

US Latinos in Film [M]

CES 358

Section 01

Spring 2008

M 5:10 to 8:10 pm

Wilson 6

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The writers moved comfortably from Jews to Italians to Chicanos to blacks to Puerto Ricans. They were just searching for a confrontation between peoples of color and Caucasian Anglo-Americans. Such script assumptions reveal a priori the attitudes and prejudices against racial minorities in the USA at different historical periods. These prejudices constitute a discourse of racism by framing the racial Other in stereotypes of delinquency, poverty, and crime. That is indeed how Puerto Ricans were conceived of in *West Side Story*.

—from “*West Side Story: A Puerto Rican Reading of ‘America’*” by Alberto Sandoval Sánchez.

Latinas... are portrayed in a limited number of roles. Some, such as the maid and the welfare mother, overlap with African American female images. We also get the binary virgin-whore opposition that representations of women in general project in the popular culture of patriarchal societies. .. Additionally, Latina women in Hollywood film almost always have thick, unshakable, often humorous, and self-deprecating accents...

—from *A Latina in the Land of Hollywood and other Essays on Media Culture* by Ancharad N. Valdivia.

[A]t this particular time, it may only be through a documentary-style presentation of social and historical context, rather than through the individual triumphs of a particular character, that an authentic representation of the Chicano experience can be made. Not individual stories outside culture and history but typical stories within both are true antidote to stereotype.

—from “Type and Stereotype: Chicano images in Film” by Linda Williams.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course is not intended to be a study of film and film techniques. Rather, it is designed to study images and representations of Latinas(os) in motion picture and independent films in order to understand societal constructions and treatment of Latinos with the hope of being able to draw parallels between representations and the treatment they receive in society, as well as parallels between representations and issues facing Latino/a communities in the United States. As part of the media (and as part of popular culture more in general) we will think of films/movies as creations about and recreations of social dynamics and social processes affecting the Latino community. Thus, the films/movies discussed in this class shall serve as illustrations and therefore tools for critical analysis of social dynamics; they shall be used as a means of documenting the connections between societal constructions of ethnic groups (by way of Latinos/as) and the predicaments those groups face in society.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Books:

- BC Berumen, Frank Javier Garcia. 2003. *Brown Celluloid: Latino/a Film Icons and Images in the Hollywood Film Industry*. NY: Vantage Press.
- LIF Berg, Charles Ramírez. 2002. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Journal Articles and Book Chapters: The articles listed are all available online through the WSU libraries articles and indexes function. Make sure you get them on time and do not wait until the very last minute, as the university system is sometimes off line or gets overloaded. I would recommend you spend a couple of hours and get all articles They will be listed in the schedule by title and author's last name.

Barrueto, Jorge. 2007. "The Narrative of Hope in Cuban Films Reacting to the Special Period." *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, Vol. 4.3, pp. 105-114.

Bradley, Robert H. and Robert F. Corwyn. 2004. "American, and Dominican American adolescents Life satisfaction among European American, African American, Chinese American, Mexican." *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, Vol. 28:5, pp. 385-400.

Lanius, Christie. 2007. "Real Women Have Curves: A Feminist Narrative of Upward Mobility." *American Drama*, Vol. 16:2, pp. 15-27.

Lindenfeld, Laura . 2007. "Visiting the Mexican American Family: **Tortilla Soup** as Culinary Tourism." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, Vol. 4:3, pp. 303-320.

Mahrouse, Gada. 2005. "The Construction of "Minority Teacher" Subjects: A Foucauldian Exploration." *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, vol. 13:1, pp. 27-42.

- Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. 2000. "Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses." *Social Text*, Vol 18:2, pp. 83-106.
- Paredes, Deborah. 2002. "Remembering Selena, Re-Membering Latinidad." *Theatre Journal*. Vol. 54:2002. Pp. 63-84.
- Valdez Avelardo, and Jeffrey H. Halley. 1999. "Teaching Mexican American Experiences Through Film: Private Issues and Public Problems." *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 27:3, pp. 286-295.
- Valdivia, Ancharad. 2000. "A Latina in the Land of Hollywood: Transgressive Possibilities." In *A Latina in the Land of Hollywood and other Essays on Media Culture*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Zatz, Marjorie S. and Edward Portillos. 2000. "Voices from the Barrio: Chicano/a Gangs, Families, and Communities." *Criminology*, Vol. 38:2, pp. 369-402.

Miscellaneous:

Spanish-English Dictionary.

