Modern Latin American Film

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Class: Spring 2012
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Office hours:

Course Description

The course is designed as an overview of Latin American Cinema during the last sixty years. We will be discussing in detail 12 significant films as well as the cultural and historical context in which they have been produced. Every film constitutes a landmark in Latin American Cinema and will be analyzed according to a particular topic or debate. Special emphasis will be given to the Latin American Cinema of the 60s and contemporary cinema.

The films and writings under consideration, from the present and the past, will provide a sampling of how cinema in Latin America has dealt in its special way with issues and problems such as poverty, justice, memory, violence, the family, the public and the private. The close analysis of the films also aims to help students appreciate the language of film and the specific issues of cinema in Latin America.

Certain topics will be discussed in detail: cinema and poverty, films as political weapon, cinema as a privileged aesthetic witness of historical processes, and the boundaries of documentary and fiction. Given the context, special attention will be given to Argentina Cinema, in particular to the films of the last decade.

Additionally, the course will include screenings and Q&As with guest filmmakers depending on the semester’s schedule and the availability of the directors. In this case, special attention will be given to young filmmakers of the New Argentine Cinema.

Course Requirements
The course will comprise two weekly sessions of one hour and a half. In addition to this, a weekly screening will be scheduled so that students will be able to watch the films included in the syllabus.

Classes will be held in English and will not assume prior knowledge of film history. Classes will consist of presentations by the instructor and class discussions, and will help to introduce topics, authors, problems and issues. There will also be some additional films or segments of films screened during class. Very often the brief introductory presentations will be followed by general discussion and questions concerning the films and texts under consideration. Students will be asked to analyze films or specific sequences. Bibliography will be composed by critical texts in English (but it may also include some texts in Spanish at the end of the semester).

**Attendance Policy and Class Participation**

Attendance to both weekly sessions and screening is compulsory. Students are expected to perform an active participation during class. Final grades depend significantly on this aspect.

No unexcused absences are permitted. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to excused absence, and they should contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work.

**Classwork**

Classwork includes both attendance to classes and significant contribution to all learning activities. In order to perform an adequate participation, students should prepare each lesson before class, as it is indicated below.

Students must fulfill the expectations required for their homework. They should carefully organize their lessons before class, read the required texts and watch the required films according to what is indicated in the syllabus.

As part of the participation students will be asked to write a weekly response to the readings and the films analyzed. Also, they might be asked to prepare the analysis of a particular scene.

**Papers and exams**

One short essay will be required by mid-term (not longer than five pages, double-spaced, in English, Spanish or Portuguese).

A longer final paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced, in English, Spanish or Portuguese) is due by the end of the semester.

**NOTE:** Only hard copies. No papers will be accepted as email attachments. No late papers will be accepted.

There will be no mid-term or final examinations.
Grading

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation and written work. The final grade will be determined by the quality of class participation and by the assigned papers. The first paper will be worth 30%; class participation, 30%; and the final paper, 40%.

Plagiarism / cheating

Written works, essays and papers must be the result of the student’s personal reflection. Quotations and bibliography must follow the MLA, APA or Chicago formats.

   The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Texts

Texts listed in the syllabus should be carefully read prior to the class they are to be discussed in. Required readings are marked by an asterisk. Other texts are suggested as of related interest. Further readings will undoubtedly come up as discussion develops. Most of the assigned texts will be available for purchase, in xeroxed copies, in the form of a Course Packet. Other texts will be distributed during the course.

   Some Recommended General Readings (not required):
   Paulo Antonio Paranagua, Tradición y modernidad en el cine de América Latina.
   David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Film Art: An Introduction.

Schedule

Week 1

Screening: Los olvidados, directed by Luis Buñuel (México 1950).
Introduction to the course.

Readings:
*Michael Wood, “Buñuel in México” (in Mediating Two Worlds, J. King and AM. Lopez, ed.).
*Luis Buñuel, My Last Breath (“Mexico” chapter).
Stephen Hart, “Bunuel’s Box of Subaltern Tricks: Technique in Los Olvidados”
*Glauber Rocha, “The 12 Commandments of Our Lord Buñuel” (in Glauber Rocha, Del hambre al sueño).

**Week 2**
Neorrealism and social cinema in Latin America

**Main Screening:**
*Tire dié* (Fernando Birri, 1960)
*Barren Lives* (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Brazil, 1963)

**Readings:**
*Andre Bazin, “Italian Neorrealism” (in A. Bazin, What is Cinema?)
Glauber Rocha, “Rossellini’s Neorrealism” (in Glauber Rocha, Del hambre al sueño)
Birri, Fernando. “Cinema and Underdevelopment”

**Week 3**
The aesthetics of hunger

**Screening:** *Black God, White Devil* (Glauber Rocha, Brazil; 1964).

**Readings:**
Glauber Rocha, “Aesthetics of Hunger” and “Aesthetics of the Dream” (in Glauber Rocha, Del hambre al sueño)
*Ismail Xavier, "Black God, White Devil: The Representation of History" (in Robert Stam, ed "Brazilian Cinema").
John King, "Brazil: From Cinema Novo to TV Globo" (in J. King, Magical Reels).

