

# Cinematic Auteurs: Cuarón, del Toro, & Inárritu

FILM 3390 / CHIC 4350 | T/Th 12:00 – 1:20 pm Cotton #201 | Spring Semester – 2026

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## Required Textbook:

*The Three Amigos: Transnational Filmmaking of del Toro, Inárritu, and Cuarón* [By author Deborah Shaw, Year: 2013, Publisher: Manchester University Press]

## Course Description:

The aim of this course is to increase understanding of a specific film director (in this case, the three Mexican directors: Alfonso Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro, & Alejandro González-Inárritu)... with the goals of enlightenment about cinema, filmmaking, and critical thinking about media. This course will introduce you to background information about the director(s), 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 as well, and therefore also emphasizes racial, ethnic, class, and gender analyses of film/media production. Finally, this class will emphasize a critical-cultural approach to media / communication overall.

**Course Objectives:** In this course you should,

- Become familiar with the director and his/her body of work, and develop a familiarity with the director's style, thematic concerns, and commitments. (In this case, the three Mexican directors)
- Develop a basic 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 potential influence of an individual's group, cultural, or ethnic/national identity on mediated productions.

**Special Acknowledgements:** Thank you to Dr. Roberto Avant-Mier for originally creating this course and curating the film selections and readings. I look forward to building upon this work into the future.

## Course Policies & Details:

### 1. ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

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 (not the professor) for the session, 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 extracurricular 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 tardies will be considered the same as one absence (for final grading). [*i.e.*, 2 tardies/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).

**Participation will be graded by student engagement in class and online in discussion posts.**

### 2. DATES/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).

### 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 (Re: *The 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](mailto: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](http://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, (b.) as long as the student sits in the front rows of the classroom, and/or (c.) CASS accommodation is documented and requested. [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. NOTE ON USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (or, “AI”):

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all work submitted in this course must be your own and completed in accordance with the **UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures Chapter 1 Section 1.2.3**. AI generated submissions that use ChatGPT, Grammarly, Chegg or other AI composition software is strictly prohibited, and will be treated as cheating and reported to the Dean of Students (with absolutely no exceptions).

## 9. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALES:

### Assignments

Attendance & Participation	30 %
Quizzes (2 total / 15% each)	30 %
Midterm Exam	20 %
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 of course / "F" or "W"

Note: 2 Tardies = 1 Absence

*Please stay home if you are sick. Email me in advance for an excused absence.*

### Numeric Scale – Letter Grade Achieved

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

**Extra Credit:** Available at the discretion of your instructor. Any extra credit opportunities will be posted on Blackboard, if applicable.

## 10. ADVISORY / "HEADS-UP" / WARNING [especially for possible triggers]:

One final thing to note for taking this class is that we will be watching movies and films, but it is important to note beforehand that sometimes films can be upsetting or offensive. Sometimes films have foul language, drug use, nudity, sex, violence, sexual assault or physical assault, etc. While this type of content is not gratuitous and always has a specific point (see readings), it is important to note that such content might appear in films. Thus, students who might have major issues with potentially seeing such things on-screen are advised not to take this class.

## COURSE CALENDAR & READINGS:

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

*Due to some longer lengths of films, there may be a need to shift the calendar depending on whether films are completed within windows allocated below.*

Week	Day	Date	Film / Topic	Length	Be Ready to Discuss
1	Tues	1/20	Introductions, Syllabus & Course overview		N/A
	Thurs	1/22	Cuarón #1: <i>Sólo Con Tu Pareja</i> (1991)	1h 25m	<i>The Three Amigos</i> : "Introduction"
2	Tues	1/27	Cuarón #1: <i>Sólo Con Tu Pareja</i> (1991)		a. <i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 7 b. "Sex, Lies, & Mariachis" (by R. Long)
	Thurs	1/29	del Toro #1: <i>Cronos</i> (1993)	1h 34m	a. "Introduction" (Tierney/Shaw/Davies) b. "G. del Toro: At Home w/ Monsters" (Salvesen & Shedden)
3	Tues	2/3	del Toro #1: <i>Cronos</i> (1993)		a. <i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 1
	Thurs	2/5	Iñárritu #1: <i>Amores Perros</i> (2000)	2h 34m	a. "Song for R. DeChaine" (Avant-Mier) b. "Dogs Heralded Millenium" (Villoro)
4	Tues	2/10	Iñárritu #1: <i>Amores Perros</i> (2000)		a. <i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 4 b. "A.P.: Force of Impact" (F. Solórzano)
	Thurs	2/12	<b>QUIZ #1</b>		N/A
5	Tues	2/17	Cuarón #2: <i>Y Tu Mamá También</i> (2001)	1h 46m	"YTMT: Dirty, Happy Things" (Taylor)
	Thurs	2/19	Cuarón #2: <i>Y Tu Mamá También</i> (2001)		<i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 8
6	Tues	2/24	del Toro #2: <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (2006)	1h 59m	<i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 3
	Thurs	2/26	del Toro #2: <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (2006)		a. "Introduction" (by McDonald & Clark) b. "Desire & Disobedience..." (J. Orme)
7	Tues	3/3	Iñárritu #2: <i>Babel</i> (2006)	2h 23m	"Bridging Worlds..." (by J. Pellicer)
	Thurs	3/5	Iñárritu #2: <i>Babel</i> (2006)		<i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 6
8	Tues	3/10	<b>REVIEW IN CLASS FOR MIDTERM</b>		N/A STUDY
	Thurs	3/12	<b>MIDTERM</b>		N/A
9	Tues	3/17	<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS</b>		N/A
	Thurs	3/19			
10	Tues	3/24	Cuarón #3: <i>Children of Men</i> (2006)	1h 49m	"Heroic Incomprehension..." (Munson)
	Thurs	3/26	Cuarón #3: <i>Children of Men</i> (2006)		"Chicano Monsters..." (M. Lechuga & R. Avant-Mier)
11	Tues	3/31	Iñárritu #3: <i>Biutiful</i> (2010)	2h 28m	<i>The Three Amigos</i> , Ch. 9 "Spirits... in <i>Biutiful</i> " (K. Connolly)
	Thurs	4/2	Iñárritu #3: <i>Biutiful</i> (2010)		a. "Making a Scene..." (A.G. Iñárritu) b. "A.G. Iñárritu," pp. 67-75 (D. Tierney) "Global Ghosts" (J. Hanley)
12	Tues	4/7	del Toro #3: <i>The Shape of Water</i> (2017)	2h 3m	a. "An Interview w/ Guillermo del Toro" (K. McDonald & R. Clark)
	Thurs	4/9	del Toro #3: <i>The Shape of Water</i> (2017)		b. "Falling for Amphibious Man" (A. Adji)
13	Tues	4/14	<b>QUIZ #2</b>		N/A
	Thurs	4/16	Cuarón #4: <i>Roma</i> (2018)	2h 15m	D. Tierney, D. Shaw, P. A. Palou, O. Consentino, Sánchez / Prado, & J. Middents
14	Tues	4/21	Cuarón #4: <i>Roma</i> (2018)		N/A

