SPW 3392: Cuban Culture Through Cinema
SPW 5396: History Cuban Cinema

Fr 6:25PM - 9:05PM
Graham Center 280

Instructor: Prof. Santiago Juan-Navarro
Office: DM 487A (MMC)
Office Hours: Friday 3:00 – 6:00 pm and by appointment

Email: Please use Blackboard Messages. Messages are a private and secure text-based communication that occurs within a Course and among Course members. Users must log on to Blackboard to send/receive/read messages. The Messages tool is located on the left side Course Menu. It is recommended that students check their messages routinely to ensure up-to-date communication.

Course Description and Purpose

This course gives an overview of Cuban cinema, from its origins to the present. The course, taught entirely in Spanish, is interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, emphasizing the socioeconomic-economic and political issues that gave rise to each specific stage in the evolution of Cuban cinema. This course is designed to introduce the students to the cinematic work of a number of Cuban film artists, and to develop a more comprehensive and creative reception of each film. Topics to be discussed in class include post-colonialism and expressions of national identity; constructions of gender; the importance of censorship; political exile and cultural Diaspora; postnationalism, the role of the audience, as well as aesthetics and film structure.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to:

1. help the students gain a deep-rooted understanding of filmmaking in Cuba;
2. equip students with a wide range of ideas and a vocabulary to talk and write about these modes of filmmaking;
3. show how the films are studied and related to other art forms and expressions of popular culture;
4. gain an understanding of these films’ integral relationship to the Cuban social, economic, and political context.

Textbook

The following books are just recommended, not required. All required readings will be available through Blackboard. Links to the films needed for this class will also be available in Blackboard.
Expectations of this Course

Although this is a FTF (Face-to-face) course, it also has an online component, meaning that some of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in a web-supported course are the same as for traditional courses, but they require a degree of self-motivation and technology skills that can make them more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Interact online and in class with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course calendar
- Log in to the course 2-3 times per week
- Respond to discussion boards postings within 3 days
- Respond to messages within 2 days
- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

Requirements

1. **Film Reviews**: A film review of each of the films assigned every week. Approximate extension: 1 page (undergraduates) OR 2 pages (graduates) that identify and analytically relate the main themes of the films to class readings and discussion and address their modes of filmmaking. All reviews should contain at least these four elements: (1) a brief description (what is told); (2) an analysis (how it is told); (3) an interpretation (what message it tries to convey); and (4) an evaluation (does the director achieve its purpose?). The reviews are not supposed to be summaries of the films’ story lines or the class discussions. Film reviews will be sent through Blackboard’s assignment dropbox, which uses plagiarism-detection software (Turnitin). Please name the file in a way easy to identify: your last name and the film title (e.g. PerezVirgenCaridad).

2. **Participation**: Students will write a brief comment (about 200 words) expressing their personal reaction after watching each of the assigned films. Please post your comments on Blackboard’s Discussion Boards. You should post your comments immediately after watching each of the
assigned films and before the following class. DO NOT COPY AND PASTE FROM YOUR FILM REVIEW. Film reviews are supposed to be objective and analytic, while Discussion Board comments are subjective personal reactions after screening the films.

3. **Oral report.** A brief report of approximately 15/20 minutes presenting one of the films. Only for graduate students.

4. **Final Research Paper:** An analytical essay of approximately 4-5 pages for undergrads and 8 pages for graduate students (double spaced/Times New Roman/1” margins). It will be submitted through the Assignment Dropbox by the end of the semester (during the finals week).

**Grade Distribution**

**SPW 3392:** Film Reviews (40%), Participation (20%), Final Research Paper (40%)

**SPW 5396:** Film Reviews (35%), Participation (15%), Oral report (15%), Final Research Paper (35%)

**Tentative Weekly Schedule**

Please check Blackboard’s Course Content Section for each week's detailed and complete list of assignments.

**Week 1: August 28**

Introduction to the Course. Overview of Cuban Cinema

The Silent Era: *La Virgen de la Caridad* (1930)

Readings:

- García Borrero, “La Virgen de la Caridad”
- Agramonte y Castillo, *Cronología del cine cubano I*, 319-330

**Week 2: September 4**

Co-productions with Mexico: *Siete muertas a plazo fijo* (1950)

Readings:

- García Borrero, “Siete muertas a plazo fijo”
- Noguer 19-80

**Week 3: September 11**

Existentialism in Cuban cinema: *De espaldas* (1956) and *La ausencia* (1968)

Readings:

- Juan-Navarro, “Las huellas del existencialismo”

**Week 4: September 18**

The Beginning of the ICAIC: *El mégano* (1955)

Readings:

- Amiot, “Discurso oficial y mito del punto cero”
- Chanan 90-114

The Beginning of Repression: *PM* (1961)
Readings:

- Ortega, “P.M.”
- García Borrero, “P.M.”

**Week 5: September 25**

The Golden Age of Cuban Cinema I: *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968)

Readings:

- Campa, “Memorias”

**Week 6: October 2**


Readings:

- Jolivet, “Lucía”
- García Borrero, “Lucía”

**Week 7: October 9**


Readings:

Juan-Navarro, “La primera carga”

**Week 8: October 16**

The Documentary: Santiago Álvarez, Nicolás Guillén Landrián, and Esteban Insausti

Readings:

- Vagenas, “Now”
- Elena, “Coffea”
- Juan-Navarro, “Existen”/“En el vórtice de la enajenación”

**Week 9: October 23**

Return of the Popular: "Plaff" (1988)

Readings:

- Juan-Navarro, “Brecht en La Habana”
- García Borrero, “Plaff”

**Week 10: October 30**

Wonderland: *Alicia en el pueblo de Maravillas* (1990)

Readings:

- Díaz, Alicia
- García Borrero, “Alicia”
Week 11: November 6


Readings:

- Santí, “Fresa y chocolate”
- García Borrero, “Fresa y chocolate”

Week 12: November 13

The Special Period: *Guantanamera* (1996)

Readings:

- García Borrero, “Guantanamera”
- Rodríguez Mangual, “Driving a Dead Body Through the Nation”

Week 13: November 20


- Tania Gentic, “Beyond the Visual City”
- Rachel Ellis Neyra, “Reading the Cuban Nation in Time in *Memorias del subdesarrollo, Fresa y chocolate, and Suite Habana***

THANKSGIVING: No classes

Week 14: December 4


- Reyes, “Los tres imperativos categóricos del audiovisual cubano actual”