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 area 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 cultural anthropology, sociology, film criticism, and history 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 examine differences in the two film forms.

3. Expand the student’s horizons of Chicano film. Moreover, the course serves to counterbalance stereotypes, ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism.
4. This course will promote critical written and oral communication skills as a response to Chicano film and 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, a midterm 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 through Blackboard

Occasional handouts will also be distributed to complement screenings

4. Course Drop Deadline: March 29, 2018

5. Methods of Evaluation

Final grades are based on a point system and are 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) two film critiques (10 points each); 3) a midterm (30 points), and 4) regular attendance – 10 points. Please be informed that each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of three points and if not checked could mean the loss of a grade. In addition, excessive tardiness may result in student being dropped from the class. With respect to the critiques, points will also be deducted for being late. There will be no extra credit.
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.

6. 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 such as PDA’s MP3 players, phones, and beepers. 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. Excessive use ill lead to the student being dropped from the class, or, in the best case scenario, being marked absent for each violation.

Course Outline

January 16

1. Overview of course.

Part 1: Stereotypes

January 23

2. Understanding Stereotypes and Film Overview
   Screen: Martyrs of the Alamo (1915, d. Christy Cabanne)

January 30

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 a historical figure might not see any contradictions.

Screen: Viva Villa (1934, d. Jack Conway)
1st critique assigned (due February 6)

February 6

4. Stereotyping continues

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

Part 2: Chicano Cinema

February 13

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 20

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

Screen: Salt of the Earth (1954, d. Herbert Biberman)
Reading: James J. Lorence “What Kind of Film Was This?” (1999)
February 27

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

   Screen: Yo Soy Chicano (1972, d. Jesus Trevino)

March 6

8. Midterm

March 13 – Spring Break

March 20

9. First steps in Chicano feature films. The earliest films were independent. That is, Without financial support from Hollywood studios. Many filmmakers preferred not to have such financial support. As a result, funds were acquired in different ways. Many from public broadcasting stations (PBS).

   Screen: Please Don’t Bury Me Alive (1976, d. Efrain Gutierrez)
   Reading: Melissa del Bosque, “The Return of Chicano Film Pioneer: Efrain Gutierrez” (2014)

March 27

10. Chicano Cinema in Hollywood. When Hollywood took a chance with this film, 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)
Part 3: Chicano or Latino Images?

April 3

11. Hispanic Hollywood: Chicano film but with a twist. Continuing the oppositional storytelling, this film, like the two that follow, present more positive images. Do Chicano films lose any of its oppositional stance as a result? While some may know La Bamba as the biography of Ritchie Valens, because of its realist narrative, is the oppositional stance originally found in early Chicano cinema towards Hollywood, lost in this film as with those that follow?

Screen: La Bamba (1987, Luis Valdez)
Reading:

April 10

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?

2nd critique (due April 17)

April 17

13. From Chicano literature to film. The next two examples are drawn from a play and a novel.

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

April 24

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 1

15. Closing remarks. Finals due