DIRTY PRETTY THINGS [2002], directed by Stephen Frears, a versatile director who also did “High Fidelity,” and starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, a British stage actor of Nigerian descent, and Audrey Tautou, best know for the French film “Amelie.” The film is rated “R,” essentially for graphic medical images and language. The film is rentable but not in great quantities.

In watching the film, consider elements that relate to the title of the class: “Social Differentiation and Inequality.” How does it address the “big three” concerns of this course: Class, gender, and race? What does it have to say about male-female relations? In some ways, the film addresses one of the dark undersides of globalization. What does it have to say about the lives of illegal immigrants? About status, hopes, fears, and expectations; the work ethic; the mutual support system of immigrants from very different societies who wind up in the same place; the idea of the “other” in a society; the environment in what some might see as one of the hidden, shadowy, sub-worlds of McWorld. Does the film have parallels with other films we have seen in such areas as exploitation by the more powerful and the idea that some lives are worth more than others?

Another question: How does London come off as a setting for a drama about illegal immigrants? A common view in the U.S. is that we have had and continue to have mixed feelings about immigrants: While we take pride in being a “nation of immigrants” and being a diversified society, we worry about the “other” and whether they can be assimilated. But we also sense that immigrants are needed to do the jobs that few native-born people will do. All of these issues are currently reflected in the debate over immigrants now taking place here. Does the fact that this is not an American film mean we are less inclined to expect a happy ending?