

School Class Drama: Between Injustice and Disobedience

Education in Movies & Movies in Education

Victoria Shmidt

Task 1 Which films have influenced your opinion about teaching and schools?

- Describe the films that affected you the most in terms of teaching and the views on education.
- Do you remember the circumstance when were you watching it? How old were you? Was it at home or in cinema? Were you along or together with friends?
- What particular scenes, moments, messages were important?
- How do the films connect with local contexts?
- Do these films remind real life or vice versa they present the most desirable image of education or they introduce dystopic vision?
- Do you have particular character which could be defined as the benchmark of teaching? Vice versa do you have the character who performs the most negative image of teaching?

Follow-up to the Task 1

- What are the films: local or foreign for the respondent; well-known (for target audience) or specific; genres (comedy, drama, thriller, action, etc...); relatively new or old.
- What is the experience: emotional, cognitive and applied, cognitive and reflective, complex.
- General attitude to the interrogation between teaching and the films about teaching: idealized/demonized in contrast to real life, helpful for practice, etc...

Teaching & Films about Teaching

Teaching

- A continuous confrontation of choices, dilemmas and tensions
- Process of forming professional identity and accessibility to various professional styles
- Critical thinking and media literacy
- Burn out and total disappointment

Movies about teaching and schools

(II) Legitimated source of knowledge about schools and life in schools:

Movies is a kind of public pedagogy shaping the expectations and norms (Giroux, 2008)

Movies disseminate recycled, ideologically colored stereotypes of both students and teachers (Gregory, 2007)

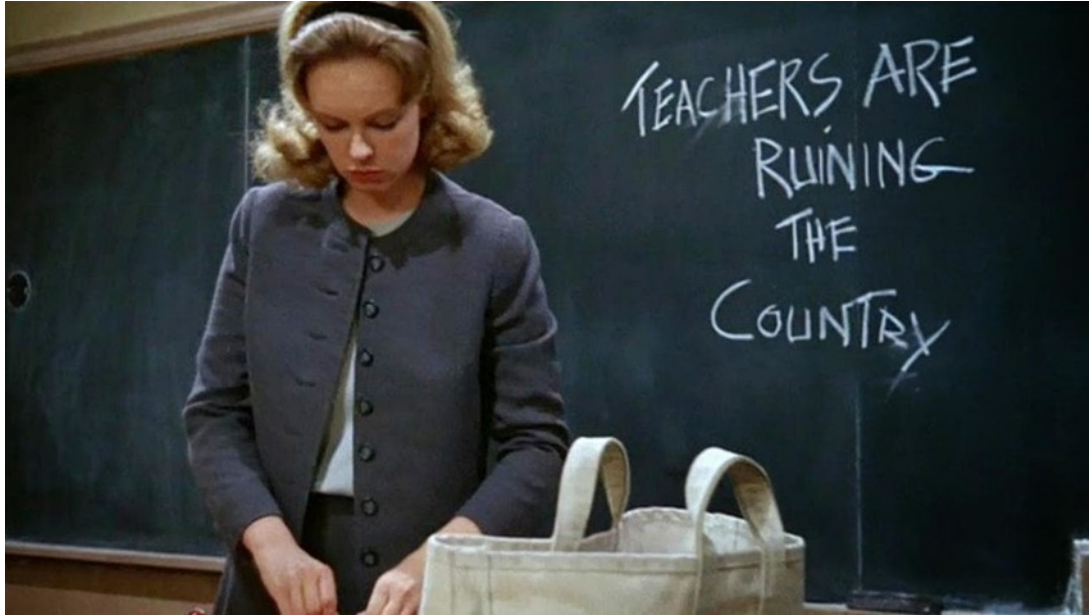
Education as socially situated realm



- power is a socially situated capacity to control others' actions
- identity power directly dependent upon shared social-imaginative conceptions of the social identities

Miranda Fricker

Teachers: agents or vehicles of identity power?



“identity power typically operates in conjunction with other forms of social power, mainly social order as a rigid class system imposes an asymmetrical code of practical and discursive conduct on members of different classes”

Miranda Fricker

Regular education as a structure and an agent of social/epistemic (in)justice

Do schools always produce injustice?

