

ARHS 1351 - VISUAL CULTURES: TOPICS IN WESTERN ART

Representing Latin America in US Visual Culture

Prof. Beatriz E. Balanta (bbalanta@smu.edu)

May Term 2016 (Thursday, May 12 - Thursday, May 26)

11:00 am – 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

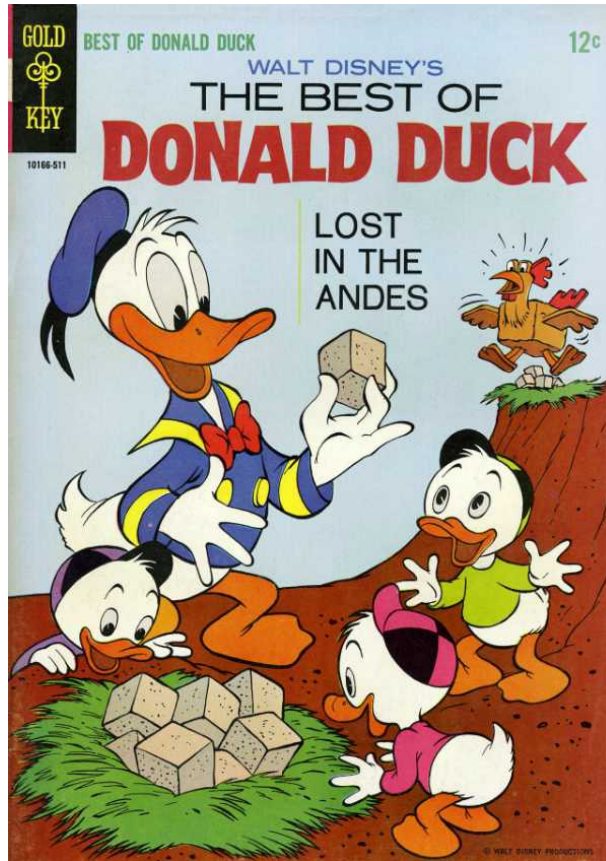


Figure 1: Cover, The Best of Donald Duck: Lost in the Andes, comic book

How has popular cinema portrayed Latin American realities? What can we learn from these depictions? In this class, we will watch feature films that grapple with key events in Latin America. Engagement with these films will allow us to critically examine historical processes such as: discovery and conquest, independence movements, U.S.-Latin American relations, dictatorships, women and violence, and globalization and immigration.

First, we investigate how the films address socio-political and historical events. To do so, we read scholarly articles to provide contextual information. We will also work to understand how films create meaning as works of art. We will investigate how audio-visual technologies construct messages and assess the impact of images in our society.

Instructor's Biography

Dr. Balanta is a native of Colombia (South America) who, as a teenager, immigrated to U.S.A. She received a BA from Boston College and a PhD from Duke University. Dr. Balanta has been at SMU since 2013 and is Assistant Professor of Art History. She is an expert in Latin American history and photography.

Course Specifics

This course fulfills: University Curriculum (Creativity and Aesthetics 1, Historical Context 1). As such, it fulfills University Curriculum Outcomes and Learning Objectives:

Pillars/Creativity & Aesthetics (Level 1):

Students will be able to evaluate sources and analyze the role and value of films to the different Latin American contexts that create and adopt them.

Students will be able to identify the aesthetic value and the structure of films. Students will be able to assess the cultural context in which films are produced.

Pillars/Historical Contexts (Level 1):

Students will be able to identify the main events, actors, and evidence involved in a defined historical period.

Course Format: This course will be conducted as a discussion based seminar. But it is divided into three distinct sections:

1. Lecture and discussion of assigned readings/films: Professor's lecture will discuss salient issues in the reading/films. However, students are expected to participate actively.
2. In class film viewing
3. Group work: Students are expected come prepared to class so that they can effectively work with each other. You must take detailed notes while watching films and reading assigned essays. These materials will allow you to participate actively and effectively in class.

Required Text Books:

1. John C. Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, New York: Norton W., W. & Company, Inc., 2011. Third Edition. Make sure to get the third edition of this text. [Available on Amazon \(from \\$35.00, used\).](#)
2. Sikov, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Technology:

The use of electronics, computers, cell phones, etc. is **NOT allowed** in class unless specified by the professor.

Students are required to check their SMU email and Canvas website periodically to keep informed. We use email to update you regarding class activities, due dates, and materials. Class materials marked with a **CW** will be available through our courses' Canvas Website. Articles marked with **LDB** can be accessed through the SMU's Databases, available [here](#) or <https://sites.smu.edu/cul/>.

Students will have to download VLC in order to play some of the films discussed in the class.

VLC for Windows: <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-windows.html>

VLC for mac: <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-macosx.html>

Students must also check their SMU emails for alerts and links sent from [wettransfer](#), that's the file sharing platform we'll be using to provide access to course materials, including films.

Communication: I hold office hours on Tuesdays, 4:00 pm – 6:00pm. However, I am very flexible and prefer to arrange specific times to meet with you. I am also available via email (bbalanta@smu.edu) and skype ([staamu](#)). If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, don't hesitate to contact me.

Course Requirements:

I. Active Engagement

Students must come to class prepared. This means that readings and films must be studied prior to the assigned date in the syllabus. Moreover, you must pay attention and take notes in class. Since lecture does not necessarily cover material from textbooks, you must have an effective way of recording topics discussed in class. Texts and quizzes rely on this information.

II. Attendance

Because of the brevity of the May Term, students are expected to attend ALL class sessions. If you will not be able to attend a specific session, you notify the instructor in advance via email and you must make arrangements with another student to get copies of notes, etc. **2 unexcused absences will result in failure (F).**

In the event of an emergency absence and/or request for extension on papers or exams (due to personal or family illness) documentation will be requested. With notification prior to class, excused absences will be granted in the event of family emergencies, funerals, medical situations, SMU sponsored events, etc. Seniors conducting job interviews should make their best effort to schedule interviews at times outside class hours. If a conflict is unavoidable, the excused absence should be requested far in advance of class.

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify the instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence (See University Policy No. 1.9.).

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity are given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue).

Unexcused lateness and/or absences will affect your grade (see below). To avoid penalization, all extensions for graded assignments must be approved ahead of time.

NO EXTRA work will be assigned to make-up for missed assignments or to get a better grade.

II. Assignments

1. In-Class Exams (2, 20% each): During the semester, 2 exams will be given. These exams will cover both historical information and filmic analysis. Test will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in the blanks, short answer, and short essay. **DUE DATES: Tuesday, May 17 and Monday, May 27.**

2. Final Exam (Take home, 30%): The exam covers the entire semester and will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in the blanks, short answer, and short essay. **DUE DATE: Friday, May 27**

3. Film Analysis Homework (20%): Students will be given viewing exercises, which must be completed in time and uploaded to Canvas website. **Homework will be assigned in class.**

3. Participation (10%): Participation includes actively engaging with the readings and discussing them in a productive manner during class. The use of cell phones, ipads, smart phones, computers, and all other electronic equipment is not permitted in class, unless otherwise allowed by the professor in specific occasions.

Grade and Numeric Equivalents:

A	95-100	C-	71
A-	91	D+	68
B+	88	D	65
B	85	D-	61
C+	78	F	55
C	75		
NOTE: Two (2) <i>unexcused absences</i> will result in you being dropped from this course. You will receive an F (failing grade)			

Academic Ethics

Students are expected to abide by the SMU Honor Code at all times. (See www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp) If you have questions about how the Honor Code applies to your work in this course, please contact the instructor. Written works, essays and papers must be the result of the student's personal reflection. Quotations and bibliography must follow the Chicago Manual of Style formats. The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Disability Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the instructor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.).

Schedule of readings*

Readings and activities scheduled are subject to change at the professor's discretion. Students will need to complete daily assigned readings and homework prior to lecture.

Before the beginning of class (May 12), students must read:

1. Chasteen, John C. *Born in Blood and Fire*:
Chap. 1: "Encounter"
Chap. 2: "Colonial Crucible"
Chap. 6: "Neocolonialism"

Thursday, May 12

Introduction Film/History

Introduction to course themes and expectations

También la lluvia (Even the Rain), Dir. Icíar Bollain, España-Bolivia, 2010, 104 mins.

Friday, May 13

Discussion:

Colonial Dreams of Discovery and Conquest

1. *Apocalypto*, dir. Mel Gibson, USA, 2006, 138 mins.
2. Sikov, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*:
Chap. 1: "Mise-en-Scene: Within the Image"
Chap. 2: "Mise-en-Scene: Camera Movement"
Chap. 3: "Mise-en-Scene: Cinematography"

Monday, May 16

Discussion:

Military Regimes

1. *La historia oficial* (The Official Story), dir. Luis Puenzo, 1985, 112 mins.
2. Sikov, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*: Chap. 4: "Editing: From Shot to Shot"
3. Chasteen, John C. *Born in Blood and Fire*: Chap. 8: "Revolution" and Chap. 9: "Reaction"

In class viewing:

La infancia clandestina (Clandestine Childhood), dir. Benjamín Ávila, 2011, 112 mins.

Tuesday, May 17

In-Class viewing:

Televised Revolutions

No, dir. Pablo Larraín, Chile-USA, 2012, 118 mins.

Exam 1

Wednesday, May 18

Discussion:

The Peripheries of Globalization

1. *Cidade de Deus* (City of God), dirs. Fernando Meirelles, Kátia Lund, 2004, 130 mins.
2. Chasteen, John C. *Born in Blood and Fire*: Chap. 10: "Neoliberalism"

In-class viewing:

Ônibus 174 (Bus 174), dir. José Padilha, 2003, 122 mins.

Thursday, May 19**Sex/Politics/Death (Men)**

Discussion:

1. Sivok, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*. Chap. 5: "Sound"
2. *Our Lady of the Assassins*, dir. Barbet Schroeder, 2000, 101 mins.
3. Ramos, Juan G. "Homosexuality, Machismo and Violence in Barbet Schroeder's *La Virgen de los Sicarios*." Available [here](http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ci/transformations/sexualities/s2/ramos%20paper.pdf) or <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ci/transformations/sexualities/s2/ramos%20paper.pdf>

Friday, May 20**Sex/Politics/Memory (Women)**

Discussion:

La teta asustada (The Milk of Sorrow), dir. Claudia Llosa, Perú-Spain, 2009, 95 mins.

Theidon, Kimberly. "The milk of sorrow: a theory on the violence of memory." *Canadian Woman Studies* 27. 1 (2008): 8-16.

Monday, May 23**Sex/Politics/Repression****Exam 2**

In class viewing:

Y tu mamá también, dir. Alfonso Cuarón, 2001, 106 mins.

Tuesday, May 24**Globalization and Its Discontents**

Discussion:

1. Sivok, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction*, Chap. 6: "Narrative: From Scene to Scene"
2. *Bolivia*, dir. Adrián Caetano, 2002, 75 mins.

Wednesday, May 25**The Ghosts of Globalization**

Discussion:

1. *Biutiful*, dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2010, 148 mins.
2. Azcona, Maria del Mar. "'We are All Uxball': Narrative Complexity in the Urban Borderlands in *Biutiful*." *Journal of Film and Video* 67.1 (2015): 3-13. LDB.

Thursday, May 26**Conclusions/Review
Take Home Exam**