

## TFM 363 International Cinema

### **Images of Latin American in Cinema**

Ralph Waldo Emerson: "No man can quite emancipate himself from his age and country, or produce a model in which the education, the religion, the politics, messages and the arts of his time shall have no share."

INSTRUCTOR: MARK FREEMAN

Office: LT 171 C

Office Hours: By Appointment & Monday 1:40 p.m. —2 p.m.

Phone: 619 594-5497

Email: mfreeman@mail.sdsu.edu

GA

Phone:

Email:

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys films from and about Latin America. It investigates the development of film technique and film language in the context of social, political and cultural developments. The course begins with the impact of the 1959 Cuban revolution on the development of Latin American filmmaking. Filmmakers responded to the 1970's military dictatorships in Argentina and Chile with both fiction and nonfiction films. Stories of Latin American immigrants, as told by Hispanic-American filmmakers, are analyzed. In Brazil, the focus is on portraits of the brutal lives of street children.

#### Add/Drop

It is the student's responsibility to make add/drop/change grading basis or withdraw from the university within the specified time period. Criteria for dropping a class will be approved only when there are "verified serious and compelling circumstances." Approval will be made by Registrar's Office.

#### METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

This is a writing intensive course. It requires close attention to and analysis of Screenings, Readings, Lectures and Discussions.

#### OBJECTIVES

After completing this course students should be able to:

- \* Integrate an understanding of the cultural and political role of Latin American films within an historical context.
- \* Distinguish distinctly Latin American film practices and aesthetics from Hollywood models.
- \* Write a critical analysis of Latin American documentary and nonfiction films.

## EVALUATION

### *Film Reports*

44%

Each film must be discussed in terms of the **Readings: and lectures.**

(At least 2 double-spaced typed pages.) **11 reports total.** (4 possible points for each paper)

Be sure to make reference to all the films screened. Take care to compare and contrast them.

In addition one film viewed **outside of class may be** compared to films screened in class for up to 4 points. **Extra Credit**

### *Final Paper*

56%

Research paper. A 6-8 page (double spaced, typed) footnoted critical study of a specific film. See attached rubric.

**All due dates are final. Late work will not be accepted.**

## PLAGIARISM

Students should be especially careful to avoid “borrowing” from internet sources and each other. There will be “zero-tolerance” for plagiarism. Be sure to cite all of your sources with page numbers and url’s as appropriate.

## READINGS

### Required

Readings: Packet

**(RP)**

### Recommended

Corrigan, Timothy. *Short Guide to Writing about Film*, 5th Edition HarperCollins, 2003

### Research Guides

<http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research/guides/film.shtml>

<http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research/guides/filmcriticism.shtml>

### Format:

Each week we will consider 2 films. Monday and Wednesday will generally include primarily lecture and discussion. Tuesday and Thursday will generally be screening days. Most films will be available for review in the Media Center in the library. Films from ITS can sometimes be screened on closed circuit. Consult with the Media Center librarian for details.

NB Each Monday in class a 2 page response paper is due for each of the 2 films viewed the previous week. That is films screened Tuesday and Thursday one week will be reported on, on Monday of the following week.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### Italian Neo-Realism

Film 1 *Bicycle Thief* Vittorio de Sica 89 min Italy 1948 DVD-85

Readings: “The Aesthetics of Hunger “ and “De Sica’s *Bicycle Thief*”

Discussion Questions:

Does Ricci's situation seem to be typical of working people in Italy at this time? Is there anything about his situation that speaks to viewers beyond Italy in the post-war years? What is the effect of watching these scenes unfold on the streets and in actual buildings in Rome? How would the film seem different if it had been shot in studio settings?

Identify concerns articulated in the "The Aesthetics of Hunger" that are pre-figured in the themes and approaches of the *Bicycle Thief*. Discuss examples from the film that convey a point-of-view about Italian institutions including , the police, unions and the Catholic Church. From today's perspective are there aspects of the film that seem over-dramatic or sentimental, rather than realistic?

### Revolutionary Cuba: An Imperfect Cinema

Film 2 *Memories of Underdevelopment* Tomás Gutiérrez Alea 97 min Cuba 1965 VTC-1496

Readings: Interview Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and "For an Imperfect Cinema"

Discussion Questions: Compare the European art film aesthetic of *Memories* with the arguments found in "For an Imperfect Cinema." What are the differences in filmic style and approach? Is this a revolutionary film? Is it propaganda? Is it art? Are these categories mutually exclusive?

How do the fragments of speeches, newsreels, documentary footage" and other devices work to heighten the sense of place and realism? Give examples.

Describe the relationship of each of the characters to the revolution.

What does it mean to be "under-developed?" Economically, politically, socially? What does the film suggest as possible answers to these questions?

