

## Latin American History Through Film, AHR51351

Prof. Beatriz E. Balanta, [bbalanta@smu.edu](mailto:bbalanta@smu.edu)

May Term 2015 (May 14-May 29, 2015)

10:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 – 3:00pm

Classroom TBA, check [www.my.smu.edu](http://www.my.smu.edu)

### Course Description

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How has popular cinema portrayed Latin American history? What can we learn from these depictions? In this class, we will watch feature films which grapple with various events and issues in Latin America. Through these films we will both critically examine historical developments in Latin America as well as learn about the aesthetic conventions used by narrative films to convey meaning. Historical events and processes explored in the course include: Discovery and conquest, independence movements, US-Latin American relations, dictatorships, women and violence, and immigration.

We will analyze the films in two ways. 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. Therefore, we will study narrative and visual techniques.

### Instructor Biography

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

### Course Objectives and Outcomes

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This course fulfills: University Curriculum (Creativity and Aesthetics 1, Historical Context 1)

#### University Curriculum Outcomes

- Pillars/Creativity & Aesthetics (Level 1): Students will be able to evaluate sources and analyze the role and value of creative works to the cultures (context) that create and adopt them.
- 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
2. In class film viewing
3. Group work

Students are expected come prepared to class. You must take detailed notes while watching films and reading assigned essays. These materials will allow you to participate actively and effectively in class.

### Course Requirements

<u>Paper One</u>	10% of grade	Due May 18
<u>Paper Two</u>	20% of grade	Due May 26
<u>Final Take Home Exam</u>	30% of grade	May 29 (in class)
<u>Conceptual Maps (3)</u>	30% of grade	May 15, May 20, May 22
<u>Participation</u>	10% of grade	May 29

All papers and Conceptual Maps must be submitted on time. Extensions **will not** be allowed without proper documentation of a medical or family emergency.

**Paper One (10%):** In the first paper, students will analyze a film sequence focusing on *mise-en-scene*. *Mise-en-scene* is a French term meaning literally “put in the scene,” and it was originally adapted from the theater. Generally speaking, this term refers to everything that appears in a scene: setting, decor, lighting, costumes, performance etc. Narrative films often manipulate these elements in order to intensify the significance of a particular scene.

Paper length: 3 pages (700-750 words, excluding bibliography), due date: Due May 18 (no late papers)

**Paper Two (20%):** In this paper, students are asked to combine formal analysis and historical context to write a cohesive, succinct examination of a film of their choosing.

Paper length: 5 pages (1000-1200 words, excluding bibliography), due date: Due May 26 (no late papers)

ALL papers and Conceptual Maps should be submitted according to the following guidelines:

**Heading:**

Course Title  
Prof. Name  
Student's Name  
Assignment Title

**Formatting:**

Times New Roman, 12 point font  
Double space, 1' margins, page numbers at bottom right side of page  
Bibliography (formatted in Chicago Style)\*  
Every film still must be labeled (Film title, Director, time stamp)

NOTE: Papers and Conceptual Maps must be submitted via BlackBoard on time, it must be formatted as a .doc **and** the file must be saved/named as follows: Last Name\_Assignment Title. Example: Balanta\_Conceptual Map\_1.

\* All papers must contain citations and a bibliography or works cited page. Bibliography and in-text citations must be formatted using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. General instructions may be found at:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>

**Conceptual Maps (3, 30%):** Students choose a sequence in a film and analyze it focusing on particular aspects of film such as sound and décor. A Film Analysis Guide will be provided and students should write their analysis based on this Guide and using instructions distributed by the professor. Topics to be discussed in Conceptual Maps will be announced in class.

**Final Take Home Exam (30%):** The final exam shall consist of watching movie in class during which you will take notes. You'll be given the rest of the class to demonstrate your understanding of the basic concepts of film analysis by connecting them to the historical context of the times.

**Participation (10%):** Participation includes actively engaging with the readings and discussing them in a productive manner during class, bringing in examples from your own experiences that relate to the topics being discussed, and being respectful of divergent viewpoints. Please do not come in late or leave early during class unless you have notified me beforehand.

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.

Students should keep a folder containing their Readings Notes, images, and graded assignments. In class, we work actively with these materials. Therefore, it is handy to have them in class.

ALL students must adhere to the University's Honor Code.

**Readings/Films:**

There are no assigned textbooks for this course. Some class materials will be available in our **Blackboard site** and will be designated with the letters **BB** in the course schedule.

ALL films will be on reserve at Fondren Library. Also, many of these films can be streamed or are available on YouTube and other video sharing sites.

Please note that some of the readings/films discuss sensitive topics that relate to religion, sexuality, and politics. I respect your sensibilities and understand if you need to physically withdraw from the discussion (i.e. leave the classroom or be absent from class, etc.). However, this course is about critical analysis, so I encourage you to struggle through the discomfort of the strange.

**Teaching method:** This course will be conducted as a discussion based seminar. Professor's lecture will discuss salient issues in the reading/films. However, students are expected to participate actively. There will also be a series of Writing Workshops during which students are expected to work collaborative in groups. During these times, professor will facilitate discussions specific to each group and assignment.

**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.

**Communication**

I hold office hours on Mondays, 2-3pm. However, I am very flexible and prefer to arrange specific times to meet with you. I am also available via email ([bbalanta@smu.edu](mailto:bbalanta@smu.edu)) and skype (staamu). If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, don't hesitate to contact the professor or the course's TA.

**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 professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.).

**Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors 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.).

**Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be 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).

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### Schedule of Viewings and Readings

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Students are expected to complete all assigned reading and viewing materials listed beside each date BEFORE to lecture

**May 14: Thurs.****From Dream to the Indies: The "Discovery" of America**

Discussion:

Introduction to course themes and expectations

In class viewing:

Film: *Apocalypto*, Dir. Mel Gibson, USA, 2006, 138 mins.

Readings: Traci Ardren, "Is Apocalypto Pornography?" *Archaeology*, December 5, 2006, <http://www.archaeology.org/online/reviews/apocalypto.html>  
 Andrea Stone, "Orcs in Loincloths," *Archaeology*, January 3, 2007, <http://www.archaeology.org/online/reviews/apocalypto2.h>

Film Analysis Guide, BB.

**May 15: Fri.****The Nightmare of Colonialism**

Reading:

Film: *La otra conquista (The Conquest)*, Dir. Salvador Carrasco, Mexico, 1999 [2007], 105 mins.

Readings: John C. Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, chap 1 "Encounter," and chap 2 "Colonial Crucible," pp. 29-56 and 63-93. BB.

Film Analysis Guide, BB.

Film Analysis of *Psycho*, developed by students, BB.**Film Analysis Conceptual Map DUE**

In class activity:

Film Analysis Workshop

**May 18: Mon.**

**Fighting for the Nation**

Discussion:

*Camila*, María Luisa Bemberg, Argentina, 1984; 105 mins.

Reading: James Schofield Saeger, "Passion and Patriarchy in Nineteenth-Century Argentina: María Luisa Bemberg's *Camila*," *Based on a true story: Latin American history at the movies*, 1997, pp. BB.

John C. Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Independence," BB.

**Paper 1 DUE**

**May 19: Tues.**

**Latin America in the U.S. Imagination**

Discussion:

Films: *Saludos Amigos*, Dir. Walt Disney, USA, 1942, 42 mins.

*The Three Caballeros*, Dir. Walt Disney, USA, 1944, 72 mins.

*Flying Down to Rio*, Dir. Thornton Freeland, USA, 1933, 89 mins.

Reading: Allen L. Woll, "Hollywood's Good Neighbor Policy: The Latin Image in American Film, 1939-1942." *Journal of Popular Film*, 3.4 (1974): 278-293. BB.

Caetano Veloso, "Carmen Mirandadada," *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, pp. 39-46. BB.

In class viewing:

*Carmen Miranda: Bananas is my Business*, Dir. Helena Solberg, Brazil, 1994, 91 mins.

**May 20: Weds.**

**Women Imagining Revolutions**

Discussion:

Film: *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Dir. Mariano Barroso, United States-Mexico, 2001, 95 mins.

Nancy Robinson, "Women's Political Participation in the Dominican Republic: The Case of the Mirabal Sisters," *Caribbean Quarterly*, 52. 2 (2006): 172-183.

**Film Analysis Conceptual Map DUE**

**May 21: Thurs.**

**Rebellion and Revolution: Against the Dictatorial Master**

Discussion:

Films: *Lo rubios* (The Blondes), Dir. Albertina Carri, Argentina, 2003, 89 mins.

Reading: Gonzalo Aguilar, "Los rubios: Mourning, Frivolity, and Melancholy"

**May 22: Fri.**

**Race, Gender and Violence: The Lives of Women**

*La teta asustada*, Dir. Claudia Llosa, Perú-Spain, 2009, 95 mins.

In class activity:

Writing Workshop

**Film Analysis Conceptual Map DUE**

**May 25: Monday**

**MEMORIAL DAY - No Class!**

**May 26: Tues.**

**Gender and Violence: The Lives of Men**

Discussion:

Films: *City of God*, Dirs. Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, Brazil, 2002, 130 mins.

*Our Virgin of the Assassins*, Barbet Schroeder, Colombia-France, 2000, 98 mins.

*Amores Perros*, Dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu, México, 2000, 133 mins.

Readings: Juan G. Ramos, "Homosexuality, Machismo and Violence in Barbet Schroeder's *La Virgen de los Sicarios*"

Bianca Freire-Medeiros, "'I went to the City of God': Gringos, guns and the touristic favela," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesia* 20. 1 (2011): 21-34. BB.

**Paper 2 DUE**

**May 27: Weds**

Discussion:

**Neoliberalism and Its Others, part I**

*Sleep Dealer*, Dir. Alex Rivera, USA, 90 mins.

In class viewing:

*Crude*, John Berlinger, 2009, USA

**Film Analysis Conceptual Map DUE**

**May 28: Thurs.**

In class viewing:

**Neoliberalism and Its Others, part II**

*Biutiful*, Alejandro González Iñárritu, México, 2010,

In class activity:

Writing Workshop

Distribution of questions for Final Take Home Exam

**May 29: Fri.**

**Take Home Exam DUE.**