

Imaginary Leaps: Latin American Art and Cinema about Immigration
LAS 4935/LAS 6938/ARH 4930
Professor Coco Fusco
Tuesdays 12:50 - 3:50pm
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Latinos in the US are spoken of in relation to debates about immigration policy. However, the migratory experience is not only the subject of political controversy – it is also a central theme in the work of many artists and writers. In this course we will consider how visual artists and filmmakers from Latin America interpret the experience of migration to the United States. We will study works from Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia and Brazil. We will look at film, photography, painting, and performance art that represent different aspects of migration: the journey, the arrival, the encounter with a foreign culture and language, the challenges of integration, and the return to the homeland. We will compare and contrast the artists' representational strategies and their modes of affect - some treat the experience as tragic, other as comic, while others look at it as challenge that catalyzes self-discovery.

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, a working knowledge of Spanish will be helpful for understanding the films.

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. 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-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.

1. January 9: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Film: Salt of the Earth (1954)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9oY4rmDaWw>

Discuss: Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth: The Story of the Film*

2. January 16: THEME 1: THE JOURNEY BY LAND

Film: Gregory Nava El Norte (1983)

Read: Susan Wiebe Drake: *Heroic Journeys: The immigrant Experience as the Hero's Journey in El Norte and La misma luna*

and Nestor Garcia Canclini: *Migrants: Workers of Metaphor*

Charles Ramirez-Berg: **Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance**, Chapt. 1: Categorizing the Other: Stereotypes and Stereotyping.

3. January 23: THE JOURNEY BY SEA

Film: Juan Carlos Saldivar's **90 Miles (2003)**

Artworks to discuss: Painting of rafters by Luis Cruz Azaceta, Carlos Alfonso and José Bedia;

Read: Jimena Codina Gonzalez: *The Other Shore: Interpreting the Mariel Boatlift through its Visual Artists*

Charles Ramirez-Berg: **Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance**, Chapt. 2: Stereotypes in Film

4. January 30: THE JOURNEY BY AIR

Film: La Guagua Aerea (The Air Bus) (1993)

Read: Alberto Sandoval Sanchez; *Puerto Rican Identity Up in the Air: Air Migration, Its Cultural Representations and Me "Cruzando el Charco"*

(In **Puerto Rican Jam: Essays on Culture and Politics**, Eds. Frances Negron-Muntaner and Ramon Grosfueguel)

5. February 5: THE JOURNEY AS WORK

Film: Joshua Marston: **Maria Full of Grace (2004)**

Read: Jorge González del Pozo: *María llena eres de gracias: inmigración, narcotráfico y las promesas de la globalización.*

6. February 13: THE JOURNEY AS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Film: Diego Quemada Diez's **La Jaula de Oro (2015)**

Read: Michael A. Clemens: *Violence, Development and Migration Waves: Evidence from Central American Migrant Apprehensions*

7. February 20: ARTISTS VIEWS OF THE JOURNEY

Artworks to discuss:

Pablo Nazareth,: **Noticias de America (2009-2012): Para Cuando Ellos me Busquen en el Desierto (2012)**

Regina José Galindo - **America's Family Prison (2008)**

Eniac Martinez: **Mixtecos - Norte/Sur**

FIRST PAPERS DUE TODAY

ESSAY QUESTION: Choose two examples of works that represent the immigrant journey to the United States. Write an essay in which you compare modes of presentation and affect in each of the works. What is the artist/filmmaker's approach? Whose point of view dominates? Is the experience depicted as humorous,

challenging, treacherous or otherwise? Please make an effort to support your assertions with evidence drawn from the artworks and films that you decide to write about. Your essay should be 2000-2500 words in length.

8. February 27 INTEGRATION/ASSIMILATION

Film: Leon Ichazo and Orlando Jimenez Leal: **El Super (1979)**

Listen: Pedro Pietri: Suicide Note from a Cockroach in a Low-Income Housing Project (Poem, 1979) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvdAcan0Po0>

Read: Ana Lopez, *Cuban Cinema in Exile: The Other Land*

Ana Lopez: *Greater Cuba*

9. March 13 INTEGRATION/ASSIMILATION

Film: Lourdes Portillo's **After the Earthquake (1983)**

Read: Norma Valenzuela: *Lourdes Portillo's Development of a Chicana Film Aesthetic: After the Earthquake, Las Madres and Señorita Extraviada*

10. March 20 INTEGRATION/ASSIMILATION

Video - Performance: Isaac Artenstein/ Guillermo Gomez-Peña: **Border Brujo (1989)**

Read: Claire Fox: *Mass Media, Site Specificity and the US-Mexico Border: Guillermo Gomez-Peña's Border Brujo*

Charles Ramirez-Berg: **Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance**, Chapt. 8: El Genio de Género: Mexican American Borderland Documentaries and Postmodernism

11. March 27: BEYOND MIGRATION: CLAIMING FULL CITIZENSHIP

FILM: Iris Morales' **Palante Siempre Palante The Young Lords (2009)**

Hector Galn: **Chicano! Part 3: Taking Back Schools (1995)**

Read: Excerpts from *The Young Lords: A Reader* and Jesus Treviño: *Eyewitness: A Filmmaker's Memoir of the Chicano Movement*, Chapt. 1

Chon Noriega: *Imagined Borders: Locating Chicano Cinema in America*

TURN IN A PROPOSAL FOR YOUR FINAL PAPER TODAY.

Your proposal should be no longer than one page. Choose an artist or filmmaker whose work is pertinent to this course and devise a research topic for a 2500 word paper. Feel free to consult me in advance if you would like suggestions.

12. April 3: RETURNING TO THE HOMELAND

Cheech Marin: **Born in East LA (1987)**

Read: Rosa Linda Fregoso: *Born in East LA and the Politics of Representation*
Eddie Tafoya: *Born in East LA: Cheech as the Chicano Moses*

13. April 10

Film: Humberto Solas: **Miel Para Ochun (2001)**

Read: **Nicholas Balais** ; *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*

14. April 17: A POST MIGRATORY FUTURE: SCI FI APPROACHES

Film: Alex Rivera's **Sleep Dealer**

Read: Dale Hudson: *Race and Labor Unplugged: Alex Rivera's Sleep Dealer*

Charles Ramirez-Berg: **Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance**, Chapt. 7: Immigrants, Aliens and Extraterrestrials: Science Fiction's Alien Other as (Among Other Things) New Hispanic Imagery

15. April 24

Oral Presentations by students:

Students should prepare 10 minute oral presentations based on their research for their final papers. If you wish you present images in class, please send them to me in advance so I can load everything and have it ready to go before class begins.

FINAL PAPER DUE