

**SPAN 4999: Spanish Capstone Research Seminar:
Documentary as Civic Engagement in Latin American and Latinx Film**

Professor: Dr. Michelle Leigh Farrell
Email: mfarrell3@fairfield.edu
Class: Once a week, 2.5 hours
Office Hours: see below for more details



Brincando el charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican
(Negrón-Muntaner 1994)

I. Brief Course Description

In this course we examine the documentary genre in film and its participation in the public sphere as filmmakers and their audiences demand or create justice in pursuit of participation in Latin America and among Latinx communities. We see how a range of documentarians and their subjects use film to not only hold their communities and governments accountable, but also surface buried stories, and serve as alternative public platforms to reframe memory. We see how, in some communities, through the use of small screens and phone cameras, people write themselves into a more plural and inclusive history. We will examine the theoretical frameworks and documentaries coming from Latin America and Latinx communities on the topic of documentary as justice, while analyzing key documentaries that have used the genre to reveal and remember buried stories. This course and the documentaries analyzed will be in Spanish and as such we recognize our privilege interacting with these materials as Spanish-speakers and students of Spanish as another level of engagement, activism, and community.

As we examine the voices captured in these texts celebrating, narrating, criticizing, and challenging terms such as the limits of the documentary genre, democracy, nation, sovereignty, racism and gender, we too will continue to develop our own voices using the written word scaffolding our writing through a low-stakes and higher-stakes on-going practice. We will use writing throughout the course to think through texts, shape our own voices in Spanish as well as respond to each other to foster a supportive community of thinkers, writers, and Spanish-speakers.

II. Learning Goals and Outcomes

(WHAT) This is a Davis Grant informed course on Democracy and Civic Engagement.

(HOW) This is a Writing in the Disciplines [WID] course in the Magis Core and thus has two sets of complementing goals.

Davis: Democracy and Civic Engagement Course:

- a. Context Analysis Goal: to facilitate critical thinking about changing notions of what documentary and democracy mean and who is able to participate fully in civic life

Outcome: students will articulate examples of historical exclusions, comparative experiences, and current threats to democracy

- b. Values/Ethics Goal: to promote civic engagement and reflection based on inclusion, participation, openness, intercultural understanding, and difference

Outcome: at the end of project activities, students will participate in experiential learning to foster community engagement in civic contexts on and off campus

- c. Skills/Methods Goal: to cultivate constructive civic engagement with people from all walks of life.

Outcome: at the end of project activities, students will demonstrate empathetic listening, civic reflection, deliberative dialogue, consensus building, and conflict resolution.

Writing is central to our course to explore materials, strengthen our writing skills, recognize ownership of ideas through MLA citation and engage in contributing to a community of writers. That is why this syllabus is embedded with many opportunities to write, practice, engage, and respond since writing is a consistent process.

As a WID Course students will:

- a. Use writing as an instrument of inquiry across a variety of writing situations, both formal and informal;
- b. Respond to and use responses to drafts in revision to demonstrate metacognitive awareness about their writing;
- c. Engage in writing that explores and responds to texts or other content in a discipline in ways that deepen student understanding, and communicate that understanding in rhetorically appropriate ways that provide information to others;
- d. Make choices reflecting their awareness of purpose, audience, and the rhetorical context of the discipline in which they write; and
- e. Employ the forms of attribution appropriate to academic discourse. ([MLA Formatting and style guide as well as citation](#))

III. Films and Readings

All films and readings are available through Bb except for those from film festivals (see below). You will virtually “attend” two film festivals during the semester to review films released this Fall during the Pandemic. You will pay to see one of these films (BLIFF). Your writing can be extended into reviews for consideration for professional publication so that your voice on the latest films coming from Latin America is heard.

This is a wonderful opportunity. I realize that finances are difficult this year-and that is why I decided to include only PDF and open access texts with the hopes to support emerging filmmaking through your clicks. The course materials will cost about \$18 for the semester-which is 1/10 of the cost of the film studies textbook. If there are financial difficulties, please contact me with sufficient time so that I can work with you.

IV. Grading:

- Participation (in-class, in-class activities, pair work quip notes, scribe): 10%
- Weekly Blackboard writing 15%
- Film Review/annotation 5%
- Presentation: 10%
- Abstract: 5%
- Annotated bibliography:
 - First set 10%
 - Second set 10%
- First Draft 15%
- Final Draft Final Paper 20%

I. Participation:

As we begin to find ways out of the current pandemic, participation takes different forms and remains central to our class community. It means supporting our own and each other’s learning while contributing to a class community.

