

**History 475.002**  
**History of Modern Latin America Through Film**  
**Dr. Chad Black**  
**Spring 2008**

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Films have marveled Latin Americans from the time the Lumière brothers showed an astonished Mexican president Porfirio Diaz and his family “moving pictures” in Chapultepec Castle in 1896. The power to capture “reality” permanently altered how Latin American societies saw themselves, and how others represented them. In this class, we will focus on the history of Modern Latin America as urbanization, population increase, migrations, revolutions, drug wars, and health crises defined the region’s struggles and became the subjects of domestic film production and foreign consumption. While films will be a central component to our understanding of the region’s history, course readings will serve as the basis of our weekly discussions. History Department guidelines suggest a weekly reading load of between 100 and 200 pages, and as such readings still dominate the preparation time for this course. By the end of the course, students should have the analytic and intellectual tools necessary to question and elaborate on pictorial depictions of Latin America.

Most films will be in Spanish or Portuguese with English subtitles. The majority of the films are rated R for strong language, violence, and/or sexual content. These topics (sex and violence) are **NOT** the main topic of the films, but are used to convey the struggles and reality of much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in, for example, the Central American revolutions. IN class we will discuss at length the themes that go beyond the uninformed viewer’s interpretation of the film. If, however, you feel uncomfortable with these topics please come speak to me.

Through the semester we will be questioning, adding to, and challenging *Imagined Communities*. How does one define nation? How and when does this idea emerge? How do we come to think of ourselves as from Bolivia? The United States? France? Is this concept of a nation static? If we reside within a nation and feel “American,” do we all have equal rights? And what do national borders mean in the twenty-first century? These are just some of the questions that should trigger some thoughts while you are reading Anderson’s book. We will spend part of Week 3 discussing the book and will return to it each week with each new movie.

Each week a different group of students will lead discussion based on that week’s readings and the assigned film.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

1. **Reading.** Each week's assigned readings should be completed before class.

2. **Film introductions and discussions (30%).** Student groups will introduce each of the films and lead the discussion of that film. This will involve previewing the film (and perhaps other films by the same director or on the same topic), researching the historical context of the film, and engaging students actively in a discussion of the film. Consider questions such as these in preparing your presentation:

- Who is the director? What else has this person made and how does this film fit into that genre?
- What evidence is there of historical research that the filmmaker conducted in the process of producing the film?
- What images of the nation, nation-ness, and inclusion/exclusion does the film portray? How does it dialogue with the concepts of nationalism posited by Anderson?
- What potentials and limitations does the medium of film hold for interpreting the specific historical issues portrayed in the movie?
- What are the cinematographic virtues of the film?
- How have other reviewers critiqued the film?

To assist in the class discussion, the group bring to class:

- A handout for the class that may include items such as a list of discussion questions, a study guide, related web sites, and/or class exercises for discussing the film.
- An annotated bibliography of sources related to the film and its historical context.
- Powerpoint or other visual aids such as maps, photographs, drawings, etc. that may assist in the intro and discussion of the film.
- Anything else that will help in the interpretation or understanding of the film.

3. **Discussion board postings (4% each, for 40%).** After each class discussion, post to the message board on Blackboard a short essay with *your* assessment of the historical value of the film, including relating it to the day's assigned readings. How successful was the film in communicating historical facts and interpretations? What does the film express about national identity in the context of its particular subject? Did the film have other goals, and did it successfully achieve these? How would you critique the comments of your classmates on this film. I will grade our postings based on your incorporation of assigned readings, synthesis of material, ability to analyze its significance, an evaluation of its importance to the broader themes of the class, and the extent to which you engage other students in a virtual discussion. Post your essay to the discussion board by the Friday following our viewing of the movie. You must post for 10 out of the 13 films. If you post for more than 10, I'll take the best 10 for your grade.

4. **Final Essay (30%).** The final assignment will be a guided essay, due during the university-assigned exam period.

5. **Attendance.** Class attendance is mandatory. Because we meet just once a week, each student is allowed one (1) absence for whatever reason. Each ensuing absence will result in one letter grade reduction of the student's final grade.

## TEXTS

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Ed. (New York: Verso Press, 2006).

John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Fire and Blood: A Concise History of Latin America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Norton, 2006).

All other readings will be placed available online on Blackboard.

## OTHER COURSE POLICIES

**Please Note:** If any special accommodations are needed to complete the course requirements, please come see me at the beginning of the semester.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism occurs when someone knowingly or unknowingly presents another person's words or ideas as his or her own. Any work turned in for this class must meet University standards for academic honesty. Any students unsure about how to apply these rules are urged to consult with me *prior* to turning in any written work.

**Deadlines:** Assignments that are due in class must be turned in at the start of class. If you anticipate problems, please contact me before the assignment is due, not after!

**Office Hours:** Students are strongly encouraged to speak with me outside of class. I am available during office hours on a first-come, first-served basis. If you cannot come during office hours, please contact me via email or phone to schedule an appointment.

## SCHEDULE

WEEK 1:

14 January – COURSE INTRO. “THE THREE AMIGOS”

WEEK 2:

21 January – MLK HOLIDAY, NO CLASS!

WEEK 3:

28 January – CAUDILLO NATION, “CAMILA”

Groups assigned, and films divvied out.

Readings:

1. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, whole book.
2. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 3-4.
3. Stephen Hart, “Camila,” pp. 107-115 in *A Companion to Latin American Film* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004). –Blackboard

WEEK 4:

4 February – PROGRESS, “GABRIELA”

Dr Black Presents.

