



## INDIGENOUS & AFRO-DESCENDANT REPRESENTATION IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN FILM

Spring 2021 Synchronous Class Sessions: Wednesdays & Fridays, 1:15-2:30pm (ET)  
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### COURSE INFORMATION

This course serves as an introduction to film analysis by studying Latin American cinema, **with a focus on Afro-descendant and indigenous communities**. We will analyze the representation of indigenous people in contemporary Latin American cinema, and highlight the contributions of indigenous media to current discussions about indigeneity and decolonization. In addition, we will examine the cinematic representation of Afro-Latin Americans and explore the cultural legacy of the African diaspora through Latin American film. The course will highlight important social and political issues concerning historically marginalized voices in Latin America, as well as how cinematography, as an artistic medium, grapples with questions of representation, identity, memory, and activism. Movies will be screened in Spanish (in some cases, Portuguese and indigenous languages, with Spanish subtitles). Class conducted in Spanish.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The main goals of this course are (1) to acquire an understanding of how indigenous and Afro-Latin American people are represented in and represent themselves in contemporary Latin American cinema in the historical context of colonialization and slavery; (2) to gain an appreciation of film as an artistic medium with the power to promote awareness, challenge predominant world-views, and stimulate critical reflection; (3) to gain experience in analyzing film, specifically in seeing and articulating relationships between content and form.

Credit: Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies (LALC); Cross-Cultural Studies

Prerequisite: SPAN 305 and a semester of readings (SPAN 308 or 309)

### COURSE MATERIALS

- **Cineglos:** <http://sites.holycross.edu/cineglos/> (open-access Spanish-language film glossary with examples of cinematographic techniques from Latin American and Spanish cinema)
- **Films:** Almost all the films in this course will be available for free through our Canvas website, or through Kanopy, Swank, or Alexander St. Videos (video streaming services accessible via the library catalog). You must log in using your Holy Cross credentials to gain access to these platforms. Pending availability, there may be 2-3 films that you will need to rent (via Amazon Prime, Netflix or Vimeo) this semester. The cost to rent/buy is approximately \$3-12 per film.
- **Texts:** All required and supplementary readings will be available on Canvas or through the Holy Cross library catalog throughout the semester. You are expected to read these texts prior to our meeting and to bring a printed or digital copy with you to class.
- **Afro-Descendant Representation Bibliography:** <https://cinegogia.omeka.net/afrolatinamerican>
- **Indigenous Representation Bibliography:** <https://cinegogia.omeka.net/indigenous>

## QUESTIONS ABOUT FILMS & FILM STUDIES

**How many films will we watch?** We will watch 18 films this semester. You are responsible for watching 1-2 movies each week on your own as part of your course work. I highly recommend that you set aside a day and time (on your calendar) to view the films that we will discuss in class. Expect to spend dedicated time taking notes and analyzing, not just watching, these films (just as you would with a novel or essay). In order to complete your written assignments, you will need to watch key scenes or sequences at least one more time to properly analyze, critique, and understand the many different layers that comprise the films. When it is your turn to moderate or review a film, you should also plan to view the film a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time.

**What kinds of films will we watch?** The films that we will screen this semester have been selected to introduce you to a variety of perspectives, regions, communities, languages, and ways of life that exist in Latin America, with a specific focus on indigenous and Afro-descendant representation through cinema. Our course will explore issues related to gender, race, politics, and history, and some of the films include scenes with violence, sex, nudity, and offensive language. In normal circumstances, you would watch these films in the company of other college-age peers. However, given our remote learning situation, you may find yourself sharing the screen with family members. Please be advised that these films may not be appropriate for younger siblings or other family members. **I highly encourage you to watch the films by yourself or with a peer from class (if allowed by social distancing guidelines)**, so as to form your own opinions, critiques and commentaries (just as you would in a conventional college setting). Our synchronous class sessions are designed to be a safe place to discuss the films together.

