

Chicano Cinema: Cross-listed as CHIC 3302 (CRN: 21959) and FILM 3302 (21816)

Spring 2021	Office phone: 915.747.6287
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Class location: Online	Class sessions: Asynchronous

Required Materials:

The class usually sees films that I own; however, the pandemic limits that option. As such we will screen some films via UTEP library databases (instructions in the Welcome folder on BB). Regrettably, the pandemic forces me to ask you to rent films throughout the semester. You do NOT need to purchase them, only rent of access them online. I apologize and appreciate your understanding. On the upside, the class requires NO textbook. All readings will be posted in PDF format on Blackboard.

Class Description:

The course examines the representation of Chicanxes in films and documentaries. The Chicano experience is centered in struggles for social justice and a continuous negotiation of identity: Are we American? Mexican? Both? Neither? We will read films to identify and address the social critiques and commentaries they offer on multiple social issues and to consider how film influences individual and societal perceptions of Chicanxes. 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 from 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 Chicanxes via the often negative framing or complete omission of them. If society ignores a group, *symbolic annihilation* (Gerbner, 1976), they do not really exist. Recently has Hollywood begun to suggest that Brown people may be positive social models, for example, some of the roles played by Michael Peña. Yet, the film industry often negatively stereotypes the poor, regardless of race, Chicanxes and African Americans are among its biggest victims. Yet, Latinxes attend films with much greater frequency, spend more at the theater, and purchase more film-related merchandise than any other U.S. social category. The economic idea that Spanish-language media serve those who are monolingual Spanish-speakers or Spanish-dominant “Otherizes” these groups and contributes to anti-Mexican/American views. It also assumes that English-competent or English-dominant viewers will consume Hollywood fare, regardless its racist representations. Latinxes are the largest ethnic minority in the US (18% of the population; 63.3% of these people are Mexican origin). Film teaches us who we are, what to purchase, and to what lifestyle we should aspire. It reveals who in society has power and who does not. We will address these issues during our time together.

Course Objectives:

1. To learn about and understand the major themes explored in Chicana/o Cinema.
2. To learn to read mass mediated information critically to resist its hegemonic influence, particularly when it presents Chicanas/os/exes 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:

1. Identity essay (Due: Week 5, Sun, Feb 21 by 11:59 p.m.)	11 points
2. Midterm Exam (Due: Week 8, Sun, Mar 14 by 11:59 p.m.)	25 points
3. Participation in Class Discussion Boards (Due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. when assigned)	20 points
4. Quizzes (12 x 2 points each. due on the following Sunday by 11:59 p.m.)	24 points
5. <u>Final Exam (Due by Sunday, May 9 by 11:59 p.m.)</u>	<u>20 points</u>
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 any idea(s) advocated for in 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 Chicanxes. I will address these themes repeatedly because generations of people in the US have displayed racist views, enacted racist policies, and engaged in violence, 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. Your particular views will not help or hurt your grade. 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. The grading criteria are in the follow section.

Grading Criteria:

An “A” paper is a one that is superior. It addresses all of the issues assigned (i.e., directions are followed). The writer demonstrates exceptional fluency and use of language. The quality of its content, the amount of detail used to support or illustrate its central ideas, and the coherency of the analysis presented distinguishes the paper from others. It contains very few grammatical errors. It includes original analysis of the theories/concepts (not repeating what it covered in class or the texts). It accurately uses and cites sources (using APA style; this means citing sources in text as well as in the references list). That is, there is a good amount of substance from the sources and it is accurate. The sources are strong, academic sources. Finally, the paper is well organized with a clear purpose/thesis statement, clear topic sentences for paragraphs, good transitions, and good previews and reviews of main points.

A “B” paper is well above average. It is well organized and developed, and demonstrates a clear understanding of the assignment (i.e., all issues are addressed—directions followed). Although it may contain minor flaws, the writing exhibits an ability to use the language effectively and the analysis presented will be relatively coherent. It includes original analysis of the theories/concepts, but not quite as compelling as an A paper (e.g., not as well supported with evidence). It accurately uses and cites sources (using APA style; this means citing sources in text as well as in the references list). The amount of substance is strong, but not as well developed as an A paper and there may be minor flaws in the evidence. The sources are strong academic sources. Finally, the paper is well organized, but with some minor flaws in organization.

