Mexican and Chicano Images in Film (CCS and LATAM 400)
Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies
Center for Latin American Studies
Spring 2015
Schedule Number for CCS 400: 20509
Schedule Number for LATAM 400: 21791

DRAFT

Professor Norma Iglesias-Prieto
Class Day: Monday
Class Time: 4:00 to 6:40 PM
Class Location: SH 105

Contact information:
Office Hours: M & T 12:00-15:15 PM and
W by Appointment
Office Location: AL 348
E-mail: niglesia@mail.sdsu.edu (not through blackboard)
Telephone: (619) 594-0656

Course Description from General Catalogue:

General Course Description:
This course is an introduction to the analysis of representations and misrepresentations of Mexicans, Latinos, and Chicanos in Hollywood Cinema. It is also an introduction to Chicano Cinema. Films will be utilized as a resource for historical, political, artistic, and cultural analysis within the multidisciplinary field of Chicana and Chicano Studies. The course emphasizes and includes a critical approach to film, utilizing textbooks and film resources.

The first part of the course analyzes the way that Mexicans, Latinos, and Mexican-Americans have been depicted in Hollywood films. The second and most important part of the course covers contemporary work (1969- present) by Chicano/a and Mexican directors and producers who have been producing films about their own communities. They counteract the negative racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes typical of Hollywood and Mexican commercial film with more accurate and complex images of their history and culture.

By weekly viewing and analyzing films by and about Chicanos and Chicanas, students will become familiar with the most important historical and cultural milestones in Chicano/a filmmaking. Students will explore how Chicano/a filmmakers of different regional and gender backgrounds have used cinematic images to express their views on a variety of issues such as immigration, gender roles, and racial and ethnic identity.

Course Objectives:
• To introduce the student to the evolution of Chicanos and Mexicans in the film industry.
• To develop the student’s ability to analyze films and other visual texts using concepts as analytical categories.
• To develop the student’s ability to articulate a response to Chicano and Chicana images in oral and written form.
• To develop the student’s understanding of the power of the film medium as a reflection of given historical contexts.
• To expose students to various aspects of the Chicoano/Chicana experience, such as insidious stereotypes in film, identity and alienation, oppression and struggle, and Chicano culture and values.
• To develop the student’s understanding of and appreciation for the contributions of Chicano Cinema to the emergence of multifaceted, multidimensional images of the past two decades.
• To expose students to Chicana and Mexican women cinema.
• To develop the student’s understanding of basic discussions on gender and feminist theory in relation to cinema.
• To develop the student’s understanding of the importance of cinematic representations in the process of changing social reality.

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

• Discuss the importance of cinema in contemporary media culture.
• Define power and identify sources of oppression and agency in cinema.
• Define stereotype; identify those related to Mexicans, Latinos, and Mexican-Americans in Cinema and their detrimental effects on these groups.
• Define institutional racism and discuss its relationship with mainstream cinema.
• Discuss the mechanisms through which Mexican, Latino, and Chicano characters are incorporated into mainstream cinema.
• Identify the importance of cinema as cultural industry, political tool, sentimental educator, art, and promoter of values and lifestyles.
• Define countercinema and identify the differences between Hollywood and Chicano Cinema.
• Identify diverse aesthetics, narratives, and political perspectives in Chicano Cinema in different historical moments.
• Define gender and discuss the role of cinema in the reproduction and naturalization of gender conventions.

General Education Goals from General Catalog:

• Analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments.
• Develop a familiarity with various aesthetic and other value systems and the way they are communicated across time and cultures.
• Demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of humanities.

Required Texts:

You will need to purchase the following three books:


As a way to help those students who cannot purchase the three required texts, two of them—those with an asterisk—will be available for consultation at the Library Circulation/Reserve Desk. There are only two copies of each book at the Reserve Desk. It is likely that both books will have great demand from students; therefore, those who require the use of this service should plan way in advance for these assigned readings in order to avoid problems.

Suggested Readings:

Cinema and Borders, Cinema and Mexicans


**Cinema and Feminism**


**Blackboard:**

This course uses Blackboard, a web-based course aid. To access Blackboard go to: http://blackboard.sdsu.edu/.

