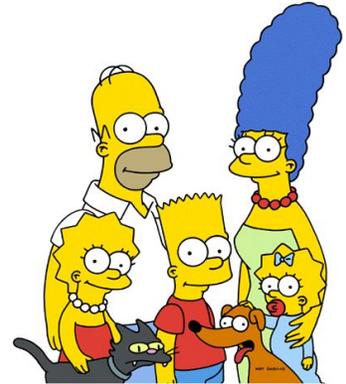
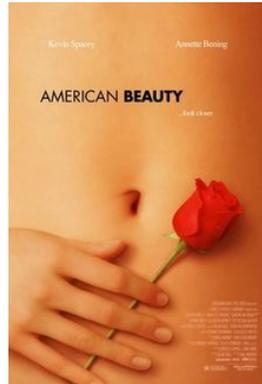


# End of the 20th Century Pop Culture



**Cinema: 1980s Machismo Cinema: Curing the Vietnam Syndrome:** The biggest issue that American cinema faced was the Vietnam syndrome: the notion that the U.S. no longer had the moral high ground. 1980's American cinema confronted the syndrome with thrilling escapist entertainment featuring equal parts testosterone and patriotism. In this era, macho movie stars such as Sylvester Stallone went toe-to-toe with America's enemies and always emerged victorious. In Rocky IV (1985), the titular hero goes to the Soviet Union and, essentially single handedly, defeats the entire country in one boxing match. In Aliens (1986), director James Cameron cured the Vietnam syndrome by having the film's heroic space marines defeat evil xenomorphs who had been reimagined from the original to behave like Viet Cong soldiers. After the Cold War, **machismo cinema continued with the same '80's movie stars facing off against America's new enemy: international terrorism. For example, in True Lies (1994) Arnold Schwarzenegger's protagonist defeats Middle Eastern terrorists in Florida.**

**Cinema: The 1990s: Affluenza Cinema:** As American capitalism triumphed over communism, some artists began to examine the darker side of American culture. In affluenza cinema, movie protagonists find themselves unfulfilled by having all their needs easily met by American culture and therefore find themselves engaging in dangerous tasks to feel "alive." The most famous examples of '90's affluenza cinema include American Beauty (1999), where its middle aged protagonist starts a relationship with a high school girl, Fight Club (1999), where the film's protagonist takes on a crusade of blowing up symbols of American capitalism, and The Matrix (1999) where the film's protagonist gives up his comfortable middle class life to embark on a dangerous existential quest to uncover a sinister plot to enslave humanity.

**Television: From Family Values to Viewer Discretion Advised:** In the age of the 1980s, the moral majority mantra of family values was seen in almost every facet of television programming from Family Ties to Punky Brewster. At the end of each episode, the show's protagonists come together to discuss/reinforce the episode's "wholesome/family values" lesson. By the 1990s, television shows such as The Simpsons, Seinfeld, and South Park irreverently lampooned that formula by having its protagonists engage in non-wholesome behaviors or by ending in the show with a "lesson" that contradicted the moral majority mantra.