LIST OF FILMS (in alphabetical order):

American Me

Date: 1992
 Director: Edward James Olmos
 Genre: Drama
 Company: Universal Pictures
 Time: 125 minutes

Bitter Sugar

Date: 1996
 Director: Leon Ichaso
 Genre: Drama/Romance
 Company: Azucar Films
 Time: 75 minutes
 Awards: 1 nomination by the Golden Satellite Award for Best Motion Picture.

My Crazy Life

Date: 1993
 Director: Allison Anders
 Genre: Drama
 Company: Channel Four Films
 Time: 92 minutes

My Family

Date: 1995
 Director: Gregory Nava

Genre: Drama
Company: American Playhouse
Time: 128 minutes
Awards: 1 Oscar nomination for best make up and 2 Independent Spirit Award nominations for Best Supporting Female and Best Supporting Male.

Raising Victor Vargas

Date: 2002
Director: Peter Sollet
Genre: Drama/Comedy
Company: Canal
Time: 88 minutes
Awards: 5 Independent Spirit Awards: 2 for Best Debut Performance, 1 for Best Director, 1 for Best Feature, and 1 for Best First Screenplay.

Real Women Have Curves

Date: 2002
Director: Patricia Cardoso
Genre: Comedy/Drama
Company: HBO Independent Productions
Time: 90 minutes
Awards: 1 Independent Spirit Award for Best Producer and 1 nomination for Best Debut Performance; 1 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award for Dramatic Performance, 2 Special Jury Prize for Dramatic Performance, and 1 Grand Jury Prize nomination for Dramatic Performance.

Stand and Deliver

Date: 1988
Director: Ramón Menéndez
Genre: Drama
Company: American Playhouse
Time: 102 minutes
Awards: 1 Oscar nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role; 1 Golden Globe Nomination for Best Performance by Actor in a Motion Picture, and 1 nomination for Best Performance by Actor in a Supporting Role in a Motion Picture; 1 Independent Spirit Award for Best Director, 1 for Best Picture, 1 for Best Male Lead, 1 for Best Screen Play, 1 for Best Supporting Female, 1 for Best Supporting Male, and 1 nomination for Best Screenplay.

Selena

Date: 1997
Director: Gregory Nava
Genre: Biography/Drama
Company: Esparza/Katz Productions
Time: 127 minutes

Awards: 1 Golden Globe nomination for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture; 1 Grammy nomination for Best Instrumental Composition Written for a Motion Picture or Television; 1 MTV Movie Awards nomination for Best Breakthrough Performance.

The Bronze Screen

Date: 2002
Director: Nancy de los Santos and Alberto Domínguez
Genre: Documentary
Company: N/A
Time: 90 minutes

Tortilla Soup

Date: 2001
Director: María Ripoll
Genre: Comedy/Romance/Drama
Company: Samuel Goldwyn Films
Time: 102 minutes

West Side Story

Date: 1961
Directors: Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise
Genre: Musical/Romance/Drama
Company: The Mirisch Corporation
Time: 152 minutes
Awards: 10 Oscars for Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Art Direction/Set Decoration, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Film Editing, Best Music and Scoring of a Musical Picture, Best Picture, and Best Sound. It also got a nomination for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. It also won three Golden Globe Awards: Best Supporting Actress, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Motion Picture—Musical and two nominations: Best Motion Picture Actor, and Best Motion Picture Director. The film also won a Grammy for Best Soundtrack Album and a Writers Guild of America Award for Best Written American Musical.

Logistics about Movie Watching:

Since this is a film class (and not a class about/for watching films) we will only watch in class about half of the movies I listed above (6 of them). The other half (5 movies in total) will be your responsibility. Look at the syllabus to learn the dates by when you need to have them watched, and your Movie Reflection turned in (see details about Movie Reflections under course requirements). The movies that are your responsibility can be acquired through any of the following methods:

- (1) I will leave a copy of each movie reserved at the library. You can check them out at the Reserve desk and you will have three hours before you have to return it—the library also provides VHS and DVD players for you to watch the movies right there. This is the only method that will require no cost to you.
- (2) Video rental places in the area. Now, please be aware that not all films are carried by these places, but some (if not most) of them are in stock. Also, this method requires that you pay for the rental of the movie.
- (3) Netflix or Blockbuster.com. All the movies you are responsible for are available through these particular sites, but you also have to pay for them. This particular method actually allows you to watch the movies on your computer (or you can rent the DVD from them).
- (4) Finally, some of these movies you can actually order (that is, buy) used through Amazon.com for (in many cases) cheaper than you can rent them.