Blackboard contains an announcement page that I will use to post information, midterm and final study guides, some extra reading assignments, and lecture notes (these after the class). For example, if a class were to be canceled, students will likely find this out first through Blackboard. Any technical questions regarding Blackboard should be directed to SDSU’s Instructional Technology Services department. Its e-mail is scc@rohan.sdsu.edu and website is: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/dept/its

**Class Dynamics:**

Since the screening of films consumes much of the class time, we must be very effective in the use of time for the other two parts. Therefore, during the first 30 minutes, I will give a traditional lecture supported by PowerPoint (PPT). Then, the film will be seen in the classroom; once it ends, we will proceed to the collective discussion and analysis of the film. The analysis of each film will be made following the instructions and analytical categories presented during that day’s lecture. Students should take notes about the film in order to be prepared and actively participate in the collective discussion. Students must be present in the classroom during the three parts that make up the class dynamics.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Regular and consistent class attendance. Students must sign in at the beginning and the end of the class.
2. Regular completion of assigned reading material (subjects of midterm and final exam).
3. Participation in class discussions, reflecting your understanding and analysis of reading and film materials.
4. Regular and on-time completion of weekly homework assignments.
5. A midterm exam (short and essays questions).
6. Final exam (short and essays questions).

**Grades:**

Final grade (total of 1,000 points) will be determined through a combination of criteria that will include the following:

- Homework related to reading assignments and lectures: 400 points total (37 points each homework with the exception of homework # 1 [30 points])
- Midterm exam: 300 points (Week 7, 03/09/15)
- Final exam: 300 points (Week 15, 05/04/15)
The grading scale based on points will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>950–1000</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>900–949</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
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Homework and Quizzes:

Students are required to submit homework on a weekly basis. This will serve as preparation for the exams. Information about the homework will be given in class. All homework must have: Student’s name, homework number, creative title, definition of concepts, and complete information of sources used. Homework must be typed (if it is handwritten you will lose points). I will not accept late homework. Book and films titles must be italicized. The first time you mention the film title you have to add the year of production in parenthesis and you have to give the name of the director.

Format of Midterm Exam:

Half of the exam consists of short questions regarding main ideas and concepts from the assigned readings and lectures (from week 1 to 6). The second part of the exam consists of short essay questions asking students to use concepts as analytical categories for the analysis of films shown in class. Remember that before you use a concept as an analytical category, you need to define it.

Examples of exam questions:

**Short question:** Define the concept of “stereotype” or Give four characteristics of critical audiences.

**Short essay question:** Analyze the film *Touch of Evil* using “stereotype” as an analytical category. (You have to really understand the concept in order to apply it to the analysis, i.e., convert the definition into an analytical category).

Format of Final Exam:

The format is very similar to the midterm, but it will emphasize short essay questions. Students will define concepts and use them as categories for the analysis of concrete films shown in class (from week 8 to 14). So, the final exam will be cumulative, but with an emphasis on film analysis of the second part of the semester. Students will need a blue book.

Extra Credit Policy:

There will be extra credit opportunities in the course. Each student could earn a maximum of 50 points during the semester. Each extra credit could get up to 25 points (depending on quality of written report). In order to earn the points, students have to write (type) one or two pages of critical comments about an assigned film or event. They will analyze the film or event using concepts and ideas from class as “analytical categories.” In other words, it is not just a description of the film or event, but rather its critical analysis using class concepts. The extra credit opportunities will be announced in class or on Blackboard. Students may suggest extra credit opportunities (extra curriculum activities or events related to topic of the class), but professor will approve and announce in class. **Due date for extracredits: Week 14: April 27, 2015.**

Cheating and Plagiarism:

There is zero tolerance in this class for cheating and plagiarism. Plagiarism can be described as taking another person’s ideas or writings (as well as material from the Web) and presenting them as your own through unethical or unauthorized behavior. If you quote material —either paraphrasing or direct quotes—you must follow appropriated MLA formatting. Cheating includes any unethical behavior while completing any type of assignment. Plagiarism and cheating will result in a grade reduction and/or course failure. Both will not be tolerated in this class. For more information, visit current SDSU General Catalog or go to [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/cheating-plagiarism.html](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/cheating-plagiarism.html)
Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Weekly Program (Topic, Film/Video, and Assigned Reading):

WEEK 1: 01/26. Introduction to the course and overview
Topics: (a) U.S. audiovisual culture/new media ecosystem; (b) stereotypes and detrimental effects; (c) definition and complexity of cinema; (d) theory and practice of “critical audiences”

WEEK 2: 02/02. Racial and ethnic imaginary in early Hollywood Films (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #1 [30 POINTS])
Topics: (a) cultural assimilation and mass media; (b) assimilation narrative; (c) cinema and ethnic prejudices; (d) early representations of border and borderlands.
Film Assignment: Touch of Evil (1958) directed by Orson Welles. Actors: Orson Welles, Charlton Heston, Valentín de Vargas, Janet Leigh, Marlene Dietrich.
Reading Assignment: Ramírez Berg, “Bordertown, the Assimilation Narrative, and the Chicano Social Problem Film,” in Chicanos and Film, pp. 29-46.