A “C” paper is an average paper. It demonstrates an adequate level of organization and development. It contains enough specific information to illustrate a described experience or a proposed argument. Although the paper may contain writing errors, they will not be serious or frequent enough to distract the reader from the content. All issues must be addressed for a paper to receive a “C” (i.e., you must follow directions to get a C). The analysis repeats with what is presented in class or texts and thus is not original. Sources are not cited properly or the amount of substance from the sources is limited (An example of limited substance is using one quotation—usually a definition—from the source to show you used it in order to count as one of the required sources.). All of the sources are not strong academic ones. Finally, the organization has some flaws. For example, main points may not be clear, the paper lacks a thesis, or similar.

A “D” paper is below average. It reveals one or two of the following weaknesses: (a) all

objectives of the assignment are not addressed (author did not follow directions), (b) serious problems of organization or focus, (c) insufficient information to illustrate experiences or support arguments, (d) serious problems in sentence structure, (e) errors in writing that are sufficient to distract the reader from the content of the paper, (f) not enough outside sources (or none), and (g) lacking original analysis.

An “F” paper demonstrates little understanding of the assignment or the mechanics of writing. Essentially, it includes three or more of the weaknesses presented in the “D” paper.

I expect you to contribute your original ideas to class discussions and in assignments.

Late Papers: I do not accept late papers unless there are circumstances beyond your control that you can document. If you need to submit an assignment late, please let me know ahead of time, whenever possible. You will lose 5 points off the final grade for each day it is late. In cases of illness or death, please contact me directly via email: fperez1@utep.edu

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. You must give me at least two weeks to complete the recommendation. Please also let me know if you would like for me to be an employment reference. I am always glad to help but need to know who you are as a person, have a copy of your resume, and some basic info about the job or position for which you are applying. Please contact me before you list me as a reference.

Participation: It is imperative that you keep up with the reading assignments, discussions, films, and quizzes.

Class Policies

Academic Honesty: Students caught in acts of academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with UT El Paso policy.

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. 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, discussions, quizzes, and screening/viewing films. It is imperative that you keep up with these assignments. Participation is part of your grade.

Quizzes: Quizzes about course content (e.g., lectures, readings, guest speakers) will be regularly assigned. They are part of your final grade and are posted on Blackboard and you have only 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 leave town to conduct research throughout New Mexico and Colorado and return to campus at the start of the next term. However, if you have a concern regarding your final grade contact me at your earliest convenience via email. I will review your grades and explain how your grade was calculated. In the event of any errors, I will submit a grade change via email and the new grade should post in about two weeks. Alternately, you may contact me at the start of the 2021 Fall semester. Again, I will be review your grades and to correct any grading errors.

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.

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.

A Note about Readings: The readings for the week are listed in each corresponding folder on Blackboard (BB).

Schedule of Class Sessions

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

Week 1 – Jan 19 and 21

Topic/Readings

What is a Chicana/o? Course Overview

- Welcome Folder and Week 1 Folder
- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Begin to explore labels for Americans of Mexican descent and their presentation in film.
- Readings: None
- Videos: Billy Broncho and the Greaser (1914)
- Lecture Notes: Chicanas/os/exes in Hollywood
- Discussion Board - Introductions
- Quiz 1: The Syllabus (answer this for a few easy points)

Week 2 – Jan 26 and 28 **Zoot Suit (1981) – Chicanos on the WWII Homefront**

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about the Sleepy Lagoon Murder Trial of 1942 and the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943
- Readings: Fregoso on Zoot Suit and Intertextuality and Alvarez on the Power of the Zoot
- Videos: *Zoot Suit* (1981)
- Lecture Notes: *Zoot Suit* (1981)
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 2: Alvarez, Fregos, and *Zoot Suit* (1981)

Week 3 – Feb 2 and 4 **Chicano Struggles in the Post-WWII Era**

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about the miners' strike represented in *Salt of the Earth* (1953) and the Witch Hunt for Communists in Hollywood
- Readings: Lorrence on Suppression of *Salt of the Earth* and Perales (2010) on Smelertown
- Videos: *Salt of the Earth* (1953)
- Lecture Notes: *Salt of the Earth* (1953)
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 3: *Salt of the Earth* (1953)