- How school class dramas fix the injustice: the sources of injustice, actors of injustice, the ideal of justice and the obstacles of its achieving
- How do films construct the solution: mapping the actors and options, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses

Task 2 Why the schools produce injustice in:

The Chorus (2004)



The Class (2007)



The Class (2008)



Decoding regular education as producing injustice

Core ambiguity of education because of dilemmas which infiltrate social life

- Human capital (outputs) vs. human right (access)
- Security (safety, sustainability) vs. autonomy (emancipation, independence)

Task 3 What type of teacher, teaching approach would you prefer?

Human capital

- The History Boys (2006)



Human rights

Stand and Deliver (1988)



Human capital in education: Gifted students



Human capital in education: impressive results

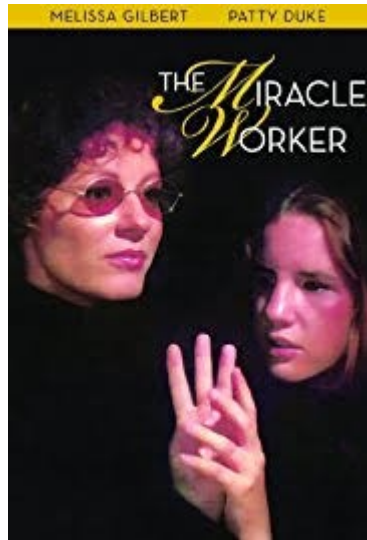
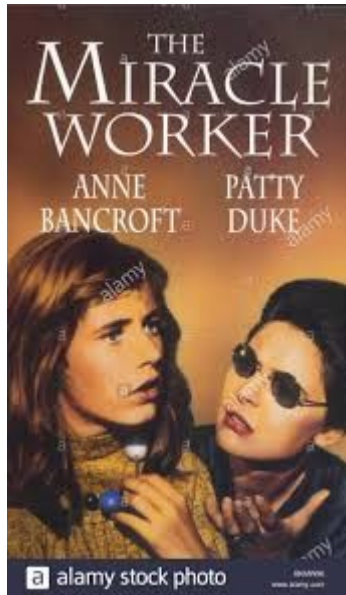


Task 4 Try to list four films with the focus on human rights in education

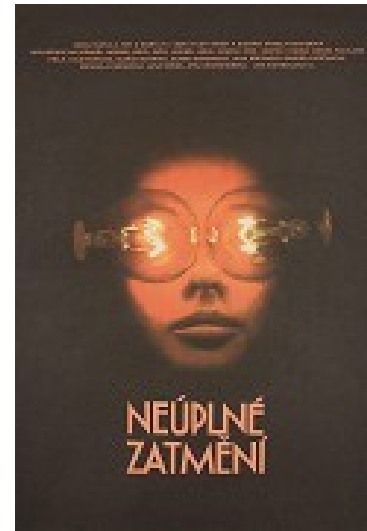
- Measuring inequality and segregation: class, race/ethnicity, age/childhood, gender

Question to thinking: Why the major part of the films about girls also are the films about people with disabilities

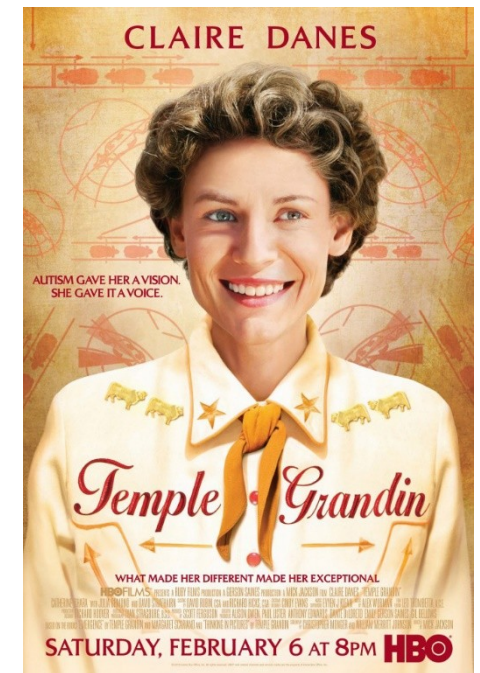
The miracle worker (1962, 1979, 2000)



Incomplete Eclipse




Temple Grandin



Task 4 What was your priority during your school time: security or autonomy?