Whatever you do, do it before the movie is due for discussion (refer to the schedule included in this syllabus to learn when each movie will be discussed in class). I will accept no excuses about you not being able to get a hold of a movie, because I am giving you plenty of options, and more than plenty of time to get organized and be able to watch the movies and write your Movie Reflections before they are due. The movies you are responsible for are listed as “Assigned” in the schedule. The ones we are watching in class are listed as “In-class viewing.” Remember that, for the assigned movies, the day they appear in the schedule is the day we will be discussing them in class, thus, that is the day your Movie Reflection is due.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Attendance and Participation: Attendance and participation at every class are **required** and will be worth a total of 180 points of your final score (90 points for attending class and 90 points for participating in class discussions and group and individual exercises). You are allowed up to **two absences** and after that you will **lose ten (10) points** for every regular lecture class missed. Only approved and documented university excuses will be accepted (for athletes, this means forms from the Athletic Dept. handed in **before** the absence; for serious illness or family emergency, this means a phone call to your instructor **before** class and followed up with a note from Student Health or your family doctor). Since class will almost always consist of a lecture as well as a discussion, I will expect you to come to class 1) having completed all the readings assigned for that day, 2) willing to listen closely to and engage with the lecture, and 3) wanting to respond thoughtfully and respectfully to the topic, to your instructor, and to your peers. I will be looking for both quantity *and* quality in your contributions to class discussion when allocating participation points. Taking notes during lectures is highly recommended, since I'll expect you to apply key concepts and terms in your journals and in-class assignments, and to show your understanding of them on your final essay. Finally, disruptive behavior will make you lose points for participation. The followings are examples of disruptive behavior: (1) arriving late to class and/or leaving early, (2) talking to classmates during lecture, (3) reading the newspaper, (4) playing with your laptop computer, etc. If you engage in any of those behaviors

during class (or any other that I deem disruptive), you will lose points from attendance and participation at my discretion and without any warning.

In Class Assignments: The purpose of the in-class assignments is twofold. First, on a basic level, they are designed to synthesize your interpretation of the readings with our class discussions. On a deeper level, they are also designed to make you reflect on broader issues of economic inequality, ethnic identity, transnationality and community organizing within the Chicana community. There will be a total of five assignments, and each will be worth 100 points. Since **there will be no make-up assignments**, I will drop your lowest score. This means that if you miss one in-class assignment due to an absence, the missed assignment will count as your lowest score. I repeat: no make up assignments will be given. Should you miss more than one, you are in the unfortunate circumstance of forfeiting the points. Your four highest scores have a maximum combined value of 400 points.

Reading Reflections: You are required to keep typed “reflections” of the readings. In order to get full credit, you must write a separate entry for each reading (will always have more than one reading per day, so you will need **one entry per reading**), and each entry must be prefaced with the following information: your name, date, title of reading, title of the book, pages, and entry number. For instance, the first entry for Monday, January 14 should have the following info:

Your Name
1/14/07
Part I “Introduction
Brown Celluloid
Entry #1

Each entry should include two paragraphs: one including a summary of the reading, and another paragraph including an analysis. The analysis may be theoretical, social and/or political (any personal “feelings” or ideas must be backed with information from the reading). Number your entries consecutively. **I will collect the reflections every week in class.** I will then grade two random entries from the assigned readings for that week. Each entry graded will be worth 20 points (X 2 = 40 points a week) for a total of **320 points** (8 weeks) at the end of the semester.

Note: The reading reflections will be collected in class. If you miss class one day and I choose to grade the entries from that day, you will lose your points for that day’s reading reflection.

Note 2: I will not accept late reading reflections, nor will I accept reflections brought to my office, sent over e-mail, or left in my mail box.

Note 3: Although I will only grade two reading reflections, I will deduct points for every missing entry (even if the one/ones you are missing is/are not one of the randomly chosen ones). That is to say, in order to get full credit on the two random entries I select to grade that week, you must turn in an entry for every reading assigned for that week.

Movie Reflections: You are required to watch 5 movies on your own (see details above) and you are also required to turn in a reflection of each movie on the day we are discussing that particular movie in class. In order to get full credit, the entry must be prefaced with the following information: your name, date, and title of the movie. Each entry should include two paragraphs: one including a summary of the movie, and another paragraph including an analysis. The analysis may be theoretical, social and/or political (no personal “feelings:” i.e., how you felt about a particular character or situation in the movie is irrelevant to the discussion, unless you are using those “feelings” to talk about a bigger issue). There will be a total of 5 movie reflections at 20 points each for a total of 100 points.

