LAH 4734  
LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY THROUGH FILM  
FALL 2018  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course uses film as a medium for historical research and analysis to acquaint students with transnational and global perspectives on central historical events and processes in the modern history of Latin America. Following a chronological sequence, the course examines the interconnectedness of historical processes that shaped daily life in Argentina during the post-independent period and the 1960s-1980s; in Cuba during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in Mexico during the early twentieth century and the 1950s; in Central America during the 1980s; and in Brazil during the 1990s. Students will evaluate how citizens of new Latin American republics became agents of change within their own societies, but also how they interacted and became key players in global social, economic, political, and cultural developments. Subjects ranging from gender ideologies and the cultural meaning of food, to urban poverty, the political impact of social movements, daily struggles under revolutionary and pre-revolutionary regimes, and contemporary race relations and urban violence, will be addressed through the critical analysis of assigned films and readings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

• Explain some of the key historical developments in Latin American history between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and evaluate their global significance.
• Critically analyze films as perspectives or interpretations of historical events but also as historical artifacts replete with the concerns of their creators.
• Construct original, concise and well-supported written arguments based on evidence from readings and films.
• Apply techniques for analyzing written sources and films to examine media beyond the classroom.

MAJOR AND CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills your historical foundations core requirement (for history majors) and the University Core Curriculum’s Humanities in Writing requirement (for all students). To meet these requirements, you must achieve a grade of C or better, not C-. To help you meet these goals, I will offer you some writing guidelines, we will conduct writing exercises during class meetings, and writing will make up a significant portion of your final grade.

Global Learning Course Objectives. This is a discipline-specific Global Learning course that counts toward your Global Learning graduation requirement. The reading, film and writing assignments will encourage students to build evidence-based arguments regarding the historical role of Latin American societies in current processes of globalization.
Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural approaches shaping Latin American economic, social and political development, and culture and, in turn, how central events in Latin American history have impacted historical developments beyond the region. (Global Awareness)
- Conduct a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems related to the representation of historical developments (economic, political, social) in film. (Global Perspective)
- Demonstrate willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving with regard to the issue of domestic violence. (Global Engagement)

COURSE MATERIALS

The course will be based on several texts, all of which are available for purchase at the university bookstore; they can also be consulted at the reserve section of our library. The abbreviation in parenthesis is used throughout the syllabus to list these readings:

**Required readings:**
- Donald Stevens, *Based on a True Story. Latin American History at the Movies* (Stevens)
- Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo. Civilization and Barbarism* (Facundo)
- John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (Reed)
- Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Que Vivan Los Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Pilcher)
- Esteban Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave* (Montejo)
- Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez* (Children)
- Menchu, Rigoberta, *I Rigoberta: An Indian Woman from Guatemala* (I Rigoberta)
- Reading on contemporary Brazil to be announced (TBA)

**Recommended readings:**
- Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith, *Modern Latin America*
- E.B. Burns, *Latin American Cinema. Film and History.*

The course will occasionally also make use of shorter readings (articles or excerpts from books) to be consulted in the reserve section of the library. The main ones are:

**Required reserve readings** (find only on Green library’s reserve room, library’s 2nd floor by circulation desk):
- Robert A. Rosenstone, “The Historical Film. Looking at the Past in a Postliteral Age, Ibid., pp. 45-79 (library reserve)
- Alma Guillermoprieto, A Heart that Bleeds, Chapter on Medellin. (library reserve)

Students wishing to read more extensively on any of the topics covered in the course may consult the optional suggested readings listed below or request additional titles from the instructor. Finally, films and documentaries will be shown regularly in class. Students will have to view some additional ones on their own.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Final grades for undergraduate students will be based on:

Two Short Written Assignments (each 3-4 pages, typed and double-spaced). Each student will write two 3-4-page papers that critically analyze processes in world history which impacted Latin American history as well as how Latin American societies drove historical change within and outside the region. These assignments will require students to evaluate multiple interpretations of historical events expressed in reading materials and films. They will be written in response to questions provided by the instructor at least two weeks before the respective paper is due. These papers must be turned in through the Turnitin option on CANVAS on the due date.

