

**Chicano Cinema: Cross-listed as CHIC 3302 (CRN: 22075) and FILM 3302 (22076)**

Fall 2020

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Dr. Frank G. Pérez

Virtual Office hours: M from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. and by appt.

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Class location: Online

Class sessions: Asynchronous

**Required Materials:**

Regrettably, the pandemic limits the films we can screen via UTEP databases. As such, I will ask you to rent some films throughout the semester. If you want to purchase the films, it is up to you, again, renting is fine. Where I can provide links to films for free or info for you to view them via UTEP, I will do so and appreciate your understanding.

On the upside, the class requires NO textbook. All readings will be posted in PDF format on Blackboard.

**Class Description:**

This course examines the representation of Chicanas/os/xes in mainstream Hollywood films and documentaries. The Chicano experience is centered in struggles for social justice and a continuous negotiation identity: Are American? Mexican? Both? Neither? We will read Chicana/o films to identify and address their social critiques and commentaries on identity. We will also consider the role film plays in forming individual and societal perceptions of Chicanas/os/exes. Cinema's vilification of Mexican Americans as criminals, drug addicts, oversexed señoritas or Latin lovers, undocumented immigrants, and/or welfare frauds builds on negative stereotypes that began in the early 1800s. Hollywood often promotes paranoia about and disdain for Mexican Americans and many of these views are linked to the "Anything but Mexican" mentality prevalent throughout the US (Acuña, 1996). The film industry also impacts Chicanas/os/exes via their often negative framing or complete omission of them. If society ignores a group, *symbolic annihilation* (Gerbner, 1976), they do not really exist. Only recently has Hollywood begun to suggest that Brown people may be positive social models, for example, some of the roles played by Michael Peña. The film industry often negatively stereotypes the poor, regardless of race. Chicanas/os/exes and African Americans are among its biggest victims. Yet, today, Latinas/os/exes attend films with much greater frequency, spend more at the theater, and purchase more "tie-ins" than any other U.S. social category. Why, then, do they remain all but absent from English-language films and television? This racism is partially supported by an economic logic that Spanish-dominant people will be served by Spanish-language media. English-competent/-dominant viewers will presumably consume Hollywood fare, regardless its racist representations. Latinas/os/exes are the largest ethnic minority in the US (18% of the population) and Mexican origin people constitute 63.3% of that population. Film teaches us who we are, what to purchase, and to what lifestyle we should aspire. It socializes people and reveals who in society has power and who does not. We will explore such issues during our time together.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To learn about and understand the major themes explored in Chicana/o Cinema.
2. To understand how to critically read mass mediated information to resist its hegemonic influence, particularly when it presents Chicanas/os as the "Other" in society.
3. To learn to think about and write critically about social issues. How one sees the world and how one communicates such views is vital to being a successful professional and valuable member of society.

**Course Assignments:**

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Identity essay (Due: )                   | 10 points |
| 2. Midterm Exam (Due:)                      | 20 points |
| 3. Film Critique (Due: )                    | 15 points |
| 4. Participation in Class Discussion Boards | 15 points |
| 5. Quizzes (number of them TBD)             | 15 points |
| 6. Final Exam (Due: TBD)                    | 25 points |

Total

100 points

**INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THE CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Instructor's Message about Learning:** Learning can be challenging and this class will expose you to ideas that may contest your worldview. You do not need to agree with the idea(s) advocated by the assigned readings, films, guest speakers (if any), or lectures. You do, however, need to contemplate what is being said, doing so will either reinforce what you already believe or allow you to think in a new way. One defining element of the class is that it is taught from a Chicanonormative perspective. The lectures, films, and readings will call out issues of classism, homophobia, racism and other prejudices levied against (and sometimes by) Americans of Mexican descent. I will address these themes repeatedly because generations of people in the US (predominantly of European extraction) have displayed racist views, enacted racist policies, and engaged in violence, almost always unprovoked, against Mexican Americans. I cannot change this reality and we will discuss it in an honest and complex manner.

