Cinematic Auteurs: Pedro Almodóvar / Queer Cinema: Pedro Almodóvar

FILM 3390 / WS 3336 / CHIC 4350 **T/Th 12:00 – 1:20 pm** **Cotton #201**
CRN: 22342 / 24887 / 22674

Spring Semester – 2025

Instructor: Roberto Avant-Mier, Ph.D.
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Phone: (915) 747.6588
Office Hours: Tue. & Thur. 8:30 am – 10:30 am (or by appointment), or Virtual (by appt)
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Required Texts:

REQUIRED Textbook: ***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 *auteur*, in this case director 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, thematic concerns, and commitments.
- 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 & context in film as a communication medium.
- 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. **Second, 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 (not from the professor), and for learning material from that session for any relevant exams or quizzes.

Third, 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 means 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.

Fourth, 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.

Next, it is important to note that tardies (arriving late to class) will also be marked and counted, and a simple class rule is that excessive tardies/lates will result in the reduction of the student's final grade. More specifically, for "Attendance & Participation" purposes two "lates" will be considered the same as one absence (for final grading). [2 lates = 1 absence]

Finally, students are required to keep track of their own absences, and therefore should not expect the instructor to regularly report absences or notify students in case of attendance issues or problems (unless as a courtesy by the instructor, determined by the instructor's discretion).

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 personal and work schedules far in advance to accommodate these deadlines and policies. Once again, because the attendance policy dictates that you will (for the most part) be present in this in-person 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 at least 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, they will be required to submit documentation and then fulfill an alternative assignment. In other words, only in extreme circumstances will your instructor make arrangements with you to complete your coursework through "make-ups" or 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. 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. [In other words, students should not 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. COVID-19 PRECAUTION STATEMENT:

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org.

9. ASSIGMENTS & GRADING SCALES

Assignments

* Attendance & Participation	30 %
Quiz # 1:	15 %
Mid-Term Exam:	20 %
Quiz #2:	15 %
Final Exam:	20 %

***** 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 attendance grade
6-7 absences = automatic "D" for final grade
8 or more = Automatic failure / "F" (or "W")

PLZ NOTE:

2 Lates = 1 Absence

Numeric Scale – Letter Grade Achieved

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

10. ADVISORY / “HEADS-UP” / FAIR WARNING (Or, “Trigger Warning”):

One final thing to note for taking this class is that we’ll be watching the films of Pedro Almodóvar (obviously), but it is important to note beforehand that his films can be considered offensive by some people. Almodóvar films are famous and infamous for things like nudity, sex scenes, drug use, or other outrageous acts or behavior. Sometimes, the films might other “adult content” such as a rape scene or sexual assault, or a church scene that could be offensive to somebody that’s very religious. While this type of content is NOT gratuitous and always has a specific point (see your readings on this matter), it is important to note that such content will occur throughout his films. Thus, students who might have major issues with watching such things on-screen, or who might be offended or potentially triggered by such content are advised NOT to take this class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – Spring 2025

Week	Date	Topic	Be ready to discuss:
1	T 1/21	a Introductions, syllabus & course overview b. *Viva Pedro…* (documentary)	(Get the books/ materials!) Video + Discussion
	Th 1/23	*Pepi, Luci, Bom Y Otras Chicas…* (film)	"A Punk Called Pedro" (Triana Toribio)
2	T 1/28	*Pepi, Luci, Bom…* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 1
	Th 1/30	*Entre Tinieblas* / *Dark Habits* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 3
3	T 2/ 4	*Entre Tinieblas* / *Dark Habits* (film)	"Interview: Dark Habits" (Llauradó)
	Th 2/ 6	*Que He Hecho Yo Para Merecer Esto?!* (film) *What Have I Done to Deserve This ?!*	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 4
4	T 2/11	*Que He Hecho Yo…* (film)	"Music and Songs" (Allinson)
	Th 2/13	**QUIZ #1**	
5	T 2/18	*La Ley del Deseo* / *Law of Desire* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 6
	Th 2/20	*La Ley del Deseo* / *Law of Desire* (film)	"Figuring Hysteria" (Epps)
6	T 2/25	*Mujeres al Borde…* / *Women on Verge…* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 7
	Th 2/27	*Mujeres al Borde…* / *Women on Verge…* (film)	"Women on the Verge…" (Strauss)
7	T 3/ 4	*Átame!* / *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (film)	"Melo-Thriller" (Acevedo-Muñoz)
	Th 3/ 6	*Átame!* / *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 8
	3/10 – 3/14	***SPRING BREAK***	(No classes)