One Final Film Proposal (4-5 pages, typed, and double-spaced). After being exposed to some of the major events in Latin American history and to various interpretations of these events in assigned readings and films, each student will write a proposal for the making of an historical film. The proposal should be thesis-driven and provide support for the global impact of the historical event(s) or processes represented on the proposed film as well as the relevance of representing such events on film today. Alternatively, the paper may critically analyze one of the films viewed in or outside of class and propose the remaking of the film based on a different historical interpretation or perspective. This project must be turned in via the Turnitin option on CANVAS on the day it is due.

Two In-class Presentations. Each student will be required to make brief in-class presentations of films and readings two times during the semester. The presentations should synthesize the arguments in readings for the week and make connections to the assigned films. Students will be able to sign up for these presentations on their preferred week during the first week of class.

Attendance. Attendance is essential for students to be exposed to multiple perspectives and engage in the exchange of ideas related to themes discussed in class. Thus, students are expected to attend all classes and actively engage in classroom discussions. Students with 4 or more unexcused absences will have points deducted from their attendance grade.

Co-curricular Activity Reflection. Once over the course of the semester students must attend a talk, convention, museum, or other community event that relates to subject matter discussed in class or expressed in the readings or films. Each student will write a brief 1-page reflection on how this event relates to the themes discussed in class. The reflection should consider how new perspectives introduced through course readings, lectures and/or class discussions can help resolve the problem or issue discussed at the event. It should also consider how the event itself provides other perspectives on the problem.
Grading Scale
A = 100-93 B+ = 89-87 B- = 82-80 C = 76-70 F = 59-0
A- = 92-90 B = 86-83 C+ = 79-77 D = 60-60

Grade Breakdown
2 Short Written Assignments 15% each or 30%
1 Final Film Proposal 25%
2 In-class Presentations 20%
1 Co-curricular Activity Reflection 15%
Attendance 10%

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before starting this course, please review the following pages:

FIU Policies. Please review the FIU's Policies webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable classroom etiquette. http://online.fiu.edu/html/blackboardlearn/policies/

Accessibility: If you have or believe you might have a disability related need for schedule modification or reasonable accommodation in this course, contact the Disability Resources Center http://drc.fiu.edu. I will be happy to work with you and with them to accommodate you in the best way possible. Even if you do not need special accommodation, I highly advise you to let me know if you have a disability that might affect your performance in this class.

Accommodations: If you foresee any possible problems to fulfill any of the requirements of this course—attendance or on-time submission of assignments—please see me, to make any arrangements. Don’t wait until the last week of the course to bring up something you anticipated.

Academic Misconduct Statement

Academic Dishonesty: Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to be honest, and if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class presentations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whatever originally authorized or not. Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including Internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

To learn more about the academic integrity policies and procedures as well as student resources that can help you prepare for a successful semester click on the link below:
https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/about/student-handbook/index.php
CLASSROOM POLICIES

Attendance: I will take attendance, and it is particularly important to attend each class. Excused absences may be granted in cases of serious medical issues (with a doctor’s note), religious holidays, death of an immediate relative, military duty, court date, or participation in some college event. If any of any of these circumstances relates to you, contact me in a timely manner, to request an absence justification. You are responsible to obtain notes or information of what was covered in class during your absence from classmate.

Behavior: Arrive on time and stay until the end of class. If class has begun, enter or leave the classroom without disturbing your instructor and classmates. No cellphones may be turned on during class. Everyone, including the instructor, must be focus on the class content. You are free to agree, disagree, challenge, or question your instructor or classmates’ opinions and comments. You should do it respectfully without attacking classmates or the instructor.

Late Policy: Assignments are due AT MIDNIGHT OF THE DUE DATE. One-third of a letter grade will be reduced for each day a paper is late, including weekends, unless you obtained an extension from me, IN ADVANCE. No late assignments will be received during and after the last week of classes.

TOOLS TO SUCCEED

Support: I look forward to working with you this semester. Remember, I am available to answer questions. You are encouraged to visit me in my office during office hours. You can also email me to set an appointment at a convenient time to meet.

Writing your Papers: You will not be allowed to rewrite your papers. Nonetheless, I will be willing to read paper outlines or drafts of them one or two weeks before they are due in order to give you feedback.

History Tutors: There are several history students working at the Department of History (DM 390), whose job is to tutor students in history classes. They are experienced upper-level history majors and graduate students who can help with papers, and preparing for exams. To set an appointment, please visit: https://slotted.co/fiuhistorywriting

You can only reserve a slot at a time. Even if the system allows you to reserve more than one, the administrators will delete any additional appointment. Once you complete an appointment you can reserve another one. If you cancel or do not show up to an appointment in three occasions, your name will be added to the list of those students who are not allowed to use the tutoring services. Please, use this service wisely.

The Center for Excellence in Writing: It is freely available to you. The staff can help you with all aspects of writing, from approaching the question and brainstorming to techniques for editing. Their website: http://writingcenter.fiu.edu/

*I reserve the right to change or modify the syllabus at any time during the semester.

SCHEDULE

Week 1
A. Overview, Periods in Latin America’s modern history
B. Films as historical sources

Readings:
- Stevens, Chapter 1
- Robert A. Rosenstone, “The Historical Film. Looking at the Past in a Postliteral Age,” Ibid., pp. 45-79 (library reserve)
- Pierre Sorlin, How to Look at an Historical Film, in P. Sorlin, The Film in History. Restaging the Past (Toronto: Barnes and Noble, 1980), 3-37. (library reserve)

Week 2
A. Finish discussion of films as historical sources.
- Film ‘Camila.’ (finish on your own)

Readings:
- Stevens, Chapter 6

B. Aftermath of Independence in Latin America

Reading: Begin, Facundo

Week 3
A. Aftermath of Independence in Latin America II
- Reading: Facundo, entire
- Suggested: Ariel de la Fuente, The Children of Facundo

B. Film “The Last Supper.” (finish on your own)
- Reading: Stevens, Chapter 7
- Scott, “Sugar and Slavery” (library reserve)

Week 4
A. Plantations and slavery I
- Reading: Montejo
- Suggested: Robin Blackburn, The Making of New World Slavery
- Joao J. Reis, Slave Rebellion in Brazil

B. Plantations and Slavery II
- Reading: Montejo, entire
- Film, “Like Water for Chocolate.” (view on your own)
SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

Week 5

A. Social revolutions: Mexico, 1910s I
   - Reading: Stevens, Chapter 10
   - Start reading, Reed
   - Film “Viva Zapata.” (finish on your own)
   - Suggested: Alan J. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*

B. Social revolutions: Mexico, 1910s II
   - Reading: Pilcher, pp. 7 to 70 (Chapters 1 to 3)

Week 6

A. Social Revolutions: Mexico, 1910s III
   - Reading: Reed, entire.
   - Film, “Like Water for Chocolate,” (view on your own)
   - Suggested: John K. Turner, *Barbarous Mexico*

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B. Nation Building in Mexico
   - Reading: Pilcher, 77-165 (Chapters 4 to epilogue)

Week 7

A. Urban Poverty: A Culture? I
   - Film “Los Olvidados” (finish on your own)
   - Reading: The Children of Sanchez, to p. 154

B. Urban Poverty: A Culture? II
   - Reading: The Children of Sanchez, to p. 319.
   - Suggested: Carolina M. de Jesus, *Child of the Dark*

Week 8

A. Revolution in Central America I
   - Film: *El Norte.* (finish on your own)
   - Reading: *I Rigoberta*
   - Suggested: Thomas A. Paterson, *Contesting Castro*
   - Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*

B. Revolution in Central America II
   - Reading: *I Rigoberta*, entire
Week 9

A. Military Regimes I
- Film “The Official Story” (finish on your own) [alternative “4 Days in September”]
- Reading: Stevens, Chapter 11

B. Military Regimes II
- Reading: Begin, Goldstein
- Suggested: Lawrence Weschler, A Miracle a Universe

(SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE)

Spring Break, March 21-26

Week 10

A. Race Relations in Cuba I
- Reading: Stevens, Chapter 8.
- Brazil reading, TBA

- Grad. Studs only., Begin, De la Fuente
- Suggested: Ada Ferrer, Insurgent Cuba : race, nation, and revolution, 1868-1898

B. Race Relations in Cuba II
- Reading: Grad. Studs. only, De la Fuente, entire Brazil reading, TBA

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY REFLECTION DUE

Week 11

A. Urban violence, race and gender in Brazil
- Film, “City of God”
- Reading: Grad. Studs. only, Brazil reading TBA

B. Urban violence, race and gender in Brazil
- Reading: Brazil reading TBA, entire

Week 12

A. Drug trafficking/violence in Colombia I
- Film, “Maria Llena Eres de Gracia.”
- Reading: Alma Guillermoprieto (library reserve)

B. Drug trafficking/violence in Colombia I
- Film, “Maria Llena Eres de Gracia.”
Week 13

A. Drug trafficking/violence in Colombia III

- Reading: Alma Guillermoprieto, *A Heart that Bleeds*, Chapter on Medellin. (library reserve)[
  Extracredit 4: Film, “Rodrigo D. No futuro.”;]
- Reading: Alonso Lozano, *No Nacimos Pa’ semilla*

Summary and discussion of final project

B. Summary and discussion of final project

Week 14

**FINAL FILM PROPOSAL DUE**

Suggested films for final projects (arranged in approximate chronological order by period covered in film)

*Martín Fierro* (Argentina, rural life, gauchos and Indians)
*Juan Moreira* (Argentina, Spanish)
*Don Segundo Sombra* (Argentina, Gauchos culture and life in the Pampas)
*Pedro Paramo* (Mexico, Myths, Peasants and land wars, myths)
*Walker* (Nicaragua, mid-19th century, imperialism and interventions)
*Dona Barbara* (Venezuela, confrontations over land)
*Os Caminhos da Libetade, Gaijin* (Brazil, Japanese immigrants, coffee, 1910s)
*Frida, Naturaleza Viva* (Mexico, art, postrevolutionary intellectuals and society)
*Gabriela* (Brazil, 1920s, modernization, gender roles, culture)
*Memories of Prison* (Brazil, 1930s imprisonment of writer Graciliano Ramos)
*Confessing to Laura* (Colombia, gender, 1948 Bogotazo, violence)
*Lucía* (Cuba, independence, 1950s, 1960s, gender, politics)
*Sugar Cane Alley* (Martinique, 1950s, poverty, education)
*Evita* (Argentina, 1930s-1950s, nationalism, politics, gender)
*Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (Cuba, 1960s, early revolutionary days, ideas)
*Portrait of Teresa* (Cuba, revolution, gender)
*Muerte de un Enrascado* (Cuba, revolution, bureaucracy)
*Plaf. O demasia do miedo a la vida* (Cuba, revolution, housing, family, bureaucracy, religion, gender)
*Confessing to Laura* (Chile, poverty, violence, Spanish)
*The Hour of the Furnaces* (Argentina, documentary, neocolonialism, violence)
*Blood of the Condor* (Bolivia, ethnic conflict, Indians, women rights)
*La Fiaca* (Argentina, Spanish)
*Il Dr. Harder they come* (Jamaica, reggae, 1970s, drugs, popular culture, anti-heroes)
*Hour of the Dog* (Brazil, gender, rural-urban migration)
*Buccaneer Soul* (Brazil, turbulent 60’s, friendship)
*Alcino and the Condor* (Nicaragua, guerrillas, US presence)
*Bananas* (revolutions, intellectuals, US views)
*City of the Dogs* (Peru, military education)
*Don’t tell Anyone* (Peru, gender)
*Dirty Funny Little War* (Argentina, post-Peron Peronists, politics)
*Romero* (Salvador, church, political violence, 1980s)
La Frontera (Chile, dictatorship, internal exile)
Missing (Chile, dictatorship, disappearances, US involvement)
The Official Story (Argentina, dictatorship, missing children, US presence)
El Norte (Guatemala, ethnic conflict, Indians, migration and exile, military repression)
La Paz (life in 1980 Bolivia under military regime)
8-A Ochoa (world of Cuba under Castro, 1989 trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa)
La Boca del Lobo (Peru, guerrillas, 1980s, military repression)
Strawberry and Chocolate (Cuba, gender, contemporary life)
Bitter Sugar (life in contemporary Cuba)
Pixote (Brazil, street kids, urban violence)
Who Killed Pixote (Brazil, 1990s, drama about Pixote’s short life)
Rodrigo D No futuro (Colombia, street kids, drugs, urban violence)
La Vendedora de Rosas (Colombia, street kids, urban violence, family)
Sur (Argentina, dictatorship, memory)
El Lado Oscuro del Corazón (Argentina, poetry, urban life)
Tango (Argentina, gender, dictatorship, art, and memory)
Kiss of the Spider Woman (Brazil, gender, political prisoners)
Foreign Land (Brazil, political corruption in the 1990s, urban life)
Central Station (life in urban Brazil, family relations)
The Burning Season (Brazil, unions, environment, violence)