

ANTH 227 - Latino Culture through Film
Spring 2004 - Office: Susquehanna 200
Email: carole.counihan@millersville.edu
Phone 872-3575, fax 872-3942

Dr. Carole Counihan
Office Hours: Tu 1:30-3:30
Th 1:30-2:30
Fri 9:30-11:30

Latino Culture through Film

Course description:

This course uses an anthropological approach to study Latino culture in the United States through the medium of film. We take a two-pronged approach. First, we examine the content of the Latino experience as depicted in film and the accuracy of that content in describing the diversity and truth of the Latino experience in the United States, particularly in regard to gender, race, and class issues. We consider the different experiences of Latinos in the United States in films, film criticism, and social science readings. Second, we examine how the medium of film communicates the Latino experience. We examine type and stereotype; plot and characters; film technique; the narrative structure; and gender roles and relationships in the films we view. We seek to uncover the hidden ways of communicating cultural difference and to learn how to think critically about film. Writing and discussion will play a significant part in developing a critical approach to film. Students will take detailed notes on each film and on the pre and post-film discussion, will write up reflections on the film afterwards, will contribute to class discussions, and will write three film papers of increasingly greater length and sophistication. This is a “W” course.

Course objectives:

1. Students will learn about Latino cultures in the US, especially Chicana/o (Mexican-American) culture.
2. Students will learn to think critically about and uncover stereotypes in films and other forms of popular culture.
3. Students will sharpen their observational and note-taking skills through considerable practice.
4. Students will sharpen their writing and oral communication skills through considerable practice.

Film List (in order of their showing and subject to change without notice):

- Week 1 - *The Perez Family* (Mira Nair 1995)
- Week 2 - *Viva La Causa* I and II (Elizabeth Martinez 1995)
- Week 3 - *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert Biberman 1953)
- Week 4 - *Después del Terremoto--After the Earthquake* (Lourdes Portillo & Nina Serrano 1979)
- Week 5 - *Las Madres: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Lourdes Portillo & Susana Muñoz 1986)
- Week 6 - *The Devil Never Sleeps* (Lourdes Portillo 1994)
- Week 7 - *Zoot Suit* (Luis Valdez 1981)
- Week 8 - *La Bamba* (Luis Valdez 1987)
- Week 9 - *Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* (Robert Young 1984)
- Week 10 - *El Mariachi* (Robert Rodriguez 1993)
- Week 11 - *Mi Familia/My Family* (Gregory Nava 1995)
- Week 12 - *Born in East L.A.* (Cheech Marin 1987)
- Week 13 - *La Pastorela* (Luis Valdez 1991)
- Week 14 - *Brincando El Charco* (Frances Negrón-Muntaner 1994)
- Week 15 - *Bedhead* (Robert Rodriguez 1990)

Required books

- Berg, Charles Ramírez. 2002. Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Corrigan, Timothy. 2004. A Short Guide to Writing about Film. New York: Longman, 5th ed.
- Fregoso, Rosa Linda. 1993. The Bronze Screen: Chicana and Chicano Film Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class attendance (30 points).

We will see and discuss films in every class. I will give an introduction to the film and hand out a viewing guide with film credits and discussion questions. After the film students will discuss the film. Students will sign in at each class and receive 2 points for every class attended (and 2 points extra credit for every film in the Women's Film Series attended).

B. Keep a portfolio with the following (80 points total)

1. Table of contents (5 points) with the expected points for each item and a total at the bottom.

2. A copy of each week's viewing guide (15 points)

3. Notes on each film and discussion (30 points)

You must view and take notes on fifteen films. You will get up to two points for each film's notes and extra credit of up to two points for notes on each film after fifteen. You may view and take notes on films from the MU Women's Film Series for extra credit.

0 points no or minimal notes (less than one page)

1 point good notes taken during class--well over one page

2 points good notes taken during class--well over one page, and one-half to one typed page of reflections on the film integrating one of the articles assigned that week

Film notes: Take notes on the following for each film while or right after viewing it:

a. Setting: time, place, context

b. Story: Describe plot, central events, main symbols, and dominant point of view

c. Characters/actors and their gender, race, class: Are they stereotyped or authentic?

d. Film technique: How do camera, light, setting, music contribute to the film?

f. Intent and meaning: What is the film about and what is its message?