We will each write a personal reflection on our in-person or cyber participation depending on the health needs of our community- meaning how we have supported our own learning as well as that of our peers throughout the course.

As part of your participation, we have a Quip doc where you will each share your in-person, pair or breakout room work, course notes, and new vocabulary terms so that the material is centrally located for you to access to prepare for presentations, and in/formal writing.

<https://fairfield.quip.com/XbOUAXNr7sKf/Course-notes-from-group-breakout-rooms>

Participation means:

- **Speaking solely in Spanish during session, breakout rooms, and projects without professor's prodding**
- Arriving to or signing in to class on time with texts thoughtfully read
- Offering your comments and making connections from one-week to the next voluntarily **without professor's prodding**
- Writing short notes in our shared Quip archive to remember so that you volunteer to report back from breakout rooms on behalf of your group
- Considering the course as a space for reflection on your own social identities, cultural values, and privilege and sharing whether in comments, written form, board writing, or shared Quip archive, or sharing in your twice per semester [Participation](#) reflection
- Volunteering to add to class discussion in -person or zoom chat to build the conversation
- Working as a true equal in pair assignments (peer editing, in-class activities, actively listening for directions or questions to discuss, peer comments, breakout rooms, in-person work, leading the reflections)
- Adding to class community through peer comments, peer work, sessions, breakout rooms and google doc-**independently staying in Spanish**
- Focusing on the session instead of other websites, birds, phones, or other people
- Turning in weekly Bb informal 250-word posts, presentations, and formal papers on time
- Consulting syllabus and Bb frequently to answer questions as well as checking email/syllabus to stay on top of work, public health changes, and upcoming due dates
- Remembering that being in-person reflects privilege, finding ways to show up, and be there when not all of us have that privilege

II. Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

This is a weekly 250-word writing assignment due each **Wednesday by 10:00 am** on that week's Discussion Board. Plan ahead as late posts do not count for credit in order to respect our classroom community and our momentum. Choosing one of the writing prompts, you will reflect on an aspect of the week's reading or film before coming to class. Use discussion board to draw connections from the previous and current readings as well as historical presentations. This will serve as a consistent space to think through what you have seen, heard, thought of, as well as work on your writing skills.

Throughout the semester, I will dedicate myself to offering comments on the overall documents and within the text itself. To see all writing comments and suggestions via Bb, make sure to consult the right-hand comments, **as well as** the comments within the document-these are not able to be seen on your phone. To see the full array of comments, corrections, suggestions, and changes needed to make on future drafts or in your writing practice, you open the document on a laptop or computer.

I will often times write in **Spanish correction shorthand** (t.v., m.v., ref, rel, etc.). To strengthen your Spanish writing, you will consult the Shorthand correction guide for Spanish available on Blackboard under the 'information' tab.

In class we will discuss what you have written as well as quotes from the readings and screenshots. Come to class having reviewed your writing before to share your thoughts in pair activities, brainstorm, breakout rooms, class discussions, and the chat. These are public pieces as such I expect that you read the works of your peers without repeating what they have said.

Edit these short assignments before posting since it is where you will continually practice your Spanish. I will grade these Bb 250-word posts for content--you will receive credit for completing them (if you submit 6 out of 8 on time you will earn a grade of 75 for the semester's Bb grade). I reserve the right to periodically grade them for grammar as a form of a pop quiz to ensure that you are editing and practicing your best Spanish. The three formal papers will build directly on these assignments.

III. Historical/Contextual Presentation:

You will prepare a 10-minute succinct, and helpful presentation to share the key historical points that we will need to know before viewing our next film. You will view the following week's film one week earlier and present the historical context before the end of the previous class to help set the scene for the film. Does the film reference a time period that we need to know about? A court case? A past event? Could you explore further the important historical event beyond the basic information in Wikipedia? Does it try to re-construct the past? Is there a president that the film makes reference to that you can situate for us? Is there something specific about the political situation that possibly since the making of the film has changed? The purpose is for the class to contextualize this documentary's look at the past or current situation.

Writing is a process and not a product:

"You don't start out writing good stuff. You start out writing crap and thinking it's good stuff, and then gradually you get better at it. That's why I say one of the most valuable traits is persistence."

