LAS 4935/6938
Women in Latin American Cinema
Wednesdays 1:50-4:50pm
Instructor: Coco Fusco
Office: FAD 233
Email: jfusco@arts.ufl.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00-1:30 and by appointment

This course offers a survey of films by and about Latin American women. We will study both documentary and dramatic film productions. Among the women directors whose works will be shown are Margot Bencerraf (Venezuela), Sara Gomez (Cuba), Susana Amaral (Brazil), Maria Novaro (Mexico), Maria Luisa Bemberg (Argentina), Lourdes Portillo (Mexico-USA) and Lucrecia Martel (Argentina). We will also look at films by male directors about important historical and artistic figures, such as Carlos Diegues' Xica da Silva and Andres Wood's Violeta Went to Heaven about folk singer Violeta Parra. Our discussions will be organized around the following questions and concerns: what are the female archetypes that emerge consistently in Latin American cinema? Does it make sense to think of the films we will watch as women's films? What are the particular challenges that women filmmakers face? How is feminism understood in various Latin American contexts? Seminars will be devoted to group discussions and oral presentations by individual students. Students will have readings and films to study each week and will be expected to write two research papers analyzing the films in light of a range of feminist concerns.

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 several times will receive an "E" grade. Turning in assignments late will result in lower grades.

Readings for this course will be made available in PDF via Dropbox. Videos will be available through the UF Library or on line. All videos are on 2-hour reserve and must be viewed at the library.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS: The main goal of this course is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the range of visual expression addressing societal challenges. 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](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%
4. Attendance and consistency of class participation: 10%

Here is an explanation of how I determine final grades:

**A grade:**
- Perfect attendance record
- Substantive participation in at least 80% of class discussions, i.e. good questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
- Oral reports that show evidence of scholarly research, that are clear and well delivered.
- Research paper proposals that show that student can think independently and formulate a good paper topic.
- Papers that have no grammatical or spelling errors, with proper citation of sources.
- Papers that show understanding of course materials.
- Papers that have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
- Papers that indicate that the student can work with the key themes and idea of the course and apply them effectively.

**B grade:**
- No more than 2 absences.
- Substantive participation in at least 65% of class discussions, i.e. good questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
- Oral reports that are clear and well delivered, but may have some weaknesses in research.
• Research paper proposals that show that the student understands how to develop his/her own research topic.
• Papers that have minimal grammatical or spelling errors, with proper citation of sources.
• Papers that show some understanding of course materials.
• Papers that have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
• Papers that indicate that the student understood the key themes and idea of the course but may have some difficulty applying those ideas.

C grade:

• 3 absences.
• Substantive participation in less than 50% of class discussions, i.e. questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
• Oral reports that may have some good ideas but are not argued effectively.
• Research paper proposals that show that the student has difficulty developing his/her own research topic.
• Papers that have many grammatical or spelling errors, and that lack proper citation of sources.
• Papers that do not show knowledge of course materials.
• Papers that do not have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
• Papers that indicate that the student may not have understood the key themes and idea of the course.

The UF policies on grading can be found here: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Please note: Not all students who enroll in this course are familiar with the specifics of film analysis. I am attaching an appendix to this syllabus with some basics that I would expect all students to cover when they analyze films for the course. I have uploaded three books that can serve as references - James Monaco’s classic, How to Read a Film, Bill Nichols Introduction to Documentary, and Susan Hayward’s Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts.

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.

1. **August 22 - INTRODUCTION**

**Thematic 1: Documentary Approaches to Social Issues affecting Latin American Women**

2. **August 29 - Labor**

**View:** Araya by Margot Bencerraf (Venezuela, 1959)


3. **September 5 - Labor**

**View:** Love, Women and Flowers, by Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva (Colombia, 1988)

**Read:** Michael Chanan: "Latin American Documentary: A Political Trajectory" (in Wiley Blackwell's *A Companion to Latin American Cinema*)

Claire Johnston: "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sue Thornham, pp. 31-49.

Laura Mulvey: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, edited by Sue Thornham.

4. **September 12 - Human Rights**

**View:** The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo by Lourdes Portillo and Susana Muñoz (Mexico/Argentina, 1985)


Judith Mayne: "Female Authorship Reconsidered," in *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema*, pp. 89-123.
5. September 19 - Reproductive Rights

View: La Operación, by Ana María García (Puerto Rico, 1982) and Ventre Livre, by Ana Luisa Azevedo (Brazil, 1995)

Read: Laura Briggs: "Discourses of "forced sterilization" in Puerto Rico: the problem with the speaking subaltern" differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies. 10.2 (Summer 1998)


6. September 26 - Human Rights/Gender and Violence

View: Señorita Extraviada by Lourdes Portillo (Mexico-USA, 2001)

Read: Monica Torres: "Resisting the Violence of Values: Lourdes Portillo’s Señorita Extraviada as Performative Utterance."


7. October 3 - First Papers Due - Please deliver papers electronically

Paper #1 Assignment - Required Length: 8-10 pages (2000-2500 words). Double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins

Essay Question:

How are documentaries similar to and different from fiction films? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each genre? Does the fact that a film is labeled fiction mean that stories are untrue? Do documentaries provide more truthful information that fiction films? What does these genres have in common? Please use examples of techniques and content from the documentaries you have seen for this class to support your arguments. You can base your assertions about fiction films on course readings and your own experience outside class as a moviegoer.
**View:** Absences, by Tatiana Huezo (Mexico, 2015)

**THEMATIC 2: Narrative Film Treatment of Latin American Women’s Issues**

8. **October 10 - Women’s Rights and Women’s Desires**
**View:** One Way or Another by Sara Gómez (Cuba, 1974)


9. **October 17 - Women’s Rights and Women’s Desires**
**View:** Danzón by María Novaro (Mexico, 1991)

**Read:** "Maria Novaro: Exploring the Myth of the Nation" in Elissa Rashkin's *Women Filmmakers in Mexico: The Country of Which We Dream*.


10. **October 24 - Marginality in the Labor Force**
**View:** The Hour of the Star by Susana Amaral (Brazil, 1985)


11. **October 31 - Race, Sex and Power**
**View:** Xica da Silva by Carlos Diegues (Brazil, 1976)

**Read:** Randal Johnson, "Carnivalesque Celebration in Xica da Silva"
12. November 7 - Women's Rights and Creativity

Paper #2 Proposals Due

Students should write a proposal for a research paper. The topic should address one of the key themes in the course:

- What female archetypes can you identify in Latin American films we have seen?
- Is the film you are writing about a woman's film and if so what does that mean?
- Is the film you are writing about a feminist film and if so what does that mean?
- What are the female archetypes that emerge consistently in Latin American cinema?

The length of the proposal should be no less than 250 words. Remember to support your assertions with evidence from the films and reading. Students should decide what interpretive approach they will take and explain what it will be in the proposal. The proposal should also include a list of scholarly works and reviews that will be cited.

View: I the Worst of All by Maria Luisa Bemberg (Argentina, 1990)


Denise Miller: María Luisa Bemberg’s Interpretation of Octavio Paz’s Sor Juana,’ in An Argentine Passion: María Luisa Bemberg and her Films, edited by John King, Sheila Whitaker, Rosa Bosch, pp.137-173.

13. November 14 - Women Rights and Creativity

View: Violeta Went to Heaven by Andres Wood (Chile, 2011)

14. November 28 - Women and the Question of Class

**View:** The Holy Girl by Lucrecia Martel (Argentina, 2004)

**Read:** Deborah Martin: "Planeta ciénaga: Lucrecia Martel and Contemporary Argentine Women's Filmmaking" in *Latin American Women's Filmmaking: Production, Politics, Poetics*, edited by Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw.

Katy Stewart: "Establishing the Female Gaze: Narrative Subversion in Lucrecia Martel's La niña santa and La ciénega," in *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies, Vol. 21, No. 3.*

15. December 5

**Oral Reports**
Your oral report should be a brief overview of your research for your final paper. You should speak for no more than 15 minutes. Please illustrate your talk - it would be most efficient to create a power point presentation. You can show film clips but they should be very short.

**Final Papers Due**
KEY ELEMENTS TO FOCUS ON WHEN INTERPRETING FILMS

1. DETAILED DESCRIPTION/ASSESSMENT OF THE OBJECT IN QUESTION.

Formal concerns:
What is the medium?
Date of work
Scale, texture, color palette, materials

FILM:
Genre?
Composition (combination of fact and fiction)
Point of view: Does viewer see protagonist’s point of view? Do you see/know more or less than characters?
Settings (Locations)
How do sound and image interact?
How does music underscore message or create mood?

FILM SOURCES:
Continuous narrative?
Mixture of narrative and documentary?
Documentary sources (archival, interviews, etc.)

HISTORICAL/CONTEXTUAL

When and where is the film set?
Author - what information can you find about him/her?
Is film set in past or future? What is relation to the present?
Can you discern social commentary?