**Week 4**
A Cinema for the Third-World

**Main screening:** *The hour of the furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Argentina; 1968)


*Stam, Robert, "Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant Gardes", Millenium nº 7/9, 1980/81

**Week 5**
The intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution
Main screening: *Memories of underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Cuba; 1968)

Readings:

*Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Edmundo Desnoes, Michael Channan (ed), Memories of Underdevelopment and Inconsolable Memories (Rutgers Films in Print).
*Julia Lesage, “Memories of Underdevelopment” (Jump Cut, no. 1, May-June 1974).

Michael Chanan, Cuban Cinema (Cultural Studies of the Americas, 14).

**Week 6**
The documentary tradition in Brazil (1)

Main screening: *Twenty years later* (Eduardo Coutinho, Brazil; 1986)

Readings:

TBA

**Week 7**
Chile and the aftermath of dictatorship: Patricio Guzman.

Main Screening: *Chile, the obstinate memory* (Patricio Guzman, Chile; 1997)

**Week 8**
Neoliberalism and the image of contemporary Mexico

Main screening: *Amores perros* (Alejandro González Iñarritu, Mexico; 2000)

Readings:

*Paul Julian Smith, Amores perros.

**Week 9**
Urban violence, the limits of fiction and the images of poverty in Brazil

Main Screening: *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, Brazil; 2002).

Readings:

*Paulo Lins, *City of God* (chapter 1). This text can be read in the original Portuguese or in Spanish translation.
*Mike Davis, *City of Slums.* (selection)
* Ivana Bentes, "The sertao and the favela in contemporary Brazilian film" (in Lucia Nagib, ed. The New Brazilian Cinema).

**Week 10**
The aesthetics of New Argentine Cinema (1)

Main screening: *The swamp* (Lucrecia Martel, Argentina; 2001)

Readings:

**Week 11**
The documentary in Brazil (2). The role of the media.
Main screening: *Bus 174* (Jose Padilha, Brazil; 2002)

**Week 12**
The aesthetics of New Argentine Cinema (2)

Main screening: *The blondes* (Albertina Carri, Argentina; 2003).

Readings:
*Michael Renov, “The Subject in History: The New Autobiography in Film and Video” and “Filling Up the Hole in the Real: Death and Mourning in Contemporary Documentary Film and Video” (in Michael Renov, The Subject of Documentary).

**Week 13**
The return of the Real in New Argentine Cinema

Main screening: *El Bonaerense* (Pablo Trapero, Argentina; 2002)


**Week 14**
Politics and Cinema in Contemporary Argentina

Main screening: *The student* (Santiago Mitre, Argentina; 2011).

Q&A with Director Santiago Mitre.

Note: Some films in this program may be changed. Others may be added to enrich the discussion. Some additional readings will also be added.
Bibliography
Required readings are available in a course packet.

Aguilar, Gonzalo. *New Argentine Film. Other worlds*. Palgrave, Mcmillan, 2011. (Selection)


Castagna, Gustavo, "From one vanguard to another: Is there a tradition?", in Horacio Bernades, Diego Lerer and Sergio Wolf (editors), *Nuevo cine argentino. Temas, autores y estilos de una renovación*, Fipresci / Tatanka, 2002.


Gordard, Jean-Luc y Fernando Solanas, "Godard por Solanas, Solanas por Godard", *Cine del Tercer Mundo* n° 1, Montevideo, octubre de 1969, p. 15. (There is an English version in *Cinefiles*)

Horton, Robert, "Silvia Prieto", *Film Comment* vol 36 n° 2, marzo - abril de 2000.


Pick, Zuzana, "Reviewing Women's History: Camila", in *The New Latin American Cinema: A Continental Project*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1993, pp. 82 -89.


Quintín, "From one generation to another: Is there a dividing line?", in Horacio Bernades, Diego Lerer and Sergio Wolf (editors), *Nuevo cine argentino. Temas, autores y estilos de una renovación*, Fipresci / Tatanka, 2002.


Stam, Robert, "Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant Gardes", *Millenium* nº 7/9, 1980/81


Secondary readings


---------, Estudio crítico sobre Silvia Prieto, Pic Nic Editorial, Buenos Aires, 2008

Castagna, Gustavo, "La generación del 60: Paradojas de un mito", in Wolf, Sergio (ed.), Cine argentino. La otra historia, Ediciones Letra Buena, Buenos Aires, 1993, pp. 245 - 263.