An ordinary high school day. Except that it's not.



elephant¹⁵

A Film by GUS VAN SANT

HBO FILMS Presents a MEMO FILM COMPANY Production in Association with BLUE RELIEF INC. "ELEPHANT" Director of Photography HARRIS SAVIDES, ASC Executive Producers DIANE KEATON BILL ROBINSON Produced by DANY WOLF Written and Directed by GUS VAN SANT
www.elephantmovie.com

WINNER BEST DIRECTOR
Cannes Film festival 2003

OFFICIAL COMPETITION
CANNES 2003
WINNER PALME D'OR
Cannes Film festival 2003

"Gripping and superbly made, an outstanding film" THE GUARDIAN

"Powerfully thought-provoking" ESQUIRE

"Staggeringly brave and creative" TIME OUT

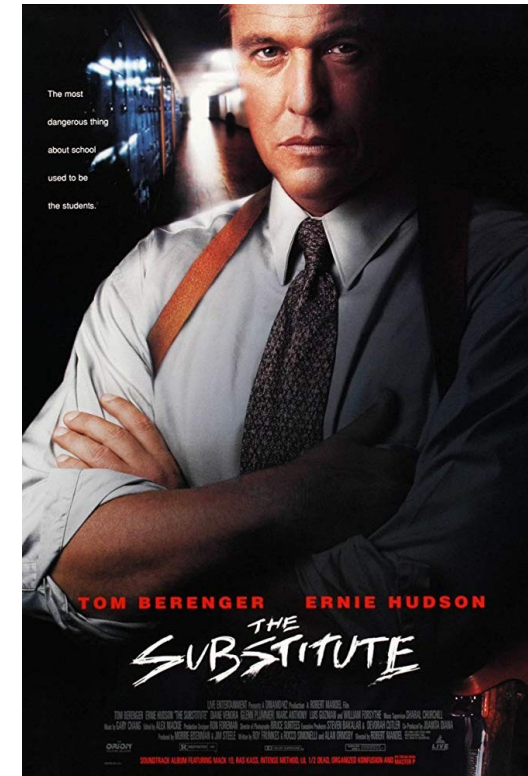
"Simply can't be ignored" DAZED Film of the month



Security: the source of risk

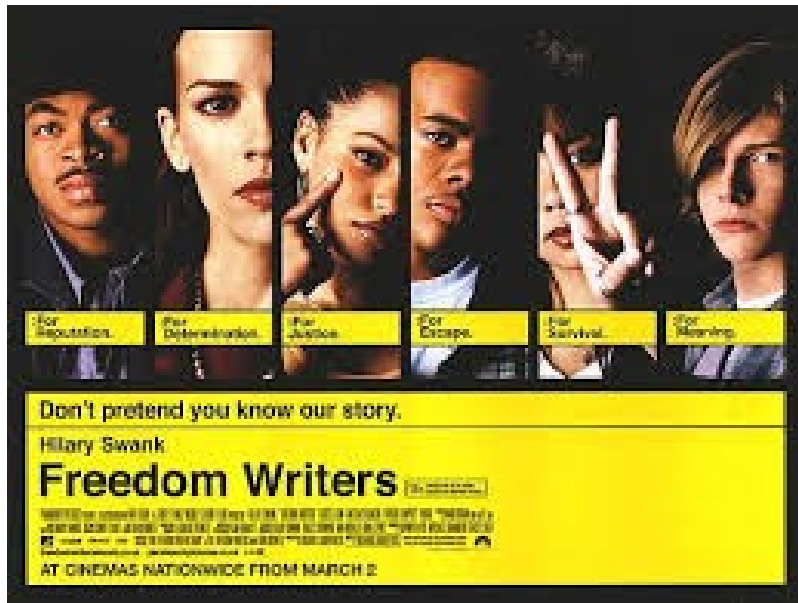
- The most dangerous thing about school used to be the students

The Substitute (1996)



Security: the source of risk

“It's 1994 in Long Beach, California. Idealistic [Erin Gruwell](#) is just starting her first teaching job, that as freshman and sophomore English teacher at Woodrow Wilson High School, which, two years earlier, implemented a voluntary integration program. For many of the existing teachers, the integration has ruined the school, whose previously stellar academic standing has been replaced with many students who will be lucky to graduate or even be literate. Despite choosing the school on purpose because of its integration program, Erin is unprepared for the nature of her classroom, whose students live by generations of strict moral codes of protecting their own at all cost. Many are in gangs and almost all know somebody that has been killed by gang violence. The Latinos hate the Cambodians who hate the blacks and so on. The only person the students hate more is Ms. Gruwell. It isn't until Erin holds an unsanctioned discussion about a recent drive-by shooting death that she fully begins to ...”