Week 4 – Feb 9 and 11 Chicanos – The Nation’s Forgotten War Heroes

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about the Longoria Affair and Chicanos in Vietnam and PTS
- Readings: Rosales on Fighting the War Back Home
- Videos: The Longoria Affair and Soldados: Chicanos in Vietnam
- Lecture Notes: Fighting the War Back Home
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 4: Chicanos in WWII and Vietnam

Week 5 – Feb 16 and 18 American Betrayal – The Repatriation of Mexican/Americans

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: To learn about US repatriation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the Great Depression
- Readings: Balderrama and Rodríguez (2006) - Deportation: ¡Adíos, Migra!
- Videos: Various short clips
- Lecture Notes: Repatriation
- Discussion Board
- Assignment Due: Ethnic Identity Essay (No later than Sunday, February 21 at 11:59 p.m.)
- Quiz 5: Repatriation (No later than Sunday, February 21 at 11:59 p.m.)

Week 6 – Feb 23 and 25 Vatos Locos – Chicano Gang Member Representations

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Develop a Multidimensional Understanding of Chicano Gang Members
- Readings: Richard Mora - Cinematic Cholos and Abjection
- Videos: *Boulevard Nights* (1979), *End of Watch* (2012)
- Lecture Notes: Mora on Abject Cholos
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 6: Chicano Gang Members

Week 7 – Mar 2 and 4 Female Gang Member Representations

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Develop a Multidimensional Understanding of Chicana Gang Members
- Readings: Pitman on Policing cinematic barrio (2010)
- Videos: *Mi Vida Loca* (1993)
- Lecture Notes: None
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 7: Chicana Gang Members

Week 8 – Mar 9 and 11 MIDTERM EXAM

- **Midterm Exam on BB and due no later than Sunday, March 14 by 11:59 p.m.**

Week 9 – Mar 16 and 18 Spring Break

Tasks: Have a fun and safe spring break!

Week 10 – Mar 23 and 25 The **Struggle for Chicano Representation in El Paso’s Public Memory and Public Space**

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about El Paso's fantasy heritage and its negative impact on Mexican Americans.
- Readings: Pérez and Ortega (2008) - The Juan de Oñate Controversy in El Paso
- Videos: Las Marthas
- Discussion Board:
- Lecture Notes:
- Quiz 8: Fantasy heritage and Juan de Oñate

Week 11 – Mar 30 and Apr 1

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Continue to learn about the history of structural racism against Mexican Americans in US public and higher education.
- Readings: Cepeda et al on Gang Members and Trauma
- Videos: *Spare Parts* (2015)
- Lecture Notes:
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 9: Cepeda et al. and *Stolen Education* (2015)

Week 12 – Apr 6 and 8

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about the history of structural racism against Mexican Americans in US public and higher education
- Readings: Shouse on *Stand and Deliver* and Organizational Structures
- Videos: *Stand and Deliver* (1987) and *Stolen Education* (2015)
- Lecture Notes:
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 10: *Stolen Education*

Week 13 – Apr 13 and 15

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Learn about Chicanas in the Professional Realm.
- Readings: Nancy Aguirre - A Stranger in Charleston
- Videos: Tortilla Soup (2001)
- Discussion Board
- Lecture Notes
- Quiz 11: *Tortilla Soup* and Aguirre

Week 14 – Apr 20 and 22

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: To explore fantasy heritage as created and critiqued by Mexican American women in/from Texas.
- Readings:
- Videos: Las Marthas (2013)
- Discussion Board:
- Quiz 12: Las Marthas

Week 15 – Apr 27 and 29

- Learning Objectives / Learning Outcomes: Explore what we learned and review for Final Exam next week
- Readings: Review
- Videos: Review
- Discussion Board: What did you learn?
- No Quiz

Week 16 – May 4 and 6

- Complete the **Final Exam**, posted on **BB** at the start of the week and is due by **Sunday, May 16 at 11:59 p.m.**