Film 3 *Lucía Parts 2 and 3* Humberto Solás Cuba 96 minutes 1969 DV0066

Reading: "About Lucia"

Discussion Questions: This film treats women's issues in the context of a larger revolutionary agenda. Compare and contrast the 2 portraits of Lucia. In what ways do they show changes in the political situation in Cuba? In the roles of men and women? Are there feminist issues that this framework overlooks? Can you think of any U.S. films that treat similar themes? How is this film similar or different?

Which section made the most impact on you? How was this achieved: through the plot? The setting? The acting? The use of music? Visual composition? Explain and provide examples.

### **REPORTS FOR FILMS 1 AND 2 DUE 6/4**

Film 4 *I am Cuba* Mikhail Kalatozov USSR/Cuba 141 min 1964 DVD-107

Readings: "I am Cuba" Klawans and "I Am Cuba" West Cineaste

Discussion Questions:

This is a film which delights in “formalist” extravagance. Identify and discuss in detail striking images and techniques. What is challenging or unusual? How do these choices relate to the themes of the film? Are they effective in capturing your interest and attention? Or are they a distraction? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach? Compare the impact of this film to that of other films we have screened. Is it more or less successful in keeping you intellectually, aesthetically or emotionally engaged?

The Southern Cone: Argentina and Chile under military dictatorships

Film 5 *Las Madres del Plaza de Mayo* Portillo and Blaustein USA 64 min

Readings: “The Domestic Politics of Human Rights”

Discussion Questions:

Does the film provide sufficient background and context for you to understand the political and dramatic themes it presents? Do you find it credible? Why? How would you judge the balance between the film’s appeal to emotions and to logic/factual argument? Is the film persuasive? How? In what ways? What are the greatest strengths and weakness of the documentary? How would the impact of this story be different if told in fiction rather than in a documentary?

**REPORTS FOR FILMS 3 AND 4 DUE 6/11**

Film 6 *Missing* Costa-Gavras USA 123 min 1982 VTC-1771

Reading: Interview Constantin Costa-Gavras

Discussion Questions: How does *Missing* function as a genre film? How would you define and analyze its political stance: Revolutionary? Liberal/Reformist? Reactionary? How persuasive is the film: For a politicized audience? For an uninformed audience? For you? How does the film’s form and style ---narrative structure, character development, camera work, mise-en-scene, editing etc., advance its political message? Give examples. Does the film suggest a call to action? If so, what kind? How might the film relate to the U.S. role in Central America at the time of the film’s release?

Film 7 *Death and the Maiden* Roman Polanski UK / USA / France 1994 103 min DVD-1375

Readings: "Roman Polanski – Death and the Maiden Interview"  
"The Life and Times of Death and the Maiden"  
"Afterward from Death and the Maiden"

Discussion Questions:

Does this film work as a "thriller" or "mystery?" Are you caught up in the plot? Or is it a more morality play about justice, the law, accountability and revenge? Does the film version evoke Latin America for you? Why or why not? Is this important or not? How does the persona of the actors and the director affect your reading of the film? Can you imagine that this story would be more or less compelling as live play? Track your feelings through the development of the plot? Do your sympathies shift? Does the film inform your own judgments about the larger political and personal themes it raises? Explain.

### **REPORTS FOR FILMS 5 AND 6 DUE 6/18**

United States: Latino Immigrants

Film 8 *El Norte* Gregory Nava 1983 141 min USA TV4178VR or VTC-1854

Reading: "The Bridges Of Los Angeles County"

Discussion Questions: Audiences may not be predisposed to look favorably upon "illegal" immigrants? How is *El Norte* constructed to capture audience sympathy? Give specific examples from the film. Consider not only the "plot," but also cinematic techniques----for example lighting, camera angle, language, music, acting, editing etc.

"Discuss the use of different styles in the film--magical realism and social realism. ... In what ways does the filmmaker integrate his social criticism and political vision with dream images associated with Latin American literature? Cite specific examples." (Eva Rueschmann, Hampshire College)

Film 9 *Zoot Suit* Luis Valdez 1991 104 min USA VTC-271

Reading: "Brechtian and Aztec violence in Valdez's *Zoot Suit*"

Discussion Questions: Compare and contrast how Mexican identity is portrayed in *Zoot Suite* and *El Norte* (e.g. the Mexican truck driver and the Mexican-American who runs the labor camp). Are there any similarities? Differences? How (and why) is the Spanish language used in these films? What is the effect on Spanish speaking viewers? On English-only viewers? This film is based on historical events. Using specific examples, discuss the way, which the film establishes its relationship to historical facts. Imagine a documentary film covering the same material and time period. How would a documentary treatment differ from this fictional feature? What are the benefits and pleasures of a fictional treatment? Any drawbacks?

### **REPORTS FOR FILMS 7 AND 8 DUE 6/25**

Brazil: Children in the Streets

Film 10 *Central Station* Walter Salles Brazil 1999 106 min VTC-1318

Readings: American Historical Review  
Central Station Pat Aufderheide

Discussion Questions: Make an argument citing examples from the film that *Central Station* is primarily a social-issue film or primarily a sentimental love story. How does this story of a quest or journey compare to *Bicycle Thief*. Stylistically do you think it has more in common with the traditions of neo-realism or with the conventions of Hollywood filmmaking? Is this film specifically Brazilian? Or is it a melodrama that would work in a variety of cultural contexts.