**I've never taken a film class – what should I expect?** You should expect to never be able to watch a movie again without noticing new and surprising things! **Warning:** after you take this seminar, your friends and family may be slightly annoyed by the comments you make about low-angle shots, non-diegetic sound and key lighting while watching movies with them. You will learn to recognize how films create meaning, provide insight into different cultures, and give a voice to stories from Latin America that are not typically portrayed by the dominant lens of the Hollywood film industry. You will learn how to analyze the multiple layers of a film, including character development, perspective, theme, cinematography, production context, and film history. As part of this process, you will discuss the films and related readings, and make oral presentations during class; you will learn how to identify the building blocks of cinematography and write film reviews; and you will create a digital video-essay about selected films from the course and a topic of your choice.

**What films will we watch?** During the first half of the semester, we will focus on indigenous representation in Latin American cinema, as well as indigenous media produced in Abya Yala (an indigenous-language term used to refer to the region). These films include: *Wallmapu* (2001); *Fuga de la Patagonia* (2016); *Tava, a casa de pedra* (2012); *Ixcanul* (2015); *La teta asustada* (2009); *El niño pez* (2009); *Tote/abuelo* (2019); *El abrazo de la serpiente* (2015); *Pirinop, meu primeiro contato* (2007); and *El grito de la selva* (2008). Following this module, we will screen a series of films that highlight Afro-descendant voices, communities and filmmakers: *Ôrí* (1989); *La soledad* (2016); *El techo* (2016); *Cafe com canela* (2018); *Cidade de Deus* (2002); *Pelo malo* (2014); *Cores e Botas* (2010); and *Miriam miente* (2018). In addition to these films, you will have the opportunity to write your film reviews on a related film in consultation with the professor.

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

*Each week, students will be responsible for preparing or presenting different assignments. The work is spread out over the course of the semester, so students will be responsible for their tasks on different dates and for different films. More details and dates will be posted on Canvas.*

### WEDNESDAYS

- **MODERADOR/A (M):** Responsible for creating a guide with discussion questions about the assigned film and reading. The written part of this assignment is called “Puntos de enfoque” and must be uploaded to Canvas by 5pm (ET) on the Monday prior to class. During Wednesday’s class, the moderator will give an oral presentation (8-10 minutes, graded) with context about the director and the film, and then s/he will moderate a discussion (20 minutes) based on the questions in the “Puntos de enfoque.” Each student will moderate **1 film** during the semester.
- **PUNTOS DE ENFOQUE (PE):** On most Wednesdays, most students will answer the *puntos de enfoque* (discussion questions) created by the moderator and upload their responses to the relevant Discussion Forum on Canvas **before** class on Wednesday. This weekly exercise will help you discern elements of the films that are significant, interesting, or problematic, and to develop your critical writing skills. Note: *Moderators are exempt from responding to their own “Puntos de enfoque”.*

### FRIDAYS

- **PRESENTADOR/A DE ARTICULO (PA):** On most Fridays there will be an assigned reading about Latin American cinema, the specific film we are studying, or a related topic. Weekly presenters will identify the thesis or main point, summarize the article in their own words, and create 5 questions about and/or based on the reading, using the weekly films as reference points. The Article Presenter will also present the reading in class on Friday, and use his/her questions as the basis for a broader discussion with everyone.
- **TAREA DIGITAL (TD):** On Friday, students will complete different kinds of digital homework in preparation for the final video essay project. These low-stakes assignments are designed to help you recognize film techniques and how they function, as well as to provide you with the cutting and editing practice needed for the final video essay project (due at the end of the semester). Some of this work will be completed with a partner(s), some will be done on your own. Note: *Article presenters are exempt from the Friday digital homework on the day that they are scheduled to present.*

### RESEÑAS (Film Reviews)

- Students will write two (2) film reviews, 5-6 paragraphs in length. A list of recommended movies will be provided. The first review will focus on indigenous representation and/or indigenous media, and should be written for an audience that is not familiar with the historical context of the film. The second review will focus on an Afro-Latin American film, and should be designed for publication in a newspaper in Latin America. Detailed instructions, due dates, and guidelines for writing the film reviews will be discussed in class and provided on Canvas.

