

GST 382
Latin American Politics through Film
Winter 2006
Monday to Friday 1.30-4.30 pm
Room: Powell 215
Instructor: Inés Valdez (inesv@email.unc.edu)

Objective and Focus of the Course: This course will center on the social and political dimensions of neoliberal reform and globalization as it relates to Latin America. The core of the course will be devoted to the examination of recent (most of them subtitled) Latin American films and documentaries that reflect on contemporary social issues, and provide highlights on groups or actors (like youngsters, workers, local small business-owners) that are exposed to new risks and challenges during this era. To adequately examine these films an introduction to recent Latin American history and the political economy of neoliberal reforms (including the role of the IMF and the World Bank) will be provided, as well as some background on specific Latin American countries and film interpretation.

Goals of the Course: By the end of the course students should be able to have an overall understanding of contemporary Latin American politics, as well as the capacity to analyze and criticize the filmic expressions of the multi-faceted transformations these societies have experienced in the last two decades.

Organization and Requirements: The requirements of the course are first and foremost regular class attendance, reading of the assigned materials, and active participation on class discussions.

Other course requirements include **two analytic papers** with a critical analysis of at least two films using the theoretical framework on film analysis and exploring their relation between them and with the broader political context in the particular countries and the Latin American region. The pair of films to be analyzed should be coordinated in advance with the instructor. These papers should be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced. The papers will be due in class at the dates specified below, be sure to consult the instructor in advance about your topic, and provide for enough time to work on your papers. You may write three such papers, but only two will count for the final grade; in other words, you may drop the paper with the lowest grade.

Please note: late papers will be penalized with one letter grade per day late.

There will be a **Midterm** on Friday, January 13th. The Midterm exam will contain multiple-choice questions about the readings, and essay questions relating to broader themes. Answers to essay questions should combine film and readings.

There will be a **Final exam** on Tuesday January 24th. The Final exam will include short-answer questions covering *only the second half of the course*, and essay questions covering the *entire course*.

There will unannounced **quizzes** to test your knowledge of the readings assigned for the day.

No make-up exam will be given, unless *prior* arrangements are made with the instructor or *proof of a medical visit or excuse from the Dean of Students* is given to the instructor.

Final grades will be based on the following percentages for each of the requirements:

Requirement	% of Grade	Date
Midterm	25	01/14/2005
Papers	25	01/17, 01/23, and 01/25/2005
Final	25	01/24/2005
Discussion	15	----
Quizzes	10	Several dates
Total	100	

Course Material:

The following course books are available at Elon University Campus Shop (the rest of the readings will be provided through Blackboard):

Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith. 2005. Modern Latin America. New York: Oxford University Press.

Vallejo, Fernando. 2001. Our Lady of the Assassins. London: Serpent's Tail

Schedule of Topics and readings: the following are the readings and topics to be discussed each day, please note that readings should be done in advance to allow for more rich discussions and to provide for the necessary background for the analysis of films. Besides each film the country subject is in parenthesis (note, it does not necessarily coincide with the origin of the film, as we will be seeing many American films dealing with different Latin American countries).

Tuesday, January 3
Syllabus Presentation

Wednesday, January 4

Latin America: the land and the people

Readings:

Skidmore, Thomas, and Peter Smith. 2005. Modern Latin America. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1-2.

Thursday, January 5

The contemporary period: the political and economic reforms of the 1990s

Readings:

Valdez, Inés. 2004. "Structural adjustment." Handout.

Valdez, Inés. 2004. "Financial crises and the IMF." Handout.

Friday, January 6

The contemporary period: the political and economic reforms of the 1990s (cont.)

Readings:

Huber, Evelyne., Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, and Stephens, John D. 1997. "The Paradoxes of Contemporary Democracy: Formal, Participatory, and Social Democracy." Comparative Politics, 29 (3), 323-342.

UNDP. 2004. Democracy in Latin America. Towards a Citizens' Democracy. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Pages 35-44 and 154-162.

Monday, January 9

The contemporary period: outcomes and social consequences of the economic reforms

Readings:

Weyland, Kurt. 2004. "Assessing Latin American Neoliberalism: Introduction to a Debate," Latin American Research Review, 39 (3), 143-149.

Huber, Evelyne and Fred Solt. 2004. "Successes and Failures of Neoliberalism," Latin American Research Review, 39 (3), 150-165.

Walton, Michael. 2004. "Neoliberalism in Latin America: Good, Bad, or Incomplete?" Latin American Research Review, 39 (3), 166-183.

Tuesday, January 10

What to look at when you watch a movie

Readings:

Jameson, Fredric. 1981. "On interpretation: literature as a socially symbolic act," in The Political Unconscious: narrative as a socially symbolic act. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ashcroft, Bill, and Pal Ahluwalia. 2001 (1999 1st). "Orientalism," in Edward Said. London: Routledge.

Invited Speaker: Exequiel Lopresti (Department of Romance Studies – Duke University)

Wednesday, January 11

Effects of economic reforms, small economies.

Readings:

Kurtz, Marcus. 2004. "The Dilemmas of Democracy in the Open Economy. Lessons from Latin America." World Politics, 56 (2), 262-302.

Documentary:

Life and Debt (2001) (Jamaica)

Thursday, January 12

Free trade and integration in North America: some tales from the Mexican-U.S. border.

Readings:

Skidmore and Smith (2005), chapter 8.

Huntington, Samuel. 2004. "Mexican Immigration and Hispanization," in Who we are?, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Documentaries/mockumentaries:

El Otro lado / The Other Side (1993) (Mexico/US)

A day without a Mexican (1997) (Mexico/US)

Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos (2000) (Mexico)

The New World Border (2001) (Mexico/US)

Friday, January 13

Midterm

Monday, January 16 (Martin Luther King Jr. – Holiday)

No classes today

Tuesday, January 17 ***First paper due*******

Economic instability and the crisis of the Nation-state

Readings:

Skidmore and Smith (2005), chapter 3.

UNDP. 2004. Democracy in Latin America. Towards a Citizens' Democracy. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Pages 182-191.

Film:

Nueve Reinas / Nine Queens (2000) (Argentina)

Wednesday, January 18

New social issues in changing societies

Readings:

ECLAC. 2004. Social Panorama of Latin America. Santiago de Chile: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Film:

25 Watts (2001) (Uruguay)

Thursday, January 19

Poverty, violence, and crime

Readings:

Skidmore and Smith (2005), chapter 5.

Vallejo (2001)

Film:

Cidade de Deus / City of God (2003) (Brazil)

Fragments of La Virgen de los Sicarios / Our Lady of the Assassins (2001) (Colombia)

Friday, January 20

Poverty, corruption, and inequality

Film:

Amores Perros / Love's a bitch (2000) (Mexico)

Monday, January 23 ***Second paper due*******

Review Session: bring your questions for the exam.

Tuesday, January 24

Final Exam

Wednesday, January 25 ***Optional third paper due*******

No classes today