Film 11 *Bus 174* José Padilha [and] Felipe Lacerda Brazil 2002 120 min DVD-2299

Readings: Director's Statement and Interview

Discussion Questions: How does this view of impoverished children differ from the portrayal in *Central Station*? Does the documentary shed any light on the techniques of TV journalism as practiced in the U.S. ? Does the film hold your interest? How is this done? What about the film is most effective? Why? In learning about issues in Latin America, do you find fiction or documentary to be the most useful point of entry? Why?

**REPORTS FOR FILM 9 AND 10 DUE 7/2**

Film 12 *City of God* Fernando Meirelles Brazil 2003 130 minutes DVD-695

Reading: Lessons of Streets and Screens

**7/5 REPORT FOR CLASS 11**

**FINAL PAPER**

**Extra Credit Outside Film**

**DUE**

### 363 Weekly Report Rubric

4 Total possible points per report Late papers are not accepted.

#### Qualitative

A. Thorough, insightful more than a simple response to the questions; well-written, a clear and concise analysis; examples from the films and several references to lectures and Readings.

B. Generally a good job. But not thorough, missed the point; didn't refer sufficiently to the discussion questions, Readings and lectures.

C. Relied on plot summaries; substituted personal opinion for analysis. Confused the films.

F Late

#### Quantitative

Addressing the discussion questions and comparing and contrasting the week's films

.5 1 page

.5 2 pages

1 Using several specific and appropriate references to scenes in the films

1 Using several specific and appropriate references to the lecture and class discussion as they relate to the discussion questions.

1 Using several specific and appropriate references to the readings as they relate to the discussion questions

#### MAKE GRADING EASIER

It's helpful if you incorporate the question in your discussion.

**Highlight references** Use **Bold** for examples from the film(s)

Underlines for references to the reading

*Italics* for references to class lecture and/or discussion

Feel free to use colored ink or highlighters as well.

### **Rubric for Final Paper 363**

Analyze films not screened in class. Evaluate the artistic elements of the production based on the concepts covered in class and readings. Consider filmmaker, period, techniques etc. Place the film in its social, cultural, political, economic and historical context. Specific elements and examples from the film selected should be cited, but a mere re-iteration of the "story" will not be sufficient or satisfactory. Evaluation, analysis and reference to film history and/or theory are required. **Topics and outlines must be approved in advance.**

**N.B. Graduate Students** will be expected to submit a more developed and complete paper, which may consider more than a single film. (10--12 pages) Please consult with the instructor.

- A. This is an exceptionally thorough, well-written analytical paper. It makes a cogent argument, supports it with specific examples and makes reference to a variety of credible outside resources. It considers form and content, and may include discussion of the relationship of the filmmaker to subjects and audiences, as well as ethical concerns. The author demonstrates familiarity with appropriate documentary theory and history. The analysis supplies sufficient cultural, historical, social and/or economic context to evaluate film under discussion. It may refer to other films or filmmakers to further develop the case. The paper usually will be closer to eight pages than five. The research including five or more sources relies primarily on books and serious journals rather than internet or newspaper reviews.
- B. This paper is similar to an "A" paper, but the arguments may be somewhat less developed, the analysis less compelling. This paper is a solid piece of work, which demonstrates a clear understanding of the major concepts considered in class. It may have fewer "high level" sources and be less thorough than an "A" paper.
- C. A paper earning a "C" has multiple deficiencies. It may be unfocused or unclear about key concepts of documentary theory or history. The argument is generally weaker and much less developed than in a "B" paper, and it may tend to rely heavily on plot summaries. There is little or no reference to documentary theory, history or social context. Sources tend to be missing or less analytical and credible than in a "B" paper. The writing may be weak and less than clear. The paper may be closer to five pages than to eight.
- D. This paper is very poorly written and organized. There is little or no analysis. There are major errors and misconceptions. Sources are inappropriate or non-existent. There is little evidence of care or effort expended to address the issues at hand.

SURVEY

This survey is not required. It is designed to give the instructor some additional information about your experience, interests and expectations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation (if any besides student)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

\_\_\_\_\_  
College Standing: (Freshman etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Academic Major

Have you ever taken a film course? If so, please list.

Please rate your current knowledge ( 10 = "a great deal").

Film History 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Film Technique 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please rate your current knowledge of

American History 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

World History 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Latin American Politics 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

"3rd World" History/Culture 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Why are you taking this course? What do you expect to learn?

On the other side list three specific topics you would like to have covered during this course.

(Feel free to write additional comments on the back of this form.)

\* Identify and understand the formal and stylistic elements particular to “New Latin American Cinema .”

Mi Familia directed by Gregory Nava 1995 126 min VTC-1574

*Obstinate Memory* ?

Pixote 127 min DVD-2037