Readings:

1. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 5.
2. Susan Besse, “Crimes of Passion: The Campaign against Wife Killing in Brazil, 1910-1940,” *Journal of Social History* 22.4 (1989): 653-666.
3. Sueann Caulfield, “Getting into Trouble: Dishonest Women, Modern Girls, and women-Men in the Conceptual Language of “Vida Policial,” 1925-1927,” *Signs* 19.1 (1993): 146-176.

WEEK 5:

11 February – REVOLUTION I, “QUE VIVA MEXICO”

Group 1 presents. (Whitney Green, John Quarles, William Walton, and Caroline White)

Readings:

1. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 6-7
2. Meyer, Sherman, Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, Chs. 8-9. – Blackboard.
3. Stephen Hart, “Que Viva México!”, pp. 17-24 in *A Companion to Latin American Film*. – Blackboard.
4. Chris Robé, “Enstein in America: The Que Viva Mexico! Debates and the Emergent Popular Front in US Film Theory and Criticism.” – Blackboard.

WEEK 6:

18 February – REVOLUTION II, “I AM CUBA”

Group 6 presents. (Robert Laser, Heather Grigsby, and Kris O’Barr)

Readings:

1. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 8.
2. Susan Eckstein, “The Impact of the Cuban Revolution: A Comparative Perspective” – Blackboard.
3. Selected Writings Fidel and Che.
4. Alejandro dela Fuente, “Race, National Discourse, and Politics in Cuba: An Overview.” *LAP* 25.3 (1998): 43-69. – Blackboard.

WEEK 7:

25 February – DAYS OF HOPE AND RAGE. “THE HARDER THEY COME”

Group 2 presents. (Emily Escue, Eric Jones, Nicolas Spivey, Alex Thompson)

Readings:

1. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 9

2. Anthony Bogues, "Politics, Nation, and Postcolony: Caribbean Inflections." – Blackboard
3. Prakash Younger, "Historical Experience in *The Harder They Come*" – Blackboard.
4. Loretta Collins, "*The Harder They Come*: Rougher Version." – Blackboard.

WEEK 8:

3 March – URBANIZATION I, "CITY OF GOD"

Group 4 presents. (Joseph Foutch, Michael Jones, Jeremy Pennycok, Zachary Stern)

Readings:

1. Julio César Pino, "Labor in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro, 1940-1969," *LAP* 25.2 (198): 18-40. --Blackboard.
2. Ney dos Santos Oliviera, "Favelas and Ghettos: Race and Class in Rio de Janeiro and New York city," *Latin American Perspectives* 23.4 (1996): 71-89. – Blackboard.
3. Stephen Hart, "Cidade de Deus," 203-210 in *A Companion....* – Blackboard.

WEEK 9:

10 March – URBANIZATION II, "BUS 174"

Group 8 presents. (David Keys, John Cave, Brandon Plummer)

Readings:

1. Excerpt from Alma Guillermoprieto's *The Heart That Bleeds* "Mexico City" pgs.237-258 – Blackboard.
2. "The Drive-by Victim" in *Citizens of Fear: Urban Violence in Latin America*. pgs.130-137 – Blackboard.
3. "I saw a City Invincible" pgs xi – 57 – Blackboard.

WEEK 10:

17 March – SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS!

WEEK 11:

24 March – NEOLIBERALISM AND SOCIAL STRUGGLE, "ENTRE MARX Y UNA MUJER DESNUDA"

Group 5 presents. (Megan Smith, Chris King, Jessica Jones)

Readings:

1. Chasteen, *Born in Fire*, Ch. 10.
2. James Cypher, "The Slow Death of the Washington Consensus on Latin America." –Blackboard.
3. Selections from John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*. – Blackboard.

WEEK 12:

31 March – RETHINKING CUBA, “FRESA Y CHOCOLATE”

Group 10 presents. (Alan Betz, Megan Brunnel, Brandon Mullins)

Readings:

1. Enrico Mario Santí, “*Fresa y Chocolate*: The Rhetoric of Cuban Reconciliation,” *MLN* 113.2 (1998): 407-425. -- Blackboard
2. Rafael Ocasio, “Gays in the Cuban Revolution: The Case of Reinaldo Arenas,” *LAP* (2002): 29-78. -- Blackboard
3. Stephen Hart, “Fresa y chocolate” pp. 162-170 in *A Companion...* – Blackboard.

WEEK 13:

7 April – NARCOAMERICA, “TRAFFIC”

Group 9 presents. (William Borges, Jonathan Alford, Jesse Ryan)

Readings:

1. Elijah Wald, “The Sinaloa Sound,” in *Narcocorrido* pgs. 47-68 – Blackboard.
2. Paul Gootenberg, “The “Pre-Colombian” Era of Drug Trafficking in the Americas: Cocaine, 1945-1965” – Blackboard.
3. Documents on Drug Trafficking from the National Security Archive. – Blackboard.

WEEK 14:

14 April – MIGRATION, “EL NORTE”

Group 7 presents. (Gaby Maldonado, Ellen Harvey, Sarah Grady)

Readings:

1. Alma Guillermoprieto, “The Border”
2. Jorge Durand and Douglas Massey, “Mexican Migration to the U.S. A Critical Review.” – Blackboard.
3. “What’s Driving Mexico-US Migration? A Theoretical, Empirical, and Policy Analysis.” – Blackboard.
4. Victoria Sanford, “Between Rigoberta Menchú and La Violencia” – Blackboard.
5. Stephen Hart, “El Norte” in *A Companion...* – Blackboard.

WEEK 15:

21 April – LATINAS IN THE US, “REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES”

Group 3 presents (Trevor Joseph, Candace Fiero, Samantha Ray, Mary Rickard)

Readings:

1. Transnational Latina/o, selection – Blackboard.
2. Sam Quinones, “Zeus and the Oaxacan Hoops,” from *True Tales from Another Mexico*. pg. 117-135 – Blackboard.