~Octavia E. Butler

In our path towards conducting independent capstone research, we will commit to drafts, responding, listening, and re-writing for our own work and each other's. We will strive towards building something that most clearly reflects our argument. We will walk together through this process. To remain up to date with the various stages of the research timeline students will turn in the various aspects of their research throughout the semester and check the syllabus to keep key dates in mind.

I will accompany you in this research process and meet the deadlines alongside of you in our course discussion board for an article that I am writing for publication. This way we each contribute to a community of writers willing to give supportive and timely feedback on the multiple stages of our writing and be vulnerable with our drafts.

IV. Stages of the Research Paper:

A. Abstract: You will submit a 250-word abstract to the Blackboard Discussion Board describing the topic and aims of your original research paper. The abstract should clearly present the subject of your research, and also include a description of the investigative questions you will tackle and the sources you will use.

B. Annotated bibliography: You will submit two annotated bibliographies:

First: three sources

Second: three sources

The assignments will model a professional research process.

For the annotated bibliographies you will choose three academic articles, books, or films that you have found through the following databases on the library website—JStor, Hapi online [Hispanic American Periodicals Index], Hispania, Hispanic Review, etc.

You will first write the bibliographical information for the source using MLA format. For information on MLA see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

You will synthesize the information in a half page detailed summary of the source answering the following questions:

- What is the main idea of the article/book/or film?
- How do the authors make their argument? Using film, theory, close-textual analysis?
- What examples from class readings, literature, culture or history does the author analyze?
- How could this source possibly support your research interest?
- Is there an aspect about this article that draws you to engage with the article?
 - Does the article fill in an information gap in the field or in your own understanding about a specific event or concept?
 - Does the article offer an idea that you disagree with and will serve as a foil to your opinion or argument?
 - Has the article helped form or reframe an opinion?
- What is this article missing?
 - How could you improve this article?
 - How will your work create a dialogue with the work presented here?
 - How will use this information in your own paper?
 - Will you apply a similar approach as the authors to another documentary?

Each annotated bibliography entry should be about 1-2 pages for a total of 4-6 pages, Times New Roman, size 12 double spaced, margins 1.” After you turn in these annotated bibliography entries, you will receive feedback via Blackboard. Reading your fellow students’ work will strengthen your own writing.

- C. First Draft Research Paper:** The first draft of your research is due by the start of class to our Blackboard Discussion Board. The first draft includes a full introduction, conclusion, and body of the paper. Based on the comments from your instructors and your fellow peers, you will then revise the draft for final submission at the end of the semester. We will use the written work rubric to grade the first draft. You will be able to increase a maximum of 10 points for the final draft-this will encourage you to **write your strongest first draft**, and design the argument of your paper. 7-15 pages
- D. Final Research Paper:** Your work over the course of the semester will work towards a 12-15 pages, argument-based research paper on a topic of your choosing. The paper will draw from at least five additional secondary sources - either books or peer-reviewed academic journals (available on databases such as Jstor through the library) - and corresponding primary sources. Many or all of these sources will come from your annotated bibliography assignments. The final research paper is the opportunity for you to demonstrate your understanding of the major themes, events, and trends we have analyzed during the semester. You will turn in your final paper via Discussion Board by the time of your scheduled final exam.

Formatting is 10% of each grade: Times New Roman, 12-point font double-spaced, one-inch margins, to cite additional works or lectures use: Consult the MLA formatting guide. It is a key part of writing full-length research papers as the formatting represents the language used to fairly cite the materials that we reference.
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Fostering our Class Community During and Between Sessions:

COVID-19 Considerations

COVID-19 has upended how we learn and teach. Our class begins with an acknowledgement that students may be facing new personal and academic challenges, and that the pandemic has intensified existing inequities in our communities, on and off campus. In this class, we will prioritize supporting one another to foster intellectual nourishment and social connection.

As per University regulations, masks are required for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors inside University facilities. We will wear masks inside the classroom at all times to protect one another.

To mitigate the risk of transmission, we will also take other pre-cautions. Food and drink are not permitted in class. Please bring a face mask that fits: it should not droop and should fit snugly. If a student comes to class with an ill-fitting mask, s/he/they will be asked to leave the class to adjust their mask or to procure a better-fitting one.

Community Norms: this is a community where we discuss representations of ethnicity, race, gender, stereotypes, and power. We will challenge our assumptions, images, and previous beliefs by questioning common representations. During the class we will discuss community norms-so that we can make explicit brave spaces to grow, develop, and question representations and narratives that are omnipresent but far from neutral. We will create a community of learners courageously reflecting on the materials we examine.

To create a class community, we hope that you will use your voice, presence and video to share your voice and face during the class session. We need to show up for each other and that means making community in times of world struggle and isolation. Please use the “smudged out” background option on Zoom to help us all focus on speakers and not their backgrounds.

Privacy: To ensure a safe and fair learning environment as well as strictly adhere to copyright rules, all online materials, lectures, videos made by the professor and/or fellow students are protected under Privacy and Copyright Law. No student or device can record, distribute, or copy materials from the class, fellow students, including professor’s classes or lectures, nor record Zoom synchronous course sessions without prior written agreement. Distribution of materials off or online (placing on YouTube) is strictly prohibited and violates the course Privacy and US [Copyright Law](#). This will ensure that we feel comfortable sharing our voices in Spanish without fear of being recorded.

More information on Office Hours:

XXX - XXXX

My office is small and does not allow for social distancing. To ensure an opportunity to meet in a safe environment office hours this semester will be held via zoom.

For in person office hours during this time I can meet outside between Canisius and Donnarumma (see picture)-weather permitting and will simultaneously keep my zoom office hours open as well. It is a sunny spot on campus where I enjoy reading and writing.



Pedagogy and Preparation: All courses in the Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures use a flipped classroom approach (as do the majority of university courses in the US). With a flipped classroom approach, students come prepared having read, and reflected on materials **before coming to the class synchronous/asynchronous session.**

Note that the readings and films in Spanish are designed for speakers of Spanish and students of film which means that you may need to read articles twice or re-watch scenes in films. This is normal and is not cause for concern-it is where the real learning happens.

Attendance: This course includes synchronous instruction with me in person (or, if the pandemic decides, via zoom), and asynchronous work (via discussion board, drafts, homework, feedback, reading etc.). Each part is essential in the learning process and contributes to consistent attendance.

Missed Class Policy: If you miss a Wednesday class session, it is your responsibility to obtain the notes from a fellow classmate. I will also meet with you during office hours to discuss course content or questions you have after reviewing the posted online lesson plan (see Bb->lesson plans-> scroll down to date), class Quip folder for communal notes, and after reviewing work with a classmate.

The Dept. of Modern Languages & Literatures' expects students to attend all scheduled class sessions. The Dept. policy allows students to miss the equivalent of one week of coursework without loss of credit. In this turbo course that would mean one excused absence. Each absence after the first will result in a reduction of your final grade by 2.5 points per additional absence. A student with two absences and a final grade of 87 will earn a grade of 84.5. According to the Dept policy after six absences, the student will earn an F for the course. To respect our class community and the course discussion-two late arrivals, (of five minutes or more) or Zoom sign-ins will equal one unexcused absence. This also includes arriving to scheduled meetings with your partners on time. We realize that these are unforeseen times coupled with health difficulties. That is why you and I need to be in contact with each other, via email, Bb, and zoom to make sure that we are okay and supported.

As we have learned with this pandemic, the world is unpredictable. If you or someone you are responsible for becomes seriously ill, expectations for attendance will be modified as needed-please remain in contact with me and your classmates to continue to foster a classroom community.

Emails: To contact your peers or myself through Bb- use the 'communication' tab and choose the email option. I will respond to all emails within 24 hours of receiving them, I will respond to emails sent to me after 6pm the following day.

Email Etiquette:

1. Use formal writing in emails (it is a useful space to practice)
2. Start your email with a greeting, ~~not with Hey~~. (Estimada, Querida, Buenos días)
3. You can refer to me as Dra. Farrell, Profesora Farrell, Profe
4. Make sure you have double-checked your syllabus and Bb before you ask a question that is already answered in this document or on Bb
5. Write in Spanish as much as you can-let's practice.
6. Conclude all emails with a closing such as (Saludos, gracias, muchas gracias, aprecio su tiempo, espero su respuesta, agradezco su tiempo, que pase un buen día, many thanks, regards, best, thank you for your time). This is another way to use Spanish less-practiced in the classroom.

Health and Wellbeing: Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. Counseling & Psychological Services helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Counseling & Psychological Services offers confidential services provided by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. Counseling & Psychological Services is free for full-time undergraduate students. For more information, contact counseling@fairfield.edu or by calling (203) 254-4000 ext. 2146.

