

Chicano Cinema: Cross-listed as CHIC 3302 (CRN: 12319) and FILM (CRN: 12121)

Fall 2019

Office phone: 915.747.6287

Dr. Frank G. Pérez

Office hours: Mondays from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. and by appt.

Office: Quinn Hall, Room 207

Email: fperez1@utep.edu

Class location: CCSB 1.0202

Class sessions: TR 1:30-2:50 p.m.

Required Readings:

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 of identity issues. 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 playboys, 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 omission. 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 (17.8% 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 to 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. Exams (Two x 20 points each: Oct 31 and Dec 5) | 40 points |
| 2. Identity essay (Due: September 26) | 10 points |
| 3. Film Critique (Due: Oct 24) | 30 points |
| 4. Attendance (Beginning 2 nd week of class) | 10 points |
| 5. Quizzes (assigned randomly) | 10 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, many films, and readings will call out issues of classism, homophobia, racism and other prejudices levied against Americans of Mexican descent. I will address this theme repeatedly because generations of people (largely 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 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

Attendance: By registering for this course, you have tacitly agreed to be here on T/Rs for the duration of the semester. While scheduling conflicts arise from time to time, I urge you to keep requests for extended absences to a minimum. We will screen several films and your viewing them with us and joining in the discussion or listening to the related lecture is imperative to your earning a good grade. Students are expected to attend class regularly and attendance will be taken during each class session. Each student is allowed 4 excused absences. **Do NOT tell me that or why you are absent nor provide any reason/documentation.** Talking to me will neither help your grade nor increase the number of excused absences, unless you are hospitalized or suffer a death in your family. I hope neither of these things happens. If it does, however, then you will need to provide documentation. **Five absences will result in the loss of 10 points toward your final grade. Six absences will result in your being dropped from the class, if the last one occurs after the drop deadline a grade of F will be assigned.**

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. 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 come prepared for class discussions. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussions. Participation in discussions and attendance will help if you have a borderline grade.

Quizzes: Quizzes about course content (e.g., lectures, readings, guest speakers) and current events in local, national, and international media are randomly assigned throughout the term. I recommend that you read the Sunday versions of the *El Paso Times* and the *New York Times*. Both provide free online content. Also, listen to NPR or another news source. You will enter the professional ranks after graduation. You must know what is happening

in the world if you want to succeed or make informed decisions in these contexts. I will drop at least two quizzes before calculating final grades. However, quizzes 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 in the fall. 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.

Missed Exams: I do not allow people to take missed exams AFTER the exam has been administered. However, if you have a university-authorized absence or legitimate and documented reason for being out on an exam day, I will allow you to complete a take home exam, possibly an alternate version or an essay exam that will be due **PRIOR** to your absence and that will require you to provide your answers in APA format, using multiple academic sources.

Late Assignments: Papers submitted by 5 p.m. the day they are due will lose five points. Papers submitted the next day will lose 10 points. Papers submitted later than that will lose 10 points per day until they are submitted or your grade reaches 0 for the assignment in question.

Lecture Notes: Lecture notes and other course-related items will be posted on the course's Blackboard shell after the lecture has been delivered/topic covered in class, provided I have a PowerPoint slide show for it. I do not have a PowerPoint presentation for every film or lecture, my apologies.

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, please do so only after discussing this possibility with me.

Time: The class runs on my phone's clock (It should match everyone else's). If people are frequently late to class there will be attendance quizzes at the start of class. Quizzes are due immediately when called for and cannot be turned in after they are picked up by your professor. I may also ask those who are late to wait outside until quizzes are completed by those taking them. Quizzes may NOT be turned in after I have picked them up.

Assignment Related Issues: Do not place your final paper in any kind of binder or folder. Please turn off mobile phones, tablets, etc. before entering the classroom. Students texting during class will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class session. On the second and subsequent occasions, if any, I will deduct 5 points from your final grade for each occurrence. Please do NOT text while in class. It is perhaps the rudest behavior in which you can engage.

Electronic Equipment: If you use a laptop to take notes in class please be sure you do not use it for any other purpose. Students caught surfing the web, working on assignments for other classes, or using the computer for anything other than taking notes will be asked to leave class for that day. Please do NOT take notes on your phone! If you use your phone to take notes you will likely ruin your eyesight (I am not a physician but think this is common sense). Please also remove your earbuds or earphones upon entering the class. **Do not audio or video record the lectures without letting me know. The lectures are my intellectual property and are legally protected as such. I will usually allow you to record them but want to know ahead of time.**

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)

Week 1 – Aug 27 and 29

Topic/Readings

- Tues** **What is a Chicana/o? Course Overview**
Syllabus review and introductions
Lecture: History of Chicanos in Hollywood
- Thurs** **Racial Struggle: Then and Now**
Lecture: Some Background on the Creation of Mestizas/os and Chicanas/os
Film: *The Head of Joaquín Murrieta* (2015)
Read this for Tuesday, Sept 3 class sessions: Rosalinda Fregoso (1993):
“Intertextuality and Cultural Identity in *Zoot Suit* (1981) and *La Bamba* (1987)” and
Obregón Pagán on “The People v. Zamora from *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*” (2004)

Week 2 – Sept 3 and 5

- Tues** **Lectures: *Zoot Suit* (1981) and Intertextuality/Chicanos and WWII: The U.S. Homefront and Pachucos**
Continue readings from Jan 24 if you have not finished.
- Thurs** **Film: *Zoot Suit* (1981)**
Read for Tues, Sept 10: Rosales (2011): *Fighting the Peace at Home*

Week 3 – Sept 10 and 12

- Tues** **Film continued: *Zoot Suit* (1981)**
Class discussion on film and Rosales
- Thurs** Wrap up Chicanos and WWII
Begin lecture on *Salt of the Earth* (1953- widely and incorrectly cited as 1954)
Read for Sept 17: Lorence on the Suppression of *Salt of the Earth* and Perales’ chapter on *Smelertown*

Week 4 – Sept 17 and 19

- Tues** **Chicanas/os and the Search for Workplace Respect**
Lecture on *Salt of the Earth* and begin film
- Thurs** *Salt of the Earth* continued
No readings for Sept 24

Week 5 – Sept 24 and 26

- Tues** **Film: *Salt of the Earth***
- Thurs** **Film Continued: *Salt of the Earth***
Read for Tues, Oct 1 and 3: Pérez and Ortega (2008) on Juan de Oñate in El Paso

Week 6 – Oct 1 and 3

- Tues** **Lecture:** Chicanas/os and Fantasy Heritage or Keeping It “Safe” for Tourists and Others in El Paso
- Thurs** **Film:** *The Last Conquistador* (2008)
Class discussion – Fantasy Heritage and Power: El Paso Chicanas/os and Their Continued Struggle

Week 7 – Oct 8 and 10

- Tues** **Film:** *The Last Conquistador* continued
Read for Thurs, Oct 10: George N. Green. (1991). The Felix Longoria Affair. *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 19(3): 23
- Thurs** **Films:** *The Longoria Affair* (2010) and *Soldados: Chicanos in Viet Nam*
NOTE: These films and the reading by Green will be on Exam I.

Week 8 – Oct 15 and 17

- Tues** **In-Class Review for Exam I**
- Thurs** **EXAM I – Bring a Number 2 Pencil, green scantron, a good eraser, and Your Student ID Number**
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 22 and 24

- Tues** **Lecture on:** Repatriation and Understanding the Chicana/o Experience in the US
Film: *My Family/Mi familia*
- Thurs** **Continue** *My Family/Mi familia*

Week 10 – Oct 29 and 31

- Tues** Exam I Review
- Thurs** **Exam I**
Read for Nov 5: Cepeda, Valdez, & Nowotny (2016) on Childhood Trauma and Gang Membership

Week 11 – Nov 5 and 7

- Tues** **Old School Vatos Locos**
Film: *Boulevard Nights* (1979)
Read for Nov 7: Blackboard PDF Reading: Giles, Linz, Bonilla, & Gómez, “Police Stops of and Interactions with Latino and White (Non-Latino) Drivers: Extensive Policing and Communication Accomodation” (2012)
- Thurs** **Continue Film**

Week 12 – Nov 12 and 14

Tues DWB and Being Law Enforcement: Two Sides of the Oppression Coin
Film: *End of Watch* (2012)
Readings for Apr 16: TBD

Thurs **Film continued**

Week 13 – Nov 19 and 21

Tues Educating the Homies
Film: *Stand and Deliver* (1988)
Readings for Apr 23 TBD

Thurs **Continue film**

Week 14 – Nov 26 and 28

Tues The Last Gang Member
Film: *Champion* (2005)

Thurs Happy Thanksgiving

Week 15 – Dec 3 and 5

Tues Exam II review

Thurs **Exam II**