that made the sale of "marital aids" (aka dildos) a crime in one state should not be too surprising. When the intersection of taxes and sex lead to an outcry, however, even given the heightened fear over sex crimes, it provides a peculiar moment in considering how humans come to a rational decision about sex (if indeed they ever do). When the impetus to save taxpayer monies leads to accountability, we often laud the effort. What is less obvious are the myriad ways that moralists will explore to continue the frontal (no, not *full* frontal) assault on so many all-too-human activities. Moral righteousness: it's not just against queer anymore.

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## Society for Linguistic Anthropology

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### Linguistic Moments in the Movies

By Mark Allen Peterson (Miami U)

It's May. It's warm in that classroom after lunch, and outside the balmy weather is just calling the students (and maybe you) to go outside and stretch out on that soft, green grass. There's only one thing to do! Turn out the lights and turn on the digital projector with this year's offering of linguistic moments in the movies. Special thanks to Alexander King, David Samuels and Hal Schiffman for their recommendations.

#### **Blazing Saddles (1974)**

Many people have suggested this film over the years, but always with misgivings. *Blazing Saddles* is one of the most brilliant deconstructions of racism in Hollywood history, from the early scene where white cowboys order black railroad workers to sing, through the concluding speech by the town leader agreeing to integrate the town. Bart's intelligence is marked by his urbane, grammatical speech and contemporary idioms, while the stupidity of the white cowboys and townspeople is marked by stereotyped rural registers. And there is of course the notable and frequently referenced surreality of the Yiddish-speaking Indian. The film's representations of gender, however, are disturbingly pre-feminist if not misogynistic, even to the use of at least two jokes about rape.

#### **Bleach (2004–09)**

After high school student Kurosaki Ichigo is attacked by hungry, tormented spirits called Hollows, he is forced to become a *shinigami*, or death god, whose duty it is to purge Hollows so they can pass on to the afterlife known as the Soul Society. This very popular manga/anime series is rich with lexical borrowing, particularly Spanish. The world of the Hollows is "Hueco Mundo" [sic]. In the manga/graphic novel versions—of which some 20 volumes are in print—there are bad guys called *arrancar* (Spanish for "to remove or to rip off") who even introduce themselves in Spanish ("Yo soy arrancar numero trece, Eduardo Leones"). Five volumes of the English dubbed version are now available on DVD, but the Japanese version is more interesting because the characters speak an idiomatically modern Japanese filled with English loan words, while magic spells are uttered in an older, more formal register of Japanese.

#### **Life of Brian (1979)**

Play with accents and registers is common throughout what is probably Monty Python's funniest film, but the best scene for classroom use is the one where Brian, trying to write "Romans Go Home" on a wall, is given a brutal lesson in Latin grammar.

#### **Pygmalion (1938)**

The Internet Movie Database lists at least seven versions of this classic, but the 1938 version was adapted by playwright George Bernard Shaw himself (he won an Oscar for it). Recognizing that class distinction involves learned registers of speech, paralinguistic and cultural competence, Professor Henry Higgins (Leslie Howard) bets that he can enable a Coventry Garden flower girl (Wendy Hiller) to pass for a duchess in polite society. Along the way he discovers to his shock that the lower classes are real persons with their own thoughts and feelings.

#### **Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (1986)**

In an interesting take on other animal communication, an alien space probe appears over twenty-third century earth, seeking to communicate with the planet's humpback whales. When no whales answer its call (they were hunted to extinction in the twenty-first century), the probe starts to cause major storms on earth and threaten its destruction. The film also offers amusing opportunities to discuss cultural competence, as the twenty-third century space crew travel back into the twentieth century to locate some whales, and must negotiate various cultural practices that are completely alien to them. There is a recurring motif in which the characters attempt to employ profanity guided by the twentieth century "classic" literature of Jacqueline Susann and Harold Robbins.

Is there a movie you didn't see here? SLA columns from May 2002, 2003, 2007 and

2008 discussed *Airplane*, *Amistad*, *Ball of Fire*, *Bambi*, *Beavis and Butthead Do America*, *Blade Runner*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Canadian Bacon*, *Children of a Lesser God*, *Class Act*, *Dances with Wolves*, *El Norte*, *Encino Man*, *L'Enfant Sauvage*, *Executive Decision*, *The Funeral*, *Good Will Hunting*, *I Cento Passi*, *Mad Hot Ballroom*, *Nell*, *Phenomenon*, *Ranma ½*, *Santa Fe*, *Solomon and Gaenor*, *Star Wars*, *Tampopo*, *Taxing Woman*, *The 13<sup>th</sup> Warrior*, *The 25<sup>th</sup> Hour*, *Wayne's World* and *Whose Line is it Anyway?*

Please send your comments, contributions, news, announcements and movie ideas to Jim Stanlaw ([stanlaw@ilstu.edu](mailto:stanlaw@ilstu.edu)) or Mark Allen Peterson ([petersm2@muohio.edu](mailto:petersm2@muohio.edu)).

## Society for Medical Anthropology

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### Mark Your Calendar! SMA 2009 Award Competition Deadlines

#### **Eileen Basker Memorial Prize**

The Basker Prize is awarded for a significant contribution to excellence in research on gender and health by scholars from any discipline and nation, for a specific book, article, film or exceptional PhD thesis produced within the preceding three years. Some previous recipients of the Basker Prize include Matt Gutmann and Kathy Davis (2008), Sophie Day (2007), Michele Rivkin-Fish (2006), and João Biehl (2005). Nominations should be sent to Carolyn Sargent (Committee Chair), Department of Anthropology, Washington University in St Louis, One Brookings Drive, St Louis, MO 63130. For details, visit [www.medanthro.net/awards/basker.html](http://www.medanthro.net/awards/basker.html). Deadline: July 1, 2009.

#### **Career Achievement Award**

The Career Achievement Award honors an individual who has advanced the field of medical anthropology through career-long contributions to theory or method, and who has been successful in communicating the relevance of medical anthropology to broader publics. Candidates for this award should be senior scholars, typically those who are retiring, or have achieved emeritus status, or have passed the age of 65. Under unusual circumstances exceptions to this rule may be made by the Selection Committee with the approval of the SMA Executive Committee. Nominations for the award should include a letter of nomination, an additional supporting letter, and the candidate's current CV. Send materials to Alan Harwood (Chair of the Selection Committee), Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA 02125. For more information, visit [www.medanthro.net/awards/career.html](http://www.medanthro.net/awards/career.html). Deadline: September 1, 2009.