Note: The movie reflections will be collected in class. If you miss class on the day the movie reflection is due, you will lose your points for that particular reflection.

Note 2: I will not accept late movie reflections, nor will I accept reflections brought to my office, sent over e-mail, or left in my mail box.

COURSE POLICIES:

Academic Etiquette Policy: Class will begin promptly at 12 noon. Arriving late and leaving early is not tolerable; if you have class, job, or childcare conflicts, please see me as soon as possible. Please do not attempt to carry on private conversations with other students during lectures or discussions. I also require that guest speakers/guest lecturers be treated with respect, courtesy, and your complete attention. **Finally, toleration for diverse opinions voiced in class is essential, and I expect all students to treat each other respectfully. In order for us to learn from each other, we have to allow each other to make mistakes, and/or to offer unpopular positions for debate. Name calling and other forms of verbal harassment will not be allowed and will result in either the student being asked to leave the class and/or in receiving penalty points at my discretion.**

Cellular Phones and other Communication Devices: Turn your cell phones and communication devices off before coming to class (that includes laptop computers, blackberries and any other electronic device utilized to communicate with the world outside our classroom). The world can survive without getting a hold of you for an hour and fifteen minutes. Trust me, it will be ok. If, for a reason I cannot fathom at this point, you forget to neutralize your communication device, and it does go off, you will annoy the heck out of me, and will have the option of (1) turning it off immediately, or (2) handing it to me and letting me answer it. You will take full responsibility for what happens when/if you allow me to answer your phone. If your device goes off more than once during the semester, I will deduct points (at my discretion and without notifying you) from your attendance and participation points.

Plagiarism: In all instances, you must do your own work. There is no excuse for plagiarism, or for submitting another's work, ideas, or wording as your own. In simple terms, plagiarism is the act of using another person's words or work without giving them credit for it. If you do not understand the seriousness of plagiarism, and the importance of avoiding it, I would recommend that you read WSU's Academic Integrity Policy in the WSU Student Handbook, especially

sections WAC 504 26 010; WAC 504 26 202; and WAC 504 26 404. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, may result in a grade of "F" for the assignment in question, or a grade of "F" for the entire course. Should there be any suspicion of plagiarism, I will discuss the situation with you first and then with the Chair of Comparative Ethnic Studies before penalties are enforced. I am also required to submit a formal complaint against you to the Office of Student Conduct. If you are at any time unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please contact me. Better safe than sorry!

Disability Accommodation: Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. Please go to the Disability Resource Center (DRC) during the first two weeks of every semester to seek information or to qualify for accommodations. All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC, located in the Administration Annex Bldg, Room 205. To make an appointment with a disability counselor, please call 335-3417.

Last but Not Least (or The “How is that my problem” Clause):

I am a pretty busy person, and as a professor, my role in this class is to teach you about the predicament of Latinos in US society and to generally prepare you for the professional world. Nothing more, nothing less. I feel the need to warn you, then, that often times I will have a standard response to many of your requests or “conflicts.” The response will usually be a variation of: “How is that my problem?” For instance, if you tell me that your parents are going on a vacation to Cancún during the week we are having an in-class assignment, and they want you to come along (and already bought your tickets), I will ask you: How is that my problem? Similarly, if your best friend is getting married in California and you want to go to the wedding the day your final paper is due: How in the world is that my problem? Or, if your roommate/friend needs a ride to the Spokane airport and you decide to take her/him and miss class: not my problem! Thus, before you raise any particular issue with me, understand that your personal matters should bear no effect on me or on how this class is conducted. It is your responsibility to conform to and abide by the schedule and the syllabus and not the other way around (in other words, the schedule is not meant to conform to you and your needs). Ultimately, you need to keep in mind that if you decide to bask under the Mexican sun, or eat wedding cake in “sunny California,” or go to Spokane during class time, the activity will come with a cost to your grade. It is ultimately up to you to make your own decisions, but decisions, even in college, have consequences attached to them whether you like them or not. Keep that in mind.

SPRING 2008 SCHEDULE

NOTE 1:	Though I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance.
NOTE 2:	This syllabus tells you the dates by which you need to have the material read.