	Thurs	4/23	Iñárritu #4: <i>Birdman</i> (2014)	2h	"Interview with A. G. Iñárritu" (Deleyto & del Mar Azcona)
15	Tues	4/28	Iñárritu #4: <i>Birdman</i> (2014)		TBD
	Thurs	4/30	del Toro #4 <i>Nightmare Alley</i> (2021)	2h 30m	TBD
16	Tues	5/5	del Toro #4 <i>Nightmare Alley</i> (2021)		TBD
	Thurs	5/7	<b>REVIEW IN CLASS FOR FINAL</b>		N/A STUDY
<b>FINALS</b>	Tues	5/12	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		*As per university schedule

## Director Filmography

### Alfonso Cuarón:

*Sólo con Tu Pareja* (1991) [Or, “Love in the Time of Hysteria”]  
*A Little Princess* (1995)  
*Great Expectations* (1998)  
*Y Tu Mamá También* (2001) [Or, “And Your Mother Too”]  
*Harry Potter & The Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004)  
*Children of Men* (2006)  
*Gravity* (2013)  
*Roma* (2018)

### Guillermo del Toro:

*Cronos* (1993)  
*Mimic* (1997)  
*The Devil’s Backbone* (2001)  
*Blade II* (2002)  
*HellBoy* (2004)  
*El Laberinto del Fauno* (2006)  
*HellBoy II: The Golden Army* (2008)  
*Pacific Rim* (2013)  
*Crimson Peak* (2015)  
*The Shape of Water* (2017)  
*Nightmare Alley* (2021)  
*Pinocchio* (2022)  
*Frankenstein* (2025)

### Alejandro González Iñárritu:

*Amores Perros* (2000) [Or, “Love is a Bitch”]  
*21 Grams* (2003)  
*Babel* (2006)  
*Biutiful* (2010)  
*Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* (2014)  
*The Revenant* (2015)  
*Bardo (or False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths)* (2022)

### Further Reading Suggestions, Resources, and References:

- ***The Three Amigos: The Transnational Filmmaking of Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón***, by D. Shaw (2016), Manchester University Press.
- ***Alejandro González Iñárritu***, by C. Deleyto and María del Mar Azcona (2010), University of Illinois Press.
- ***Amores Perros***, by Paul J. Smith (2003), Palgrave Macmillan.
- ***Hermeneutic Humility and the Political Theology of Cinema: Blind Paul*** by S. Desilets (2016), Routledge.
- ***The Supernatural Cinema of Guillermo del Toro***, by J.W. Morehead (2015), McFarland & Company.
- ***The Transnational Fantasies of Guillermo del Toro***, by A. Davies, D. Shaw, and D. Tierney (2014), Palgrave Macmillan.
- ***Guillermo del Toro: Film as Alchemic Art***, by Keith McDonald and Roger Clark (2015), Bloomsbury Academic.
- ***Guillermo del Toro “At Home With Monsters”: Inside His Films, Notebooks, and Collections***, by B. Salvesen, J. Shedden, & M Welch (2016), Insight Editions.
- ***Guillermo del Toro “Cabinet of Curiosities”: My Notebooks, Collections, and Other Obsessions***, by G. del Toro & M. Zicree (2013), Harper Design.
- ***Guillermo del Toro “Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark”: Blackwood’s Guide to Dangerous Fairies***, by G. del Toro & C. Golden (2011), Hyperion Books.
- ***Guillermo del Toro’s The Devil’s Backbone***, by M. Z. Seitz & S. Abrams (2017), Insight Editions.
- ***Guillermo del Toro’s Pan’s Labyrinth: Inside the Creation of a Modern Fairytale***, by G. del Toro, N. Nunziata, & M. Cotta Vaz (2016), Harper Design.
- ***Guillermo del Toro’s The Shape of Water: Creating a Fairy Tale for Troubled Times***, by G. McIntyre (2017), Insight Editions.
- ***Pan’s Labyrinth: The Labyrinth of the Faun***, by G. del Toro & C. Funke (2019), Katherine Tegen Books.