8	T 3/18	*Deconstructing Pedro…* (documentary)	"Bolero in Cinema of Almodóvar" (Poe)
	Th 3/20	**MID-TERM EXAM**	
9	T 3/25	*Carne Trémula* / *Live Flesh* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 12
	Th 3/27	*Carne Trémula* / *Live Flesh* (film)	"Almodóvar's Post-Modern Cinema" (Fuentes)
10	T 4/ 1	*Todo Sobre Mi Madre* / *All About My Mother* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 13
	Th 4/ 3	*Todo Sobre Mi Madre* / *All About My Mother* (film)	"All About My Mother" (Strauss)
11	T 4/ 8	*Hable Con Ella* / *Talk To Her* (film)	Almodóvar's Girls" (Bersani & Dutoit)
	Th 4/10	*Hable Con Ella* / *Talk To Her* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 14
12	T 4/15	**QUIZ #2**	
	Th 4/17	*Volver* (film)	"Spanish Film Music" (Vernon/Eisen)
13	T 4/22	*Volver* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 16
	Th 4/24	*La Piel Que Habito* / *The Skin I Live In* (film)	"Three Films Close-Up" (Goss)
14	T 4/29	*La Piel Que Habito* / *The Skin I Live In* (film)	*Desire Unlimited*, Ch. 18
	Th 5/ 1	*Los Amantes Pasajeros* / *I'm So Excited!* (film)	"The Auteur Theory" (Goss)
15	T 5/ 6	*Los Amantes Pasajeros* / *I'm So Excited!* (film)]	"Almodóvar's Master Class" (article)
	Th 5/ 8	Course Review (+ Student Films?)	"I'm So Excited Performs Crisis" (Delgado)
16	Tues. May 13th	**FINAL EXAM** **(1:00 to 3:45 pm)** As per university schedule	
***	5/ 21	FINAL GRADES DUE	

Further Reading Suggestions, Resources, and References:

- ***The Last Dream*** [a collection of short stories], by P. Almodóvar (2024, Harper Collins)
- ***A Spanish Labyrinth: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar***, by M. Allinson (2001, I.B. Tauris)
- ***Pedro Almodóvar: Contemporary Film Directors***, by M. D'Lugo (2006, University of Illinois Press)
- ***Almodóvar on Almodóvar*** [Revised Edition], edited by F. Strauss (2007, Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- ***All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema***, edited by B. Epps & D. Kakoudaki (2009, University of Minnesota Press)
- ***All About Almodóvar's Men*** **(Masculinity Studies Book 8)**, by J. Rey and F. Uceda (2017, P. Lang)
- ***Aesthetics, Ethics and Trauma in the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar***, by J. D. Gutiérrez-Albilla (2018, Edinburgh University Press)
- ***A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar***, by M. D'Lugo & K.M. Vernon (2013, Wiley-Blackwell)
- ***Pedro Almodóvar: Interviews*** [Conversations With Filmmakers Series], by P.Willoquet-Maricondi (2004, University Press of Mississippi)
- ***Desire Unlimited: The Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*** [3rd Edition], by **Paul J. Smith** (2014, Verso)
- ***Master of Cinema: Pedro Almodóvar***, by T. Sotinel (2010, Phaidon Press)
- ***Post-Franco, Post-Modern: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar***, edited by **K.M. Vernon & B. Morris** (1995, Praeger)
- ***Los Archivos de Pedro Almodóvar***, by P. Duncan (2017, Taschen)
- ***Gay Directors, Gay Films?: Pedro Almodóvar, Terence Davies, Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, John Waters***, by E. Levy (2015, Columbia University Press)
- ***How the Films of Pedro Almodóvar Draw Upon and Influence Spanish Society***, edited by **M.R. Matz & C. Salmon** (2012, The Edwin Mellen Press)
- ***Un Caníbal en Madrid: La Sensibilidad Camp y el Reciclaje de la Historia en el Cine de Pedro Almodóvar***, edited by **A. Yarza** (1999, Ediciones Libertarias)
- ***Transmutaciones de Género en el Cine de Almodóvar: Mujeres al Borde de un Ataque de Nervios***, by **B. Pastor** (2002, Universidade de São Paulo)