

History of Latin American through Feature Film—Fall, 2010

Professor: Michael J. LaRosa

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Office Hours: MWF 8 am to 10 (Clough Hall); W 3-7 pm, Burrow Hall

Introduction:

This course will help students understand the complex history of Latin America using feature film as a primary “source.” We will watch a total of 12 films during the semester, and the films will be organized into four broad categories (Religion, Violence, Culture and Immigration). This course is not a “survey” of Latin American history. We will move thematically, not chronologically, and the key concern is to consider Latin American history from a variety of sources and approaches.

There are four books available for purchase in the college bookstore. These are “required” texts for the course.

Feitlowitz. *A Lexicon of Terror*

Fuentes. *The Crystal Frontier*

Stevens, ed. *Based on a True Story*

Winn. *Americas* (latest edition)

Method: The course will be organized in four three-week units adhering to the topics outlined above. Tuesday will be lecture day, on Wednesday evening we will watch a film, and Thursday will be dedicated to critical reflection and discussion on the film (and/or lecture and reading). It is important that students attend all lectures, films and discussions. Tuesday and Thursday class will run for one hour.

Policies: Students can not miss class except in extraordinary circumstances. I do not accept late papers, or electronic submissions of work. Students will write three short essays (on the first three thematic topics), will present an in-class midterm and a final exam. All work is worth about 20 percent and can be presented in English or Spanish.

Writing: We will do a lot of writing in this course and students will hand in writing that is clearly connected to the themes of the course, but the writing assignments will be short, and analytical rather than research based. Students will be graded on three five page essays, a mid-term and a final exam (essay exams) and each week, students will hand in a

short paper (c. 250 words, or one page) exploring the week's theme, as expressed through the film and readings.

Group work: Each Thursday a small group of students will be assigned to lead the Thursday discussion. Also, groups of four students will be randomly selected to select, view and discuss a film --not found on my list--that deals with Latin American history; each student will write up a one page summary of how the selected film supplements the content of the course.

Week One: Introduction

Weeks 2-4: Religion in Latin America

Films: The Mission; Yo La Peór de Todas; Romero

Reading: Week 2: Winn, chapter 1,2; Stevens chapter 1,5
Week 3: Winn, chapter 10; Stevens chapter 4
Week 4: Winn, chapter 13

Weeks 5-7: Violence in Latin America

Films: The Official Story, Men With Guns, Amores Perros

Reading: Week 5: Winn, chapter 12; Stevens, chapter 11
Week 6: Winn chapter 9
Week 7: Feitlowitz; Stevens, chapter 12

Week 8-11: Cultural Questions in Latin America

Films: It's all True, Frida, Buena Vista Social Club

Reading: Week 8: Review and midterm (no film)
Week 9: Winn, chapter 8, 9
Week 10: Winn, chapter 11
Week 11: In class presentations (2) of group film screenings (Thursday)

Week 12-14: Immigration

Films: El Norte, Lonestar, Maria Full of Grace

Reading: Week 12: Winn, chapter 14, plus epilogue
Week 13: Fuentes
Week 14: In class presentations (2) of group film screenings (Thursday)

Week 15: Review for final and conclusions.

NB: The final exam for this class will be held during the regularly scheduled exam for this course.

The three essays are due at the beginning of class, on the Tuesday of weeks 5, 8 and 12; short one page summary papers (groups work) are due on the day of the presentation (week eleven and week 14).