

## Latin American History at the Movies (HIST 3816)

*“Certainly they will never be obliged to read history again.”*

– D.W. Griffith

Spring 2022, Truman State University  
BH114, M 6:00-9:00  
Office: MC 227

Marc Becker  
marc@truman.edu  
Phone: x6036

Office Hours: M 12:30-5 & WF 12:30-1:30 over zoom <https://zoom.us/my/marcbecker> (and by appointment)

Google drive:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E8ISI7DJ7tMdb6LPpLIdvgrDkJNmNnQY?usp=sharing>

### 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.

See the syllabus addendum on Blackboard for additional class policies.

### 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 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

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Reading responses (1pt each)	14
Film discussion (1pt each)	14
Film Responses (1pt each)	14
Film introduction	19
Source analysis	20
Final project	19

You can check your grade progress on the class Blackboard web page. Grades are calculated out of a total of 100 possible points, and not the percentage of completed assignments as displayed in Blackboard. At least 90 points are necessary for an A, 80 for a B, 70 for a C, and 60 for a D. Fewer than 60 points is an F. **Successful completion of all assignments is required to receive credit for this class.**

## Assignments and grades

Course grades will be based on the following assignments:

**Film introductions and discussions.** Sign up on the signup sheet (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1E8ISI7DJ7tMdb6LPpLIdvgrDkJNmNnQY?usp=sharing>) to introduce and lead discussion of one of the films. 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. **You are responsible for bringing a copy of the film to class.**

The introduction must show evidence of serious scholarly research that informs the presentation. It is your 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 are 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.
- A 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. Have me approve it for posting one week in advance to the Blackboard website.
- Develop an annotated bibliography of sources related to the film and its historical context and give it to me.
- 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 (or any other source) 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 to put a hold on the film for a day or two before we watch it. 19pts.

**Source analysis.** Select one scholarly book related to the historical topic of the film you are presenting and critique its argument. 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. 20pts.

**Reading responses:** Post a comment, question, response, or reaction for each weekly reading by noon on Monday to the discussion board on Blackboard. 1pt each, 14 pts total.

**Film discussion:** Participation in class discussion of the film, including during the film at [https://groupme.com/join\\_group/84296875/MdLasB2x](https://groupme.com/join_group/84296875/MdLasB2x). 1pt each, 14 pts total.

**Film Response.** By end of day each Tuesday after each class discussion, post to the discussion board on blackboard webpage a short essay with *your* assessment of the historical value of the film. 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? 1pt each, 14 pts total.

**Final project.** As a class, we will 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. More information is on Blackboard. 19pts.

## Class Schedule

Jan 10 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 24 Pancho Villa

**Read:** Aurelio de los Reyes, "With Villa in Mexico--On Location," *Performing Arts Annual* (1986): 98-131.

**Film:** *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself* (F1234.V63 A63 2004)

Jan 31 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)

Feb 7 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)

Feb 14 Maribal sisters PS3551.L845 I53 2002

**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)

Feb 21 Ernesto Guevara de la Serna

**Read:** Claire Williams, "Los diarios de motocicleta as Pan-American Travelogue," *Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Breaking into the global market*, ed. Deborah Shaw (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 11-27.

**Film:** *The Motorcycle Diaries* (F2224 .G783 2005)

Feb 28 Cuba

**Read:** Matt D. Childs, "An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 3 (October 1995): 593-624.

**Film:** *Che Part 1* (F1787.5 .G83132 2009)

March 14 Bolivia

**Read:** Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), 701-39.

**Film:** *Che Part 2* (F1787.5 .G83132 2009)

March 21 Chile

**Read:** Paula T. Cronovich, "'No' and No: The Campaign of 1988 and Pablo Larraín's Film," *Radical History Review* 124 (January 2016): 165-76.

**Film:** *No* (PN1995.9 .F6718 N6 2013)

March 28 Guatemala

**Read:** Carlota Mcallister, "A Headlong Rush Into The Future: Violence and revolution in a Guatemalan Indigenous village," in *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and counterinsurgent violence during Latin America's long cold war*, ed. Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 276-308.

**Film:** *Men with Guns* (PN1995.9.F6718 M45 2003)

April 4 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)

April 11 Bolivia

**Read:** TBA

**Film:** *Our Brand is Crisis* (PN1995.9.P6 O97 2016)

April 18 Day of the Dead

**Read:** TBA

**Film:** *Coco* (PN1997.5 .C63 2018)

April 25 Work on film

May 2 Present film from class project to campus community.