Security: the source of risk



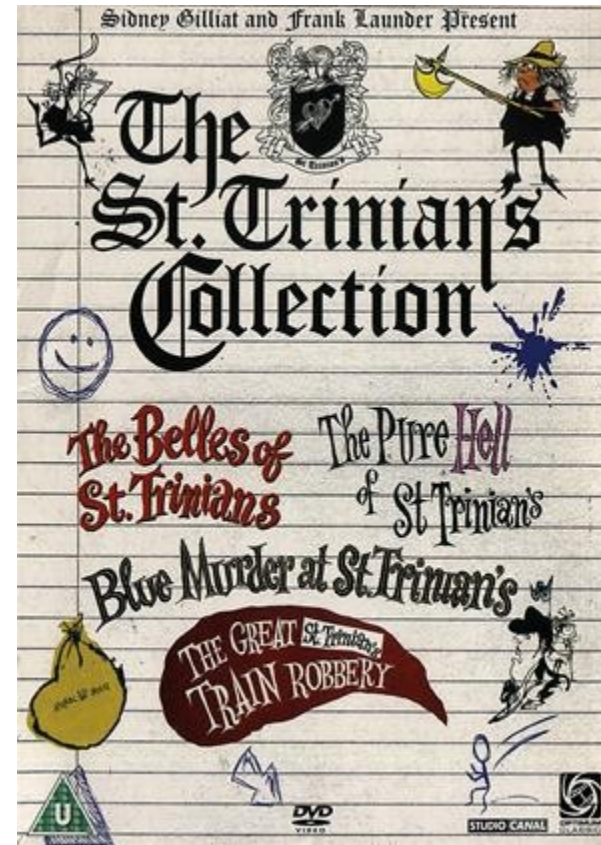
- His Czech was poor. On arrival he was silent, inhibited, insular. Later he gradually adapted, and made some contact. Unfamiliar with basic concepts, he does not even know how to listen to a fairy tale or recognize colors. He lacks basic hygiene habits. Sometimes very affectionate. At other times truculent. He lacks self control and is impulsive. He is usually alone and behaves aggressively towards the other children. These bouts are often followed by great shows of overbearing affection and pampering, to the point of discomfort. He does not understand the rules to games. But nonetheless interferes and spoils them for the others. He demands attention and when he does not get it he imposes himself and clamors in an undisciplined manner. He is too familiar. He has an apathetic look which is at the same time sly. On June 11th he insisted on telling his story. He tried to finish it even though he did not have permission to speak. Repeatedly admonished. He continued to speak. To finish his story. He grabbed hold of adults and forced them to listen. He raised his voice. When he is severely reprimanded he responds with foul language. He refuses to accept punishment. He is uncooperative and arrogant. An outsider. A gypsy.

