

## **LAS 4935/LAS 6938: Cuban Cinema: Beyond the Revolution**

**Professor Coco Fusco**

**Wednesdays 12:50 - 3:50pm**

**Office: FAD 233 (College of the Arts)**

**Email: [jfusco@arts.ufl.edu](mailto:jfusco@arts.ufl.edu)**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11am-12:30pm**

### **SUMMARY**

In this course we will consider how post-revolutionary Cuban filmmakers have responded to social crises. We will focus largely on films from the post-communist era (i.e. after 1989), but will begin with a review of classic examples and arguments from the 1960s. We will consider how filmmakers deal with triumphalist narratives about revolutionary progress; what their views are about the creation of “new” men and women, and what they see as the critical capacities of state sponsored culture. The films we will look at touch upon the failed 10 million ton sugar harvest of 1970, the storming of the Peruvian Embassy and subsequent Mariel Boatlift of 1980, the economic duress of the Special Period and the demise of socialist utopianism that marks the post-Soviet era. Among the films and videos we were look at are some that have been censored in Cuba. Among the films to be studied are Saba Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jimenez Leal's *P.M.*, Nicolas Guillén Landrian's *Coffea Arábiga*, Humberto Solas' *Un día en noviembre*, Daniel Diaz Torres' *Alicia en el pueblo de las maravillas*, and Juan Carlos Cremata's *Chamaco*. In addition to studying films made in Cuba we will discuss key documentary and fiction films produced about Cuba from outside the island, such as Nestor Alemendros' *Conducta impropia*, and Agustí Villaronga's *El rey de la Habana* (based on Pedro Juan Gutierrez's novel).

The course will be conducted as a seminar. In addition to studying films, students will be expected to read film criticism and cultural commentary, write short papers and present oral reports. Although the discussions will be conducted in English, students will be expected to have a working knowledge of Spanish to be able to view non-subtitled films and read some critical texts in Spanish.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Students must complete all reading and writing assignments and engage regularly in seminar discussions in order to pass this course. Students who do not turn in all writing assignments or who fail to complete reading/viewing assignments will receive an "E" grade. Assignments turned in late will receive lower grades.

**ACCESS TO COURSE MATERIALS:** Readings will be available in one of two formats: 1) PDFs to be downloaded via Dropbox or 2) E-books available through the UF library system. Check each week's assignments for details. Films will be available in the following ways: 1) course reserves on hold at UF Library, 2) Online access via URLs listed on syllabus. Check each week's assignments for details.

**OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:** The main goal of this course is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the range cinematic strategies for addressing the challenges that Cuban society has faced in the post-Soviet era. Another important objective of the course is to give students opportunities to sharpen their analytical tools for reading films and visual culture.

**ATTENDANCE POLICIES:** Students are expected to attend and participate in all sessions. Students who are absent more than three times without a legitimate excuse will receive a failing grade due to Attendance/Participation (i.e. E1 or U1). If you are absent due to illness, a family emergency, religious observance, or another academic obligation, you must provide a written explanation to the instructor and when warranted, a note from a medical professional or your advisor. The UF policy on attendance can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> - absences

**METHOD OF EVALUATION:** Students will be assessed based on the quality of their participation in class and their writing assignments. Any student who may be in danger of not receiving credit or not passing the course will receive a written warning prior to the end of the term. The final grade for the course will be determined by the following:

1. Quality of the student's participation in discussions: 30%
2. Quality of writing assignments: 40%
3. Quality of oral report: 20%
3. Attendance and consistency of class participation: 10%

The UF policies on grading can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

**Policy on cell phones, laptops and recording:** Cell phones should be turned on silent during class sessions. Laptops may only be used to produce work in class. Seminars may not be recorded without prior consent of the instructor.

**For students with disabilities:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Link to Disability Resource Center: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**Policy regarding non-completion of assignments:** Students must complete all assignments on time and participate in discussions regularly to pass the course. Incompletes will only be given in response to a documented emergency that prevents a students from completing assignments on time.

## 1. AUGUST 23: INTRODUCTION

- Cuban cinema and the production of foundational fictions for a society in the throes of change.
- Identify key representational strategies: Heroic, ironic and dystopic visions of the revolution.
- Identify key highpoints and crises of the Cuban Revolution.

### VIEW IN CLASS:

Octavio Cortazar's *For the First Time* (Por primera vez)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWfre271A58&index=2&list=PL19HCU5ZGMRf0REsEcmwMfPfxpCr-FFPa>)

Carlos Lechuga : *Cuca y el Pollo* (*Cuca and the Chicken*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW7LZI8xvYI>

## 2. AUGUST 30: THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

**Film:** Tomás Gutierrez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memorias del subdesarrollo*) <http://vumoo.li/videos/play/watch-memories-of-underdevelopment-91234> (no subtitles)

UF Course reserves -- PN1997.M

**Readings:** Paul Schroeder's *Tomás Gutierrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker* Chapter 1 (pp.1-10) and Chapter 3 (pp.19-66)

Tomás Gutierrez Alea – *The Viewer's Dialectic*

Julio Garcia Espinosa – *Toward an Imperfect Cinema*

(all available in PDF format )

## 3. SEPTEMBER 6 – THE NEW MAN AND THE NEW WOMAN

**Film:** Pastor Vega's *Portrait of Teresa* (*Retrato de Teresa*)

([http://www.metacafe.com/watch/7914771/retrato\\_de\\_teresa\\_1979/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/7914771/retrato_de_teresa_1979/))

Also available via UF Library Course reserves: PN1997.R5135 2000

**Readings:** Guy Barron: *Gender in Cuban Cinema*, Chapt. 4 *The Mother on Screen*

Che Guevara: *Socialism and Man in Cuba*

(PDF)

Nicholas Balais: *Cuban Film Media, Late Socialism and the Public Sphere: Chapt. 1 – Imperfect Cinema and Making Do* (PDF)

**Recommended:** Marta Nuñez Sarmiento: Cuban Development Strategies and Gender Relations, *Socialism and Democracy* [52](#) (Volume 24, No. 1) March, 2010 (PDF)

*Gender, Work, and Family in Cuba: The Challenges of the Special Period*, by Maura I. Toro-Morn, Anne R. Roschelle, Elisa Facio (PDF)

#### 4. SEPTEMBER 13: REPRESENTING MARGINALITY

**Film:** Saba Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jimenez Leal's *PM* (1961)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKvbUeqPYlo>

Lilo Vilaplana: *La Muerte del gato* (The Death of the Cat) 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLbyQFpHy74&t=181s&index=5&list=PLKRA BkfKZQI3IZObTpgm1L4gUd0Cj10y>

**Readings:** Fidel Castro's *Words to Intellectuals* (PDF)

Marc Oliver Reid: *Esta fiesta se acabó: vida nocturna y desorden social en PM y Soy Cuba*. (PDF)

Guillermina de Ferrari: *Community and Culture in Post-Soviet Cuba, Chapt 1: Socialism and Sociality*. (PDF)

**Recommended:** Orlando Jimenez-Leal and Manuel Zaya's *El Caso PM: Cine, poder y censura* (PDF)

#### 5. SEPTEMBER 20: THE END OF THE REVOLUTION'S GOLDEN AGE

**Films:** Nicolas Guillen Landrian: *Coffea Arábica* (1968):

<https://vimeo.com/16426201>

*Ociel de Toa* (1965):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvCAKRip7Pc&list=PL17SgQXA9\\_LaS-TQCuNam7ioldIH612pX](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvCAKRip7Pc&list=PL17SgQXA9_LaS-TQCuNam7ioldIH612pX)

*Desde la Habana* ;1969!:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8dprNP61SU&list=PL17SgQXA9\\_LaS-TQCuNam7ioldIH612pX&index=8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8dprNP61SU&list=PL17SgQXA9_LaS-TQCuNam7ioldIH612pX&index=8)

Manuel Zayas: *Cafe con Leche, Un documental sobre Nicolás Guillén Landrián* (2003)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXZ0XCDkxAA>

**Readings:** Chapt 10: *The Reel, Real and Hyper-real Revolution: Self-Representation and Political Performance in Everyday Life* (from *Visions of Power in Cuba* by Lillian Guerra; Ebook: UF ONLINE F1788.G755 2012 )

Elke Marhoefer: *Nicolás Guillén Landrián*, OEI: On Film 60-9-70 (2015); 452-457 PDF)

#### 6. SEPTEMBER 27

**Films:** Sara Gomez: *Una isla para Miguel, En la otra isla and La isla del Tesoro* (*A Island for Miguel, On Treasure Island and On the Other Island*)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOnBzj-0\\_Xc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOnBzj-0_Xc)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-vFJn0WH8s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YliWoQOL4A&t=71s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYfLTR2oys0&t=105s>

Please note – the title on YouTube is incorrect – Una isla para Manuel

**Readings:** Chapt 7: *Juventud Rebelde: Nonconformity, Gender and the Struggle to Control Revolutionary Youth* (from *Visions of Power in Cuba* by Lillian Guerra. Ebook: UF ONLINE F1788.G755 2012)

**Recommended:** Yissel Arce Padrón: *Relatos de exclusión: Indagaciones poscoloniales sobre raza y marginalidad de Sara Gómez* (PDF)

### **ESSAY QUESTION TO BE COMPLETE FOR NEXT WEEK:**

Both *Memories of Underdevelopment* and *A Day in November* feature protagonists who are riddled by doubts about the choices they have made with regard to Cuba. In your essay, compare and contrast the internal and external dilemmas that these protagonists face. How can the concerns of each character be understood as a commentary on the society that they are part of? What strategies do the directors use to elicit your sympathy, your skepticism or your distrust of these characters? Make sure to reference specific scenes and lines from the two films to argue your position. When you analyze the films, you should consider the following elements: plot, character development, genre, filmic style, music.

**Essay requirements:** 2000-2500 words. Typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. Please turn in a hard copy.

### **7. OCTOBER 4**

**Film:** Humberto Solas – *Un día en noviembre* (*A Day in November*)

### **ESSAY DUE TODAY**

### **8. OCTOBER 11: THE MARIEL EXODUS AND SOCIAL MARGINALITY**

**Films:** Santiago Alvarez: *March of the Combatant People* (*La marcha del pueblo combatiente*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0v4h0Q3nJc>

Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jimenez Leal's *Improper Conduct*

UF LIBRARY: VIDEO 3889

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn4i17dKm70>

**Readings:** Tomás Gutierrez Alea: *¡Cuba Sí, Alemendros No!*

Responses by Nestor Almendros/Orlando Jimenez Leal and Richard Goldstein from *The Village Voice*

Abel Sierra Madero: *El trabajo os hara hombres: Masculinación nacional, trabajo forzado y control social en Cuba durante los años sesenta* (PDF)

**Recommended:**

Abel Sierra Madero: *Academias para producir machos en Cuba*,  
<http://www.letraslibres.com/espana-mexico/politica/academias-producir-machos-en-cuba>

Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich: *Homosexuality, Homophobia and Revolution: Notes Toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience* (Parts 1 and 2) (PDF)

**9. OCTOBER 18: SEXUALITY AND THE STATE**

**Film:** Pavel Giroud's *El Acompañante* (The Companion)

**Reading:** Nicholas Balaisis: *Cuban Cinema, Late Socialism and the Public Sphere, Chaps. 2-3: Late Socialism, Special Period and Film and Media Practice/Mourning the Revolution: Melodrama and Temporality in Late Socialist Narrative Cinema* (PDF)

Desiderio Navarro: *In medias res publicas: Sobre los intelectuales y la crítica social en la esfera pública cubana* (PDF)

**Recommended:** Radiolab documentary about Los Frikis and their internment at Los Cocos. (<http://www.radiolab.org/story/los-frikis/>)

**10. OCTOBER 25: THE SPECIAL PERIOD IN TIME OF PEACE**

**Film:** Daniel Diaz Torres' *Alice in Wondertown* (*Alicia en el pueblo de las maravillas*)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uB1vizQbPKQ>

**Reading:** Pedro Porbén: *El panóptico insular en Alicia en el pueblo de las maravillas* (PDF)

Juan Antonio García Borrero: *Confiscated Utopia (from the gravity of dreams to the lightness of realism)* (PDF)

Guillermina de Ferrari: *Community and Culture in Post-Soviet Cuba, Chapt 4: The Poetics of Evil* (PDF)

**11. NOVEMBER 1: THE SPECIAL PERIOD IN TIME OF PEACE**

**Film:** Agustí Villaronga's *El Rey de la Habana* (*The King of Havana*)(adaptation of novel by Pedro Juan Gutierrez)  
<https://www.peliculasflv.tv/2016/06/rej-la-habana-2015-online.html>  
or rent at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5PVCz-jr-A>

**Readings:**

Esther Whitfield: *The Body Impolitic of Trilogía sucia de La Habana* (PDF)

Anke Birkenmaier: *Dirty Realisms at the End of the Century: Latin American Apocalyptic Fictions* (PDF)

**12. NOVEMBER 8: RETHINKING THE NEW MAN**

**Film:** Carlos Lechuga's *Santa y Andres*

**STUDENTS MUST TURN IN ONE PARAGRAPH PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER TODAY**

Final Paper Topics: Students may choose one film that we have viewed for the class or another film by one of the directors we have studied. Develop a research topic (in dialogue with the instructor) that will result in a close reading of the chosen film and an in-depth analysis of how the director articulates view of his/her society. Final paper is due on December 6.

**Readings:** Cristina Venegas: *Film Culture in the Digital Millennium* (Chapt 4 in *Digital Dilemmas: The State, The Individual and Digital Media in Cuba*)

**13. NOVEMBER 15 RETHINKING THE NEW MAN**

**Film:** Juan Carlos Cremata – *Crematorio/Chamaco*

**Reading:** Guillermina de Ferrari: *Community and Culture in Post-Soviet Cuba, Chapt 5: Ethics is the New Aesthetics* (available in PDF format)

**Recommended:** Ann Marie Stock: *Opening New Roads: Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti Redefines Revolutionary Filmmaking* (Chapt 4 of *On Location: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition*)

**14. NOVEMBER 29: INSIDE CUBA, OUTSIDE ICAIC**

Class visit by Cuban filmmaker Juan Carlos Cremata

In preparation for this visit, students should write a one-page (250 words) response to the films by Cremata and prepare at least two questions about the works to be shared with the class.

**15. DECEMBER 6: CONCLUSION**

Student Presentations about the Research Topics

**FINAL PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 12 – PLEASE TURN IN VIA EMAIL**