1. Course Description

Chicano Cinema examines dimensions of the film industry with respect to the Chicano’s place - historically and culturally - within the genre. Since film has become a genre with cultural implications, methods have emerged enabling the student to “read” the messages shaped by those images as well as the manner in which the story is told. It is within this framework that this course is based. Questions proposed for this examination include: What are the images of Chicanos in commercial Hollywood films and how have they changed as a result of historical developments? What impact did these images have, not only on the viewing public, but also on Chicanos themselves? This, however, is only one part of the story.

Because of historical social movements taking place in the 1960s and 70s, Chicanos themselves began the process of reclaiming their own films, their own images, a counter-cinema, if you will. In the last thirty years an emergence of Chicano film has developed with an eye for telling stories from the perspective of this community. Chicano cinema is an interdisciplinary course that makes use of fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, film criticism, and history in order to conduct its review of how and why Chicanos have been depicted as they have. These methodologies will be used to examine how Chicanos responded to these images and in the process contributed to their self-determination and popular culture.

Objectives

1. Engage students in an interdisciplinary study of subjects and issues central to consideration, aesthetically and culturally, of Chicano films. This will be accomplished through the screening of diverse films covering topics such as history, stereotyping, the role of the woman, immigration, colonias, education and border issues, just to name a few.

2. Contribute to the comparative, critical and analytical study of Chicano film as an art form through examination of Hollywood and Chicano film. Discussions will be used to examine differences in the two film forms.

3. Expand the student’s horizons of Chicano film. Moreover, the course will serve to counterbalance stereotypes, ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism by examining images of Chicanos (and Latinos) in Hollywood and Chicano film.
4. This course will promote critical written and oral communication skills as a response to Chicano film. This will be achieved through the preparation of critical film reviews, a critical essay where the student will develop a definition of Chicano film based on their viewing and readings from the class. It is hoped that the student will come away from the class with a more critical eye towards the film industry.

2. Course Format

This course will consist of lecture, screening of films in class, discussion of both films and reading materials. Students will be engaged in written work consisting of short critical reviews of film and take home final. Students may be asked to make oral presentations based on their reviews for purposes of initiating discussion.

3. Readings

Chicano Cinema Reader can be accessed on Blackboard

Handouts will also be distributed to complement screenings

4. Methods of Evaluation

Course Drop Deadline: March 29, 2018

Final grades will be based on a point system and is broken down as follows:

100 - 91: A
90 - 81: B
80 - 71: C
70 - 61: D
60 - 51: F

Evaluation will be based on the following criteria: 1) a final – 40 points [take home]; 2) four film critiques – 40 points; 3) regular attendance – 20 points. NOTE: Each unexcused absence will result in a three point deduction. Excessive tardiness may result in student being dropped from the class.

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited and considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. This includes but not limited to: cheating, plagiarism and collusion. Violations will be taken seriously and referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary –
action. The result of such action may be suspension or expulsion. Please consult http://hoop.utep.edu for more information.

5. Recommendations for Technology Use

UTEP supports the use of technology for learning process. However, I expect students to use laptops, for example, conscientiously. That is, for related classroom note taking. Show respect and do not use laptops for playing games, communicating with friends or doing homework for another class. If these activities are so important, it’s probably better that you drop the class, or I will just drop you. The same goes with other wireless devices. Texting will not be allowed. Again, it’s a simple matter of respect. Be here because you want to be, because you want to learn and not because you are controlled by technology. Sadly, it has come to this because of people who take things for granted. UTEP had followed the lead of other campuses around the country in having to deal with the misuse of technology in classes.

Course Outline

January 18

1. Course introduction

Part 1: Stereotypes

January 25

2. Understanding Latino Stereotypes

Screen: Martyrs of the Alamo (1915)

February 1

3. Hollywood and Revolution. The role of stereotyping continues in this examination of a historical figure. Specific roles were by now situated for roles and images regarding Mexicans. This film is an interesting example because for Mexican students who know the role of Pancho Villa will “see” an image they are not familiar with while native born Mexican American students who do not know
Villa as an historical figure might not see any contradictions.

Screen: Viva Villa (1934, d. Jack Conway)

February 8

4. Stereotypes continue

Screen: Latinos Beyond Real (2012, d. Miguel Picker and Chyng Sun)

1st critique (due February 15)

Part 2: Chicano Cinema

February 15

5. The ideology of Chicano cinema. A lecture on the response to Hollywood portrayals of the Mexican community. How did this critique develop? How were Chicanos influenced to take it upon themselves to develop their own cinema; one that would function as an oppositional cinema.

Reading: Jason Johansen. “Notes on Chicano Cinema” (1979)

February 22

6. Oppositional Cinema. Chicano filmmakers looked to films that could serve as models for what Chicano cinema could become. Latin America was one source. Closer to home, another film made during the Cold War and based on a labor strike outside Silver City, New Mexico, became that model for the critical and message-driven film that would become Chicano film.

Screen: Salt of the Earth (1954, d. Herbert Biberman)
Reading: James J. Lorence “What Kind of Film Was This?” (1999)
March 1

7. Documentary Film. A non-fiction film form that remains popular among Chicano filmmakers. Here, we’ll screen two examples of this work.


March 8

8. Midterm

March 15 – Spring Break

March 22

   Reading: Melissa del Bosque, “The Return of Chicano Film Pioneer: Efrain Gutierrez” (2014)

March 29

10. Chicano Cinema in Hollywood. Zoot Suit became the first studio-produced Chicano film. This is a unique film in that it tells a story based on historical events but in a manner rarely achieved. Though considered a musical, it is not (in the Broadway sense of the word), music is a key element for telling the story.

   Screen: Zoot Suit (1981, d. Luis Valdez)
   Reading: Greg Barrios, The Man, the Myth, Still Lives (1985)

Part 3: Chicano or Latino Images
April 5

11. Hispanic Hollywood. Chicano film but with a twist. The following films represent the second generation of Chicano films. The question for you is: do these films maintain the oppositional format of the earlier Chicano films? These films with Hollywood support are more polished and even include more positive characters; however, is Johansen’s point on the function of Chicano cinema lost or blurred?

Screen: La Bamba (1987, D. Luis Valdez)
Reading:
2nd assignment (due April 12)

April 12

12. Immigration is a topic of policy and always seems to be in the news. One film, however, takes a different look at the issue by placing a character in reverse. That is, what happens when a Mexican American is deported?


April 19

13. From Chicano Literature to film. This week’s example is drawn from a play then reborn as a film.

Screen: Real Women Have Curves, 2002, d. Patricia Cardoza)
Reading: Eliza Rodriguez y Gibson, Crossing Over: Assimilation, Utopia and the Bildungsroman on Stage and Screen in Real Women Have Curves

April 26

14. Chicano realism. The context of Chicano Studies has been captured through resistance to inequality and forged in a struggle for social justice. This week’s film captures one of the initial events that sparked the rise of the Chicano Movement.

Screen: Cesar Chavez (2014, d. Diego Luna)
Final to be distributed
May 3