Autonomy: emancipation through disobedience

- Liberal pedagogy



Autonomy: anarchic sanctuary

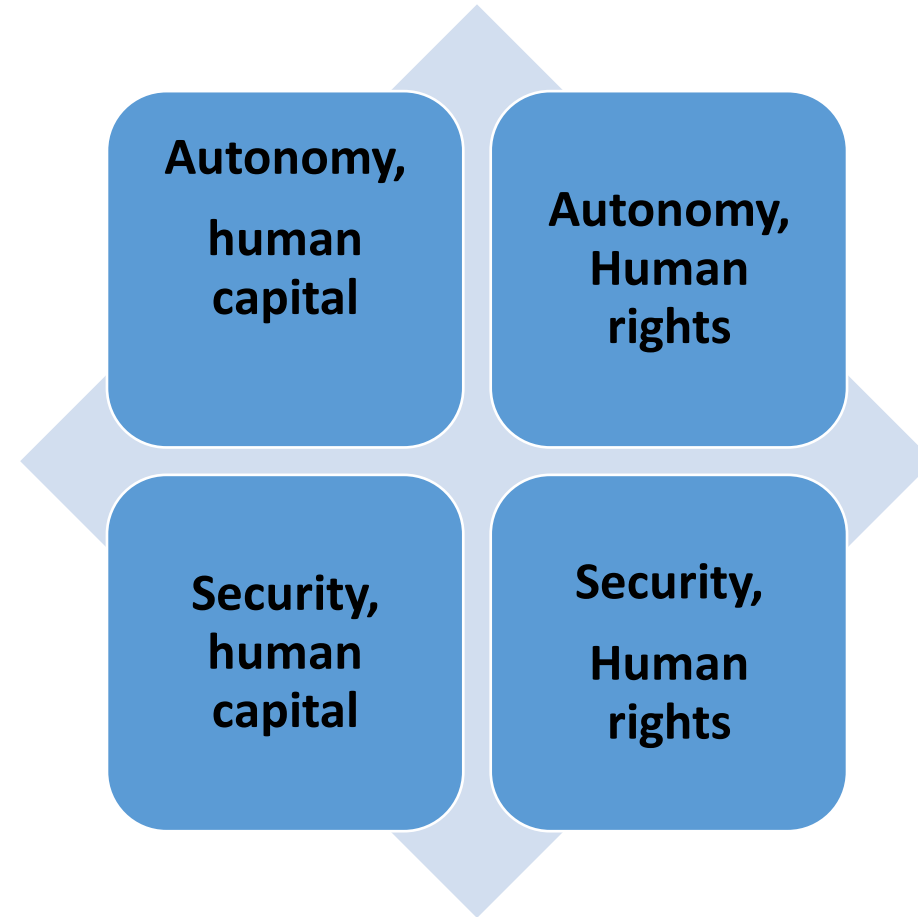


Autonomy: Children's community as the extreme of family vs children opposition

- Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone



Models of solving the dilemmas in the films



Task 5 Try to classify the films from the task 1 according to this typology

- Which type of education is preferable
- What target group
- What values
- What identities

The scholarship of the school class drama as comprehensive social hierarchy of education

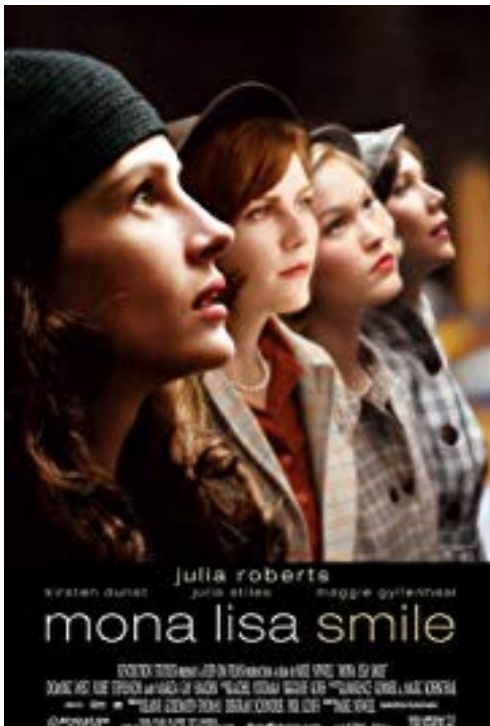
- Inner-city school vs. Suburb school
- Mainstream school vs. Special school
- Individual approach vs. Collective approach
- Long-term educational trajectory vs. Short-term educational trajectory

Suburban school entertainment

- Light hearted Romances
- Dark-humor comedy
- Celebratory youth-rebellion movies
- Spoofs
- Super-natural thriller

American school class drama: Main dilemma

The suburban myth of security and economic plenitude



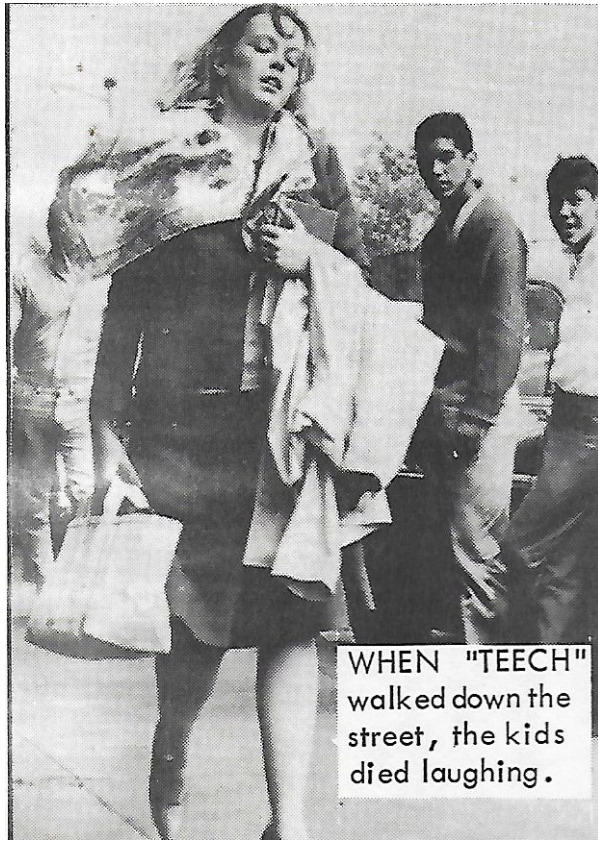
The most poignantly sordid fantasies of inner-city degeneracy and moral decrepitude



