

**Latin American History at the Movies (HIST 368):
Women in Film**

“Certainly they will never be obliged to read history again.”
– D.W. Griffith

Spring 2013, Truman State University
MC211, W 6:00-8:50
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Description

How has the popular cinema industry portrayed Latin American History? What can we learn from these depictions? In this class we will watch and analyze feature films from the United States and Latin America which grapple with various events and issues in Latin America. Through these films, we will both critically analyze historical developments in Latin America as well as the assumptions and ideological perspectives that go into the making of a film on Latin America. Through this process, we will develop a deeper appreciation for the complexities that embody Latin American and the problems that the region faces.

Requirements

Our goal in this class is to challenge existing assumptions, engage alternative viewpoints, and encourage critical thinking. Through the study of history, we seek to empower ourselves to be better citizens, and to provide ourselves with the skills necessary to play a positive and educated role in society. We need to be active constituents rather than mere recipients of our education. To accomplish those tasks, we should strive to create an open and supportive learning environment. Regular attendance and active participation are also necessary. Please drop me a note if you are unable to attend, or if you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the class.

Readings

There are three texts for the class. The primary text is the films we will watch on Latin American history. A second text is an essay or essays dissecting either the film or issues presented in the film. The third text is a primary source related to issues portrayed in the film. These last two texts will be posted to the blackboard webpage. Read both of them before class so that you are prepared to carry on intelligent discussions of the films in class.

Assignments and grades

Course grades will be based on the following assignments:

Film introductions and discussions (18 percent of course grade). The class will divide up into small groups for each film. These groups will bring the film to class, present an introduction to the film, and lead a discussion after viewing it. This assignment involves previewing the film (as well as other films by the same director or on the same topic), researching the historical context of the film, selecting a primary source document related to the historical themes portrayed in the

film, and engaging students in an active discussion of the film.

The introductions most show evidence of serious scholarly research that informs the presentations. It is the group's responsibility to help the class understand the historical significance of what is happening in the film, and your grade will be based on how well you realize that objective. See the blackboard webpage for a bibliography of suggested starting points for your research. Consider questions such as these in preparing for your presentation:

- Who is the director? What else has this person made and how does this film fit into that genre?
- What evidence is there of historical research that the filmmaker conducted in the process of producing the film?
- What is the potential and limitations of the medium of film for interpreting history as portrayed through this specific film?
- What are the cinematographic virtues of the film?
- How have other reviewers critiqued this film?

To assist in the class discussion of the film, bring to class:

- A list of discussion questions, a study guide, related web sites, and/or class exercises for discussing the film.
- Overheads, powerpoint, or other visual aids such as maps, photographs, drawings, etc., to assist in the introduction and discussion of the film.
- Anything else that will help in the interpretation and understanding of the film.

The presenters must also:

- Select a primary source document related to the historical themes portrayed in the film and post it one week in advance to the Blackboard website.
- Develop an annotated bibliography of sources related to this film and its historical context.
- Take the lead on guiding the discussion on the Blackboard website.

Please Note: It is your group's responsibility to pick up the film from Pickler library and bring it to class for viewing. In order to be sure that the film is not checked out when we need it in class, it is a good idea for one person in your group to put a hold on the film for a day or two before we watch it.

Source analysis (20 percent). Select one scholarly book related to the historical topic of the film and critique the argument in the reading. The essay should be three pages long, typed, double-spaced, follow good essay form (have an intro, thesis, conclusion, etc.) and include citations, a bibliography, and page numbers. The essay is due at the time you present your film.

Discussion board postings (3 percent each, for a total of 42 percent of course grade). After each class discussion, post to the discussion board on the blackboard webpage a short essay with *your* assessment of the historical value of the film, including relating it to the day's assigned readings. How successful was the film in communicating historical facts and interpretations? Was it more or less successful than the readings? Did the film have other goals, and did it successfully achieve these? How would you critique the comments of your classmates on this film? I will grade your posting based on your incorporation of assigned readings, synthesis of the material, ability to analyze its significance, an evaluation of its importance to the broader themes of this class, and the extent to which you engage other students in a virtual discussion. Post your essay

to the discussion board by the Monday following the day we have watched the film.

Final project (20 percent). Make a film on a historical event in Latin America. This will include conducting research on the topic, writing a script, designing costumes, filming the event, and finally editing the film. We will present this film to class as our final exam on Wednesday, May 8.

Class Schedule

Jan 16 Introduction

Read: Donald F. Stevens, "Never Read History Again? The Possibilities and Perils of Cinema as Historical Depiction," in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, ed. Donald F. Stevens (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1997), 1-11.