WEEK 3: 02/09. New Racial and ethnic imaginary in Hollywood (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #2 [37 POINTS])
Topics: (a) cinema and popular culture; b) institutionalized racism; (c) cinema and role models; (d) media agenda; (e) cinema and social representations; (f) borders and borderlands.
Film Assignment: Fools Rush In (1996) directed by Andy Tennant, with Matthew Perry and Salma Hayek.
Reading Assignment: Limón, José. “Stereotyping and Chicano resistance: an historical dimension” in Chicanos and Film, pp. 3-17.
Nericcio, “Of mestizo and half-breeds Orson Wells’s Touch of Evil” in Chicanos and Film, pp. 47-58.

WEEK 4: 02/16. The Chicano Re-construction (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #3 [37 POINTS])
Topics: (a) cinema and countercinema/oppositional cinema; (b) mainstream vs. Chicano Cinema; (c) characteristics and elements of Chicano Cinema.
Film Assignment: Salt of the Earth (1953) by Herbert Biberman.
Reading Assignment: Noriega, Shot in America, pp. xxii-xxxiii.

WEEK 5: 02/23 Chicano Cinema (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #4 [37 POINTS])
Topic: Chicano Movement and the role of art (Cinema in particular).
Film Assignment: I am Joaquin (1969) by Luis Valdez; Chicana (1979) by Sylvia Morales.
Reading Assignment: Noriega, Shot in America, pp. 1-15.

WEEK 6: 03/02. CHICANO CINEMA AND MAINSTREAM INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #5 [37 POINTS])
Topics: (a) Chicano social identity; (b) segregation and cultural resistance; (c) Pachucos or Zootsuiters.
Film Assignment: Zoot Suit (1981) by Luis Valdez.

WEEK 7: 03/09. MIDTERM EXAM (DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #6 [37 POINTS])
WEEK 8: 03/16. Cinema and the Tijuana-San Diego border
Topics: (a) Basic Model of Communication; (b) Basic Model of Cinematic Analysis; (c) borders and borderlands; (d) from representations to self-representations; (e) children model animation.

WEEK 9: 03/23. CINEMA AND MIGRATION [DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #7 [37 POINTS]]
Topics: (a) Chicanos and migration; (b) main migration theories; (c) phases of migration and their representation in cinema; (d) borders and borderlands.
Film Assignment: Alambrista. (1977) by Robert M. Young.
Reading Assignment: Fregoso, pp. 106-110.

WEEK 10: 03/33. No class – Holiday Cesar Chavez SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11: 04/06. FEMALE PERSPECTIVE. THE CHICANA GAZE (DOCUMENTARY) [DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #8 [37 POINTS]]
Topics: (a) Women’s Films vs. Women Cinema; (b) Chicana Cinema; (c) the right of self-representation; (d) gender perspective and gender theory; (e) feminisms and cinema.
Film Assignment: Corpus (1999) by Lourdes Portillo.
Reading Assignment: Fregoso, pp. 110-121.

WEEK 12: 04/13. FEMALE PERSPECTIVE. THE CHICANA GAZE (DOCUMENTARY) [DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #9 [37 POINTS]]
Topics: (a) female, feminine and feminist as analytical categories; (b) Women: From cinematic objects to subjects; (c) cinema and process of humanizing invisible communities/subjects.
Film Assignment: Film Assignment: Mi vida dentro (2007) by Lucia Gajá.
Reading Assignment: “Gendered Transnation” in Noriega Shot in America, pp. 186-194.

WEEK 13: 04/20. FEMALE PERSPECTIVE. THE CHICANA GAZE (FICTION) [DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #10 [37 POINTS]]
Topics: (a) Chicana/Latina Cinema: From counter-cinema to mainstream cinema; (b) feminist model of analysis.
Film Assignment: Real Women Have Curves (2002) by Patricia Cardoso.
Reading Assignment: http://www.moviehole.net/reviews.php?reviewid=378

WEEK 14: 04/27. REVIEW [DUE DATE FOR HOMEWORK #11 [37 POINTS]] AND ALL EXTRA CREDITS

WEEK 15: 05/04. Final Exam

WEEK 16: 05/11. Class Conclusions

NOTE: The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change.