**You are here voluntarily and my job is to help you grow intellectually.** Doing so requires that you engage the class with an open mind. If you cannot handle views that stand in opposition to your own, perhaps you should reconsider why you want a university degree. Again, I do not ask you to agree, simply to consider how others see the world. If something is anathema to you, ask yourself why and, if you like, share your thoughts during class discussions and/or in your assignments. We are here to learn from one another. Also, please participate in class by showing others the respect you ask that they show you. The grading criteria are designed to let you express your views. Good grades require a cogent argument, solid writing, and a deep contemplation of the course materials. In terms of grading, I am not concerned with your particular views, I am concerned with how well you develop and defend your argument. No one will pass or fail because of their comments or views. Anyone who turns in well-written work that displays a sophisticated use of theory, good structure, and solid grammar will do quite well.

**Class Policies**

**Academic Honesty:** Students caught in acts of academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with UT El Paso policy. A primer on plagiarism is available on our Blackboard shell.

**Disabilities:** Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure that their needs are met in a timely manner. Please also register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS), UTEP Union East, Room 106. You may reach them via telephone (915) 747-5148 or email [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu). If you need any accommodation, CASS registration will protect you and will help to ensure you receive the accommodation(s) you need to excel in your studies. I am always glad to help in any way I can. However, CASS staff members are the only individuals who can validate, and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

**Participation:** This class relies extensively on readings. It is imperative that you keep up with the reading assignments and are active on the discussion boards. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussions. Participation is part of your grade.

**Quizzes:** Quizzes about course content (e.g., lectures, readings, guest speakers) will be regularly assigned. They are also part of your final grade. I will drop at least two quizzes before calculating final grades. However, quizzes will be posted on Blackboard and you have ONE opportunity to complete them. They cannot be made up.

**Final Grades:** I do NOT provide students with final grades via email or telephone. Final grades are posted on Goldmine once they are processed by the Registrar's Office. Please do NOT contact me for grades prior to their official posting on Goldmine. After the last day of classes, I will not be on campus until the start of the next term. However, if you have a concern regarding your final grade contact me at your earliest convenience at the start of

the 2021 Spring session. I will be glad to work with you to explore the situation. If an error was made in calculating your final grade, I will gladly make any necessary adjustments and/or grade changes.

**Graduate Credit for this Course:** In order to obtain graduate credit for this course, you must satisfactorily complete a graduate level project with a topic and within parameters approved beforehand by the course instructor. See me as soon as possible if you are a graduate student.

**Late Assignments:** Papers submitted after the deadline will lost 10 points, unless you can provide documentation to explain and justify the late submission.

**Letters of Recommendation:** I provide letters of recommendation ONLY for students who have completed at least two classes with me, one of which must be an upper-division class. Furthermore, you must have earned an "A" in at least one of the classes. Finally, you must give me at least two weeks to complete the letter and/or any recommendation forms. If you would like to cite me as a personal reference for employment or something similar, I am always glad to help. But, please list me only after discussing this possibility with me.

**Final Note:** Despite the rather lengthy syllabus rules and procedures, we will have fun in this class. After 18 years of university teaching, my syllabus has evolved into a lengthy contract. However, I anticipate our journey to be one that runs smoothly, allows each of us to learn from one another, and is filled with memorable moments.

#### Schedule of Class Sessions

(Instructor reserves the right to alter the class readings and/or assignments)

## UNIT 1: Chicanas/os in Hollywood

Week 1 – Aug 25 and 27

Topic/Readings

Through

Week 3 – Sept 10

#### SUGGESTED WORK SCHEDULE

**Tues**

**What is a Chicana/o? Course Overview**

Syllabus review

**View Slide Lecture:** History of Chicanos in Hollywood

**Read for Thursday, Aug 27:** Rosalinda Fregoso (1993):

“Intertextuality and Cultural Identity in *Zoot Suit* (1981) and *La Bamba* (1987)”

**Thurs**

**Racial Struggles: Then and Now**

**Film:** *Yo Soy Joaquín* (Parts I and II)

**Read this for Tuesday, Sept 1:** Alvarez (2008) on “Race and Political Economy”

Week 2 – Sept 1 and 3

**Tues**

Review slides: ***Zoot Suit* (1981) and Intertextuality/Chicanos and WWII: The U.S.**

**Homefront and Pachucos**

**Read this by Tues Sept 8:** Obregón Pagán (2004) on “The People v. Zamora from *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*”

**Thurs**

**View film:** *Zoot Suit* (1981)

Week 3 – Sept 8 and 10

- Tues** View film: *Zoot Suit* (1981) if you have not seen it yet.
- Thurs** Complete Quizzes from Unit 1 by tonight at 11:59 p.m.  
New Unit Begins on Sept 15. Read: **Read for Sept 15:** Lorence on the Suppression of *Salt of the Earth*, and chapter from Caballero – all on Blackboard.