4. Peer Portfolio Evaluations (10 points)

Every student must make one peer evaluation of other students' portfolios and receive one. Copies of both are to be included in the portfolio (5 points each).

5. Four Reading Critiques (5 points each, 20 points total)

You must write a one-page critique of four different readings throughout the semester. They should be readings that are particularly significant to you. Your critique should describe the argument, and reflect upon it—agreeing, disagreeing, or building upon it.

C. Write three film papers (90 points)

Students will write three film papers, which integrate detailed observation and analysis to make an argument about Latinas/os and film. Essays will use ideas from the readings plus students' own ideas and observations on the films. It is important to take good notes on the films and view the ones you write about a second time if possible. Some films may be borrowed from me and others may be viewed in the foreign languages lab in McComsey 236 and 237, 8 am – 5 pm weekdays. Including reflections based on readings with your film notes each week will well prepare you to write your papers. Students will be able to rewrite their first two papers to gain up to half of their lost points. All papers should be word-processed double-spaced with at least one-inch margins.

1. The first paper is a film review and is due February 12 (**20 points**). It should be two pages (500-800 words). Read carefully Corrigan, pp. 7-9.

2. The second paper is a critical essay and is due March 25 (**30 points**). It should be three-four pages (800-1600 words). It should cite at least four different readings to analyze how one of the films viewed uses or resists stereotypes to further or challenge oppression. Read carefully Corrigan, pp. 11-13.

3. The third paper is a critical essay and is due at the date and time of the final exam, April 27, 10:15 am (**40 points**). It should be four to five pages (1000-2000 words). You should be thinking about your final essay all semester. You will define your own topic and focus on two films. Your essay should make a clear and concise argument about Latina/o culture and film. It should cite and make use of the insights from at least five different readings. Essay topics might include gender in the films of Luis Valdez or Lourdes Portillo, music in Latino films, reversing stereotypes to challenge inequality, defining your own oppositional film, etc.

Film papers will be graded on:

- a. Clarity, coherence and intellectual rigor of thesis and argument
- b. Quality and relevance of details, examples, and citations used to support thesis
- c. Clarity, conciseness, and grammaticality of writing
- d. Thorough fulfillment of assignment

Summary of Course requirements:

A. Class attendance	30
B. Portfolio	80
table of contents	5
15 viewing guides	15
15 film notes	30
extra credit film notes	?
2 peer evaluations	10
4 reading critiques	20
C. Papers	90
Film Review #1	20
Critical Essay #2	30
Critical Essay #3	40

200 points total

A	180-200 points
B	160-179
C	140-159
D	120-139
F	below 120

Film web sites

(Thanks to Dr. Jill Craven for some of these):

- The Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com>
- Movie Review Query Engine: <http://www.mrqe.com>
- Screensite: <http://www.tcf.ua.edu/ScreenSite/> or <http://www.tcf.ua.edu/ss/>
- The Cinema Connection: <http://online.socialchange.net.au/tcc/>
- Images: A Journal of Film and Popular Culture <http://www.imagesjournal.com/>
- UCLA Film Archive <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/>
- Filmsite: The Greatest Films <http://www.filmsite.org/>
- Senses of Cinema <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/>
- Cineaste: <http://www.cineaste.com/>

For information on how to cite electronic sources, see: <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

Syllabus

Week 1 - 1/15 **introduction: anthropology, culture through film, Latino culture**

FILM: *The Perez Family* (Mira Nair 1995): stereotypes of Latinas/os in film

Week 2 – 1/22 **stereotyping and resistance**

READ - Berg, Intro, chapters 1 and 3

FILM: *Viva La Causa I and II* (Elizabeth Martinez 1995): How does this film strive to create a cinema of resistance?

Week 3 – 1/29 **Type and stereotype in cinema**

READ - Corrigan, chapters 1 & 2 and Williams, “Type and Stereotype: Chicano Images in Film”

FILM: *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert Biberman 1953): How does this film move towards a cinema of resistance to race-ethnic and gender oppression? What does its suppression tell us?