Tropes, stereotypes and prejudices



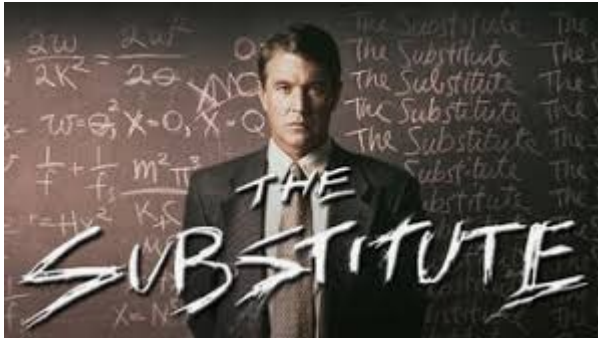
Binary oppositions: Black vs White, man vs Woman, Child vs Adult



Task 6 Binary oppositions in the films

- In which way Modern Educaayshun and Sing use binary oppositions

False masculinity vs. Authentic masculinity



Symbolic consequences: school/class space

- Staircases
- Windows
- Cages
- Doors
- Prison cells
- Stage



Comparing films

- Modern Educayshun



- Sing



School class drama: development in terms of negation by Roy Bhaskar

Real	Transformative	Radical
From school to teacher	From teacher to students	From school to society
create distance from injustice and humanistic concept of individual freedoms	attacks a pre-existing entity in order to transform something or state	the auto-subversive overcoming of a previous vision and consciousness

Question to thinking

- Deschooling is it a case of real or radical negation?

Real negation

- Extremal polarization of the teacher and school
- Master narrative – the teacher as inspirational figure, opposing good and bad teachers
- A figure of super-teacher, heroic figure, the teacher as saviour
- Disobedient students vs disobedient teachers

Extreme example of real negation



- High school teacher Trevor Garfield is stabbed by bad-boy student. Fifteen months later, he moves to Los Angeles to the unruly, predominantly Latino school. He has to tame wolf-like students.

Extreme example of real negation



- A young boy attempts to make the world a better place after his teacher gives him that chance.

Education as a tool of political arbitrariness



Transformative negation:

The changes are in the focus, and cooperation between the teacher and the students, networking, school as ongoing environment not fixed by strict rules

Very general the method of teaching, the approach to the students, school friendly to community and students, mainly relied upon real experience

- Stand and Deliver (1988) the approach to assess the competencies and proceeding math tests
- Entre les murs (2008)
- The great debates (2007)
- History boys (2006)
- The Ron Clark Story (2006)

Radical negation

Thematizing the genre and offering overview on the dilemmas and the approaches to solve it, solid scholarship of previous generations of the films about school

- Dans la maison (2013)
- Detachment (2012)
- [Half Nelson](#) (2006)

Constructing radical negation:

Constructive work with educational taboo - failed teacher and teacher-student relationship (Beveren, Rutten, vandermeersche, Verdoodt, 2018):

- The failing teacher
- The teacher as a 'fraud'
- Erotic relationship between teacher and students
- The violent teacher

Educational taboo: the failing teacher

Half Nelson (2006)

- “bewildered, depressed New York schoolteacher who is slipping into dire drug addiction”

Andrew O’Hehir



Educational taboo: The Teacher as a 'fraud'

Bad Teacher (2011)

A lazy, incompetent middle school teacher who hates her job, her students, and her co-workers is forced to return to teaching to make enough money for breast implants after her wealthy fiancé dumps her.



Educational taboo: Erotic relationship

Notes of Scandal (2006)

- “Notes on a Scandal is melodrama at its best -- a nasty, wickedly good, over-the-top story with school teachers standing in where vampires usually prowl”.

Brandon Fibbs



Educational taboo: Violent Teacher

Whiplash (2014)

“In a nutshell, Whiplash is Dead Poets Society for sociopaths.”

Alistair Ryder



Final task

- Two short films what type of negation

The role of the genre in the career of particular film makers

- Gus Van Sant