**UNIT 2: Chicanas/os, US Wars, and the Home Front**Week 4 – Sept 15 and 17**SUGGESTED WORK SCHEDULE**

- Tues** **Chicanas/os and the Search for Workplace Respect**  
Review PowerPoint on *Salt of the Earth* (1953- widely and incorrectly cited as 1954). **Read for Thurs, Sept 17:** Perales' chapter on *Smelertown*
- Thurs** **View film: *Salt of the Earth***  
**Read for Tues, Sept 22:** Rosales on Fighting the War Back Home

Week 5 – Sept 22 and 24

- Tues** Review slides for Rosales  
**View film: *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam*** (Link on BB)  
**Read for Thurs, Sept 24:** George N. Green. (1991). The Felix Longoria Affair. *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 19(3): 23
- Thurs** **Finish film and quizzes by tonight at 11:59 pm**  
**Read for Tues, Sept 29:** Pérez and Ortega (2008) on Juan de Oñate in El Paso

**UNIT 3: Chicanos in a Neocolonial World**Week 6 – Sept 29 and Oct 1

- Tues** **Review PowerPoint slides and my video lecture on BB.**  
**Read for Thurs, Oct 1:** Patrick Wolfe on Settler Colonialism
- Thurs** **Video lecture: An Overview of Settler Colonialism**  
**Ethnic identity essay due today via BB.**  
**Read for Tues, Oct. 6:** Aguirre (2017) on “A Stranger in Charleston”

Week 7 – Oct 6 and 8

- Tues** **Video lecture on Nancy Aguirre**  
**Read for Thurs, Oct 8:** Perez and Ortega (2008) on Juan de Onate in El Paso
- Thurs** **Video Lecture, Part I of II:** Perez on Juan de Onate and Fantasy Heritage in El Paso

Week 8 – Oct 13 and 15

- Tues** **Video Lecture, Part II of II:** Perez on Juan de Onate and Fantasy Heritage in El Paso  
**In-Class Review for Exam I**

**Thurs**                    **EXAM I on BB due tonight by 11:59 pm Read for Tues, Oct 22:** Balderrama and Rodriguez's chapter on Repatriation from *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (2006)

Week 9 – Oct 20 and 22

**Tues**                    **Film:** *Las Marthas* – Fantasy Heritage Explored in Documentary  
**Read for Thurs, Oct. 22:** Chapter TBD from Tim Wise's *White Like Me*

**Thurs**                    **Video:** *White Like Me* (available on Kanopy)  
**Read for Tues, Oct 27:**

## UNIT 4: Chicanos, Cholos, and Education in Cinema

Week 10 – Oct 27 and 29

**Tues**                    Exam I Review

**Thurs**                    **Exam I**  
**Read for Tues, Nov 3:** Cepeda, Valdez, & Nowotny (2016) on Childhood Trauma and Gang Membership.

Week 11 – Nov 3 and 5

**Tues**                    **Lecture: Old School Vatos Locos**  
**Read for Thurs, Nov 5:** Mora on "Abjection and the Cinema Cholo."

**Thurs**                    **Film:** *Boulevard Nights* (1979). Link on BB

Week 12 – Nov 10 and 12

**Tues**                    Read for Thurs, Nov 12: Aguirre – A Stranger in Charlotte and Penelope Esparza – Tenure with a Termination Letter

**Thurs**                    FILM: TBD

Week 13 – Nov 17 and 19

**Tues**                    TBD

**Thurs**                    TBD

Week 14 – Nov 24 and T-Day!

**Tues**                    Free Day

**Thurs**                    Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 – Dec 1 and 3

**Tues**                    Catch up Day

**Thurs**                    Final exam review