Sunday, February 1, 7 pm, Myers Aud., McComsey, Women’s Film Series Presents: *Hair Piece* (1985, Ayoka Chenzira, 10 minutes), *Lockin’ Up* (1997, T. Nicole Atkinson, 29 minutes), *Black Women on The Light, Dark Thang* (1999, Celeste Crenshaw and Paula Caffey (52 minutes)

Week 4 – 2/5 **Differential consciousness and cinema of resistance**

READ - Fregoso, “Intro, The Bronze Screen: Looking at Us Looking” & Corrigan, chap 3

FILM: *Después del Terremoto--After the Earthquake* (Lourdes Portillo & Nina Serrano 1979): what is differential consciousness and how is it portrayed in this film?

Week 5 - 2/12 **** film review due ****

documentary and political cinema with a heart

READ - Fregoso, chapter 5, “Nepantla in Gendered Subjectivity”

FILM: *Las Madres: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Lourdes Portillo and Susana Muñoz 1986): how do the filmmakers construct the documentary and how does it differ from fiction film?

Week 6 – 2/19 **multiple perspectives and contesting the truth**

READ - Corrigan chapter 4 and Berg, “Backstory” and chapter 8

FILM: *The Devil Never Sleeps* (Lourdes Portillo 1994): how does this film construct and cross cultural, genre, family, and gender borders to call into question the very nature of truth?

Week 7 – 2/26 **** portfolios due for in-class peer evaluation ****

Luis Valdez and contestatory cinema

READ - Berg, chapter 2 and Corrigan chapter 5

FILM: *Zoot Suit* (Luis Valdez 1981): the male voice in contestatory cinema

Sunday, February 29, 7 pm, Myers Aud., McComsey, Women’s Film Series Presents: *5 Girls* (2001, Maria Finitzo, 113 minutes).

Week 8 - 3/4 **Luis Valdez and mainstream cinema**

READ - Fregoso, chapter 2, “Intertextuality and Cultural Identity in *Zoot Suit* & *La Bamba*”

FILM: *La Bamba* (Luis Valdez 1987): Why does Valdez cross over? What is lost and gained?

!! Spring Break !!

Week 9 – 3/18 **Silence and speech in Latino cinema**

READ - Fregoso, chap 4, “From Il(l)egal to Legal Subject”

FILM: *Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* (Robert Young 1984): what role do voice and language play in cinema of resistance?

Sunday, March 21, 7 pm, Myers Aud., McComsey, Women’s Film Series Presents: *Mai’s America* (2002, Marlo Poras, 72 minutes)

Week 10 – 3/25 **** second essay due ****

funding and independent cinema

READ - Berg, chapters 9 and 10

FILM: *El Mariachi* (Robert Rodriguez 1993): How do type and stereotype figure in this film?

Week 11 – 4/1 **Finding the Latino voice: the family**

READ - Corrigan chapter 6 and Dennis West, “Interview with Gregory Nava”

FILM: *Mi Familia/My Family* (Gregory Nava 1995): How does Nava present the Chicano family?

Week 12 - 4/8 **Self-directed stereotyping and humor**

READ - Fregoso chapter 3, “Humor as Subversive De-construction: *Born in East LA*”

FILM: *Born in East L.A.* (Cheech Marin 1987): How and why does Marin reverse stereotypes?

Week 13 – 4/15 **Luis Valdez, folklore, and gender**

READ - Corrigan chapter 7

FILM: *La Pastorela* (Luis Valdez 1991): How do culture and gender figure in this film?

Sunday, April 18, 7 pm, Myers Aud., McComsey, Women’s Film Series Presents: *Real Women Have Curves* (2002, Patricia Cardoso. 90 minutes).

Week 14 – 4/22 **Latina voice**

READ - Berg, conclusion

FILM: *Brincando El Charco* (Frances Negrón-Muntaner 1994): breaking and crossing borders

Week 15 **** Third Essay due ** Final Exam: TUES, APRIL 27, 10:15-12:15 AM**

FILM: *Bedhead* (Robert Rodriguez 1990)