<https://www.fairfield.edu/graduate-and-professional-studies/student-life-and-resources/health-and-wellness/uwill/index.html>

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is the most important aspect of our work as students, thinkers and writers. We need to give credit to others' works as well as others' need to properly cite our work.

Plagiarism is when we present another person's ideas, words, translations, or parts of papers as our own without citing their work. The University's academic integrity policy is available in the Undergraduate Course Catalog [Academic Honesty section](#).



~Section inspired by Dr. Betsy Bowen's EN 1720 syllabus

Cell phones, texting, etc.: To foster a supportive class community we will all commit to being **cyber present** with our classmates and professor during our class sessions. Checking in with cell phones, back-grounding the class session will make us feel even more distant and will result in a lower grade.

Academic Support Services: Fairfield University is committed to providing qualified students with disabilities an equal opportunity to access the benefits, rights, and privileges of its services, programs and activities in an accessible setting. In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and applicable state law, the University provides reasonable accommodations to reduce the impact of disabilities on academic functioning or upon other major life activities. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Accessibility. Documentation should be uploaded to the student's accessibility profile through my.fairfield.edu. Students can also confidentially submit the documentation to the OOA via: ooa@fairfield.edu

COURSE SCHEDULE -----

Sep 8 Introduction to the course

Logistics, Bb, timeline, dates and information

Annotate Syllabus in Quip (pairs)

Annotate Community Guidelines in Quip (pairs)

First writing in class: Each person- in Quip:

What is documentary? What is democracy? What is civic engagement?

Sep 15 **What is documentary film? What can it do?**

Film: *Cuban Contemporary Shorts (Aram Vidal-Degeneración, Ex-generación, Rodríguez-Buscandote la Habana, Pardo-OffLine, Fajardo-Adónde vamos) 2006-2014*
available on YouTube

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Sep 22 Whose story do we see? Who writes “history”? Who remains invisible?

Film: *Nana: The Lives of Live-In Nannies*. Dominican Republic. 2015. *Kanopy*

Readings: Bb

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Sep 29 **Meet in Nursing classroom:** Egan/NHS room 204

Film: *No Más Bebés*. Directed by Renee Tajima-Peña, Moon-Canyon Films, 2013.

Kanopy

Readings: Bb

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Oct 6 Discuss Boston International Latino Film Festival

Reminder: COMING UP Boston International Latino Film Festival:

<http://www.bliff.org/>

Choose one of the following docs to view: Please note times to see films:

- Dreams of Chonta
- Fruits of Labor (only available Sept. 29 - 30)
- On the Divide (only available Sept. 30 - Oct. 3)

WRITE FILM REVIEW/Annotated bib (1) see Bb

Annotate formal writing rubric in Quip

Abstract writing workshop in pairs in class

Presentation 1:

Oct 13 Topic: Modes of documentary

Film: *Otra Isla*. Cuba. Directed by Heidi Hassan. (*Kanopy*)

Readings: Bb

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Presentation 2:

Oct 20 Film: *Los Rubios*. Argentina. Directed by Albertina Carri. 2003. (*Kanopy*)

Readings: Bb

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Due Abstract due

Workshop on how to write an Annotated bibliography

Presentation 3:

Oct 27 Film: *108 Cuchillos de palo*. Paraguay. Renate Costa. 2012. (YouTube)

Readings: Bb

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Due Annotated bibliography I

Nov 3 Film: *Sueños al pairo* * Filmmakers visit. (Film in festival circuits still-see link)

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Nov 10 Film: *Film Festival: Yale Iberian Film Festival 7 al 9 de noviembre*

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Choose film to write about

Due Annotated bibliography II

Presentation 4:

Nov 17 Film: *Brincando el charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican* (Puerto Rico, Frances Negrón-

Muntaner 1994) *Kanopy*

Due Weekly Blackboard writing [WBW]

Presentation 5:

Nov 24 Holiday- Thanksgiving

Dec 1 Taller de escritura

IDEA Form in Class

First Draft Writing workshop peer session. Incorporating comments.

Meet with professor 20-minute session post class-sign up via Bb.

Dec 8 Presentation of your research

Written reflection via Bb-

What is documentary? What is social justice? What is a search for democracy?

Final version of formal paper is due Weds December 22nd at 3:00 pm through Blackboard.

Thank you for being part of our community of thinkers and writers this semester.