# VIDEO ESSAY FINAL PROJECT<sup>1</sup>

## What exactly is a video essay?

As part of our seminar, you will craft an essay that critically analyzes 1-2 films related to our seminar topics – indigenous and Afro-descendant representation in contemporary cinema from Latin America. Unlike the traditional writing assignments in other courses, you will present this analysis as a short audiovisual essay. Video essays, also referred to as videographic criticism, have emerged in the past decade as a new form of Film Studies research. The video essay format allows us to write about and analyze movies using the very same audiovisual medium of film! Not only can we use the images and sounds from the films in question, the video essay also opens up new possibilities of expression for our analysis.

## What is the process of creating a video essay like?

I cannot assume that everyone has the same background in either digital editing or research methodology. Furthermore, writing, research and video editing all benefit from collaboration, peer-review, and multiple drafts before the final product is complete. For these reasons, our course has been designed with low-stakes learn-by-doing activities (individual and in pairs/small groups), peer-review exercises, and scaffolded assignments that will build towards the final video essay. You are encouraged (and in some cases will be required) to brainstorm ideas with one another and the professor, to workshop your writing, to problem solve technical glitches, and to share practical advice for cutting and editing. During the month of April, there will be dedicated time during class to workshop and develop your video essay.

## Who will see my video essay?

In addition to submitting the video essay to me and sharing the final result with your peers, students may have the opportunity to publish their work for public viewing (meaning that the potential audience for your research project is not just your professor and your peers, but anyone with internet access who is interested in Latin American Film Studies). You, of course, will have 100% control regarding publication of the video essay on a public forum; and you do not need to make that decision until the semester is over.

## I don't really understand what a video essay is... Can you show me some examples?

Spoken like a true film critic! To see and hear is to understand. Here are some examples of video essays created by students and scholars in Latin American Film Studies. Please remember that the length, narration, and other requirements for our video essay may be different from these specific examples.

- [We ALL Can: Perennial themes in Szifrón's \*Wild Tale\*](#)
- [Panóptico en \*Diarios de motocicleta\*](#)
- [The Underrepresentation of U.S. Latina Directors](#)
- ["I'll Run Them Over": Classism in \*Las malas intenciones\*](#)
- ["C/Leo" – On Auteurism and \*Roma\*](#)
- [La doble repetición en \*Memorias del subdesarrollo\*](#)
- [Santa y Teresa: A Walking Dialogue between two Cuban Characters](#)
- [El embrujo de \*La mujer sin cabeza\*](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Video Essay assignment adapted from course materials created by Jeffrey Middents, American University and Michelle Farrell, Fairfield University

# CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

- **Attendance & Zoom Etiquette**

I am looking forward to the day when college life resumes some semblance of normality and we can all be together on campus, in a regular classroom setting. In the meantime, consistent attendance and punctuality using our online Zoom platform are expected for this course. Please test your internet connection, microphone and camera at least 5 minutes before class begins to minimize disruptions. One important part of creating a positive and productive classroom community is that we will all try to find a quiet, private space when we meet for our synchronous class sessions on Wednesdays and Fridays. You should have your video feed on (as it is normal and helpful to see each other during class) and use headphones/earbuds to keep our discussions within the classroom space only. I understand that there may be interruptions, problems with technology or other realities that interfere with these expectations from time to time. If this is the case, you are expected to communicate your circumstances to me before class begins.

Our synchronous sessions will not be recorded. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me via email before the class meeting begins with the reason for the absence. In addition, you should borrow the notes from another student, acquire any materials that were handed out, and learn if changes have been made to the syllabus. You may also come to my virtual office hours (*Mondays 3:30-4:30pm; Thursdays 1-2pm; or by appointment*) with any questions about missed classes. I will not email recