



Cinematic Auteurs: Pedro Almodóvar */ Queer Cinema: Pedro Almodóvar*

FILM 3390 / WS 3336
CRN: 26000 / 27284

T/Th 10:30 – 11:50 am

Psych #115

Spring Semester – 2018

Instructor: Roberto Avant-Mier, Ph.D.
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Phone: (915) 747.6588
Office Hours: Tues. / Thurs. 8:00 - 10:30 am, and 1 - 3 pm (or by appointment)
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Required Texts:

Book: *Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar* [3rd Edition]
Author: Paul J. Smith Year: 2014 Publisher: Verso

Course Description:

The aim of this course is to increase understanding of a specific film director, in this case Pedro Almodóvar, with the goals of enlightenment about cinema, filmmaking and critical thinking about media. This course will introduce you to background information about the director, and will help you apply this knowledge in understanding cinema as meaning-making cultural practice. From a communication perspective, it will improve your understanding of communication from both transmission and ritual/symbolic perspectives. From a cultural perspective, the course will focus on social, societal, cultural, structural and historical dimensions of film production, and therefore emphasizes racial, ethnic, class, and gender analyses of film/media production. Finally, the course will emphasize a critical/cultural approach to communication.

Course Objectives: In this course you should,

- Become familiar with the director and his body of work, and develop a familiarity with the director's style and themes.
- Develop an understanding of how the director's films have been received by the public and understood by academics.
- Develop a working vocabulary of terms and concepts that relate to film studies as well as film studies from a communication/media studies perspective.
- Discover the importance of the roles of history and context in film as communication.
- Become more sensitive to the complexity of discursive practices in society, and knowledgeable about film and communication.
- Recognize the influence of an individual's group, cultural, or ethnic/national identity on mediated productions.

Course Policies:

1. ATTENDANCE:

In accordance with the Dept. of Communication Attendance Policy, **ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED** as a condition of successful completion of all courses in the department. After missing any class session, a student is responsible for finding out about assignments, due dates, announcements, handouts, and so forth that were covered during the missed session, and for making up any missed work. The student is also responsible for obtaining class notes from a classmate for the session, and for learning the material from that session for any relevant exams or quizzes.

The equivalent of 1 week of absence from any course will reduce a student's course grade by percentage points on their eventual "Attendance & Participation" grade. However, absence from a combined total of 3 weeks of class meetings will result in automatic failure of the course. Thus, if the class meets once a week, 3 missed sessions equals automatic failure. If a course meets twice a week, 8 missed sessions will result in failure of the course, and a combined total of 9 missed class sessions will result in automatic failure of a course that meets 3 times per week. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Absences for any reason, including illness, personal crises, athletics or other extra-curricular activities are included in this total. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss 3 or more weeks of a particular course, then that student should not enroll in the course. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss an exam or quiz, then that student should not enroll in the course.

2. DEADLINES:

All assignments and exams/quizzes will be scheduled far in advance, and due dates for exams and assignments are announced in this syllabus. Therefore, you must plan your work and personal schedule far in advance to accommodate these deadlines and policies. Because the attendance policy dictates that you will (for the most part) be present in class, make-ups and late work are therefore largely irrelevant. Otherwise, for a few special cases at the discretion of your instructor, late work will be docked one letter grade for each day late (each calendar day, not each day of class).

3. EXAMS:

Make-up tests will not be given, except for emergencies. If a student misses an exam or quiz because of a documented emergency or situation, he/she will be required to fulfill an alternative assignment. Only in extreme circumstances will your instructor make arrangements with you to complete your coursework through alternative assignments.

4. ADA STATEMENT (Americans with Disabilities Act):

The University of Texas at El Paso seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) to make arrangements for accommodations in advance.

5. CASS POLICY (Center for Accommodations & Support Services):

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747.5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit their office located in the UTEP Union – East, Room #106. For additional information, please visit the

CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

6. PHONES / ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

Cell phones or other personal electronic communication devices are NOT permitted during class, so phones should be turned off AND put away during class. Use of phones during class will result in being counted absent for the day. Laptops for note-taking are permitted, only with (a.) instructor permission and (b.) as long as the student sits in the front rows of the classroom. [Students cannot sit in the back rows when they are using laptops.]

7. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence, and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

8. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALES

Assignments

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| * Attendance & Participation | 20 % |
| Mid-Term Exam: | 25 % |
| Final "Project": | 25 % |
| Quizzes (2 total / 15% each) | 30 % |

* Attendance & Participation Points Earned

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 0-1 absences = | 90-100% for attendance grade |
| 2-3 absences = | 80-89% for attendance grade |
| 4-5 absences = | 70-79% for final class grade |
| 6-7 absences = | 60-69% for final class grade |
| 8 or more = | automatic failure of course |

Please Note:

**2 tardies = 1
absencE**

Numeric Scale – Letter Grade Achieved

90 – 100 = A 80 – 89 = B 70 – 79 = C 60 – 69 = D below 60 = F

9. IDEAS & OPTIONS FOR “FINAL PROJECT,” OR FINAL CLASS GRADE

- A. FINAL EXAM – A standard final exam, in a similar format as previous exams such as the Mid-Term exam, and/or quizzes.

- B. MOVIE REVIEW – Write a review/analysis of the film from the perspective of a professional movie critic or a cultural critic. Your task is to analyze the film critically and to address the strengths and weaknesses of either the film or the director. Topics to address could include: Biography/history of the director, How this film fits into the larger body of work by the director or how it fits into contemporary film in general, or the social significance of this director's work or a particular film genre.

- C. CRITICAL ANALYSIS – Write about specific topics that can be related to this director's films such as: “La Movida,” Sexism, Gender representation or other issues, visual features/art direction, fetishism, the use of music in film, violence, sex and violence, sexual identity or sexual orientation, differences between obscure/independent (low-budget) films and more recent international releases, etc.

- D. DIRECTOR'S EVOLUTION – Write about specific things related to this Director's evolution as a filmmaker. What themes are common throughout? What things have changed? What has remained the same? What things have been improved? What patterns are noticeable in the Director's films?

- E. COMMUNICATION/MEDIA PAPER – With specific attention to media & communication studies, analyze a specific film that we addressed in class (or more than one) and discuss how can we understand film as communication. What do films convey? How do they communicate? What do they communicate? What can we say about films as a form of media or communication?

- F. SHORT FILM – This assignment is a creative option in which the student engages in film production. The task is to produce a short film (max. 15 minutes) that addresses the work of Almodóvar, or makes a statement about his work, or tells a story through his style as a director or filmmaker. These films will be shown to the entire class on the last day of class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – Spring 2018

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Be ready to discuss:</u> |
|-------------|-------------|---|---|
| 1 | T 1/16 | a. Introductions, syllabus & course overview b. <i>Viva Pedro...</i> (documentary) | (Get the books/ materials!) Video + Discussion |
| | Th 1/18 | <i>Pepi, Luci, Bom...</i> (film) | "A Punk Called Pedro" (Triana Toribio) |
| 2 | T 1/23 | <i>Pepi, Luci, Bom...</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 1 |
| | Th 1/25 | <i>Dark Habits</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 3 |
| 3 | T 1/30 | <i>Dark Habits</i> (film) | "Interview: Dark Habits" (Llauradó) |
| | Th 2/ 1 | <i>What Have I Done to Deserve This?</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 4 |
| 4 | T 2/ 6 | <i>What Have I Done to Deserve This?</i> (film) | "Music and Songs" (Allinson) |
| | Th 2/ 8 | <u>QUIZ #1</u> | |
| 5 | T 2/13 | <i>Law of Desire</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 6 |
| | Th 2/15 | <i>Law of Desire</i> (film) | "Figuring Hysteria" (Epps) |
| 6 | T 2/20 | <i>Women On the Verge...</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 7 |
| | Th 2/22 | <i>Women On the Verge...</i> (film) | "Women on the Verge..." (Strauss) |
| 7 | T 2/27 | <i>Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!</i> (film) | "Melo-Thriller" (Acevedo-Muñoz) |
| | Th 3/ 1 | <i>Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 8 |
| 8 | Th 3/ 6 | <i>Deconstructing Pedro...</i> (documentary) | "Bolero in Cinema of Almodóvar" (Poe) |
| | T 3/ 8 | <u>MID-TERM EXAM</u> | |
| 9 | T 3/ 13 | SPRING BREAK | (no classes) |
| | Th 3/ 15 | SPRING BREAK | (no classes) |

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 10 | T 3/20 | <i>Live Flesh</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 12 |
| | Th 3/22 | <i>Live Flesh</i> (film) | "Almodóvar's Post-Modern Cinema" (Fuentes) |
| 11 | T 3/27 | <i>All About My Mother</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 13 |
| | Th 3/29 | <i>All About My Mother</i> (film) | "All About My Mother" (Strauss) |
| 12 | T 4/ 3 | <i>Hable Con Ella</i> (film) | Almodóvar's Girls" (Bersani & Dutoit) |
| | Th 4/ 5 | <i>Hable Con Ella</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 14 |
| 13 | T 4/10 | <u>QUIZ #2</u> | |
| | Th 4/12 | <i>Bad Education</i> (film) | "Spanish Film Music" (Vernon & Eisen) |
| 14 | T 4/17 | <i>Bad Education</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 15 |
| | Th 4/19 | <i>Volver</i> (film) | "Three Films Close-Up" (Goss) |
| 15 | T 4/24 | <i>Volver</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 16 |
| | Th 4/26 | <i>The Skin I Live In</i> (film) | "The Auteur Theory" (Goss) |
| 16 | T 5/ 1 | <i>The Skin I Live In</i> (film) | <i>Desire Unlimited</i> , Ch. 18 |
| | Th 5/ 3 | Course Review (+ Student Films?) | "Almodóvar's Master Class" (article) |
| 17 | Thurs. May 10 th | <u>FINAL EXAM</u> | 10:00 am – 12:45 pm (as per university schedule) |

*** 5/16 FINAL GRADES DUE