MON JAN 07: **First Day: Course Introduction**

MON JAN 14: **The Construction and Perpetuation of Stereotypes about Latinos**
Read Part I “Introduction” pp. 1-11; Part II “The Genesis of Latino Stereotypes” pp. 12-18; Part III “The Evolution of Latino Film Images” pp. 19-29; and Part IV “The 1920s” pp. 30-44 in BC.
In-class viewing *The Bronze Screen*

MON JAN 21: **MLK Jr. Day–University Holiday**

MON JAN 28: **Latinos and Film from a Historical Perspective**
Read Part V “The 1930s” pp. 89-113; Part VI “The 1940s” pp. 215-238; and Part VII “The 1950s” pp. 291-313 in BC.

MON FEB 04: **Hollywood Discovers Puerto Ricans**
Read Chapter One “Categorizing the Other” pp. 13-37 in LIF; and “Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses” by Negrón-Muntaner.
In-class viewing *West Side Story*
Note: **In-class Assignment #1**

MON FEB 11: **Portrayals of “Good Latinos”**
Read Chapter 2 “Stereotypes in Film” pp. 38-65 in LIF; and “The Construction of “Minority Teacher” Subjects: A Foucauldian Exploration” by Mahrouse.
In-class viewing *Stand and Deliver*

MON FEB 18: **President’s Day Holiday**

MON FEB 25: Read	Depictions of Life in the Margins Chapter Three “A Crash Course on Hollywood Latino Imagery” pp. 66-86); and “Voices from the Barrio: Chicano/a Gangs, Families and Communities” by Zatz and Portillos.
In-class viewing Assigned: Note:	<i>My Crazy Life</i> <i>American Me</i> In-class Assignment #2
MON MAR 03: Read	Portrayals of Family by Latinos in Hollywood Capter Five “Bordertown, The Assimilation Narrative, and the ChicanoSocial Problem Film” pp. 111-127 in LIF; and “Teaching Mexican American Experiences Through Film: Private Issues and Public Problems” by Valdez and Halley.
In-class viewing	<i>My Family</i>
MON MAR 10:	Spring Break
MON MAR 17: Read	Becoming Mainstream: The Case of Selena and J.Lo Capter Four “Subversive Acts: Latino Actors Case Studies” pp. 87-108” in LIF; and “Remembering Selena, Re-Membering Latinidad” by Paredez
Assigned Note:	<i>Selena</i> In-class Assignment #3
MON MAR 24: Read	Family and the Latino East Coast Inner City Chapter Seven “Immigrants, Aliens, and Extretaterretrials” (pp. 153-182) in LIF; and “American, and Dominican American adolescents Life satisfaction among European American, African American, Chinese American, Mexican” by Bradley and Corwin.
Assigned	<i>Raising Victor Vargas</i>
MON MAR 31: Read	Cubans and Exile: An “Outsider” Looking In “Backstory: Chicano and Latino Film Makers Behind the Camera” pp. 185-189 in LIF; and “The Narrative of Hope in Cuban Films Reacting to the Special Period” by Barrueto
Assigned Note:	<i>Bitter Sugar</i> In-class Assignment #4

MON APR 07: **Revisiting Family and Portrayals of Latinas**
Read Chapter Nine “Ethnic Ingenuity and Mainstream Cinema” pp. 219-239 in LIF; “Visiting the Mexican American Family: **Tortilla Soup** as Culinary Tourism” by Lindenfeld.
In-class Viewing *Tortilla Soup*

MON APR 14: **New Portrayals of Latinas by Latinas**
Read Conclusion: “The End of Sterotypes?” pp. 262-271 in LIF; and “Real Women Have Curves: A Feminist Narrative of Upward Mobility” by Lanius.
Assigned *Real Women have Curves*

MON APR 21: **Final Discussion**
Note: **In-class Assignment # 5**

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR CLASS GRADE POINTS BELOW

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (400 PTS)

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

Total for In-class Assignments _____

Reading Reflections (320 PTS)

#1 _____ #7 _____

#2 _____ #8 _____

#3 _____ #9 _____

#4 _____ #10 _____

#5 _____ #11 _____

#6 _____ #12 _____

Total for journal entries _____

Movie Reflections (100 PTS)

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

Total for movie entries _____

ATTENDANCE POLICY (180 PTS): _____

TOTAL POINTS ACCUMULATED _____

FINAL GRADING SCALE

A	950 points and above	C+	770-799 (77-79%)
A-	900-949 (90-94%)	C	740-769 (74-76%)
B+	870-899 (87-89%)	C-	700-739 (70-73%)
B	840-869 (84-86%)	D+	670-699 (67-69%)
B-	800-839 (80-83%)	D	600-669 (60-63%)
		F	599 or less