Films: *Birth of a Nation*, 1:34-1:47 (PN1995.75 .B57 1998)
Americas, pt. 7, *Builders of Images: Latin American Cultural Identity*, 47-57 (F1408 .A617 1993 pt.7)
Gringo in Mañanaland (PN1995.9.L37 G75 1995)
bell hooks: Cultural Criticism & Transformation, 37-49 (HM101 .B44 1997)

Jan 23 Christopher Columbus

Read: Jim Shultz, "The Cochabamba Water Revolt and its Aftermath," in *Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia's challenge to globalization*, ed. Jim Shultz and Melissa Draper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 9-42.

Film: *Even The Rain* (PN1995.9.F6718 T336 2012)

Jan 30 Conquest

Read: Salvador Carrasco, "The Invisible Sight," in *The Zapatista Reader*, ed. Tom Hayden (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002), 166-77.

Film: *The Other Conquest*

Feb 6 Religion

Read: Susan E. Ramírez, "*I, the Worst of All*: The Literary Life of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz," in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, ed. Donald F. Stevens (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1997), 47-62.

Film: *I, The Worst of All* (PN1995.9.F6718 Y63 2003)

Feb 13 Slavery

Read: Kimberly Juanita Brown, "Black Rapture: Sally Hemings, Chica da Silva, and the Slave Body of Sexual Supremacy," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1/2 (Spring - Summer 2007): 45-66.

Film: *Xiça* (PN1995.9 F67169 X5 1993)

Feb 20 Patriarchy

Read: Caryn C. Connelley, "The Trials of *Las Mujeres Pensantes*: Juana Inés and María Luisa Find a Room of Their Own," *Chasqui* 31, no. 1 (May 2002): 62-

85.

Film: *Camila* (PN1995.9.F6718 C25 2002)

Feb 27 Religion

Read: Paul J. Vanderwood, "La Santa de Cabora," *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998), 159-201.

Film: *The Crime of Padre Amaro* (PN1995.9.F6718 C75 2003)

March 6 Mexican Revolution

Read: Barbara A. Tenenbaum, "Why Tita Didn't Marry the Doctor, or Mexican History in *Like Water for Chocolate*," in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, ed. Donald F. Stevens (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1997), 157-72.

Film: *Like Water for Chocolate* (PN1995.9.F6718 C65 2000)

March 20 Frida

Read: Eli Bartra and John Mraz, "Las Dos Fridas: History and Transcultural Identities," *Rethinking History* 9, no. 4 (December 2005): 449-57.

Film: *Frida* (ND259.K33 F73 2004)

March 27 Evita

Read: Marta E. Savigliano, "Evita: The Globalization of a National Myth," *Latin American Perspectives* 24, no. 6 (November 1997): 156-72.

Film: *Evita* (F2849.P37 E9 1998)

April 3 Cuba

Read: Barbara Weinstein, "Lucia: Inventing Women's History on Film," in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, ed. Donald F. Stevens, ed. (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1997), 123-42.

Film: *Lucía* (PN1995.9.F6718 L83 1990Z)

April 10 Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Read: Mark D. Szuchman, "Depicting the Past in Argentine Films: Family Drama and Historical Debate in *Miss Mary* and *The Official Story*," in *Based on a True Story: Latin American History at the Movies*, ed. Donald F. Stevens, ed. (Wilmington, Del: SR Books, 1997), 173-200.

Film: *The Official Story* (PN1995.9.F6718 H57 1998)

April 17 Shining Path

Read Carol Andreas, "Women at War," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 24, no. 4 (December 1990-January 1991): 20-27+.

Jaymie Patricia Heilman, "Family Ties: The Political Genealogy of Shining Path's Comrade Norah," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 29, no. 2 (April 2010): 155-69.

Film: *The Dancer Upstairs* (PR6069.H286 D363 2003)

April 24 Mirabal sisters

Read: Nancy P. Robinson, "Origins of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women: The Caribbean Contribution," *Caribbean Studies* 34, no. 2 (July-December 2006): 141-61.

Film: *In the Time of the Butterflies* (PS3551.L845 I53 2002)

May 1 Chile

Read: Julie D. Shayne, "The Tenure of Salvador Allende through a Feminist Lens, 1970-1973," *The Revolution Question: Feminisms in El Salvador, Chile, and Cuba* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 67-89.

Film: *The House of the Spirits* (PQ8098.1.L54 C323 2001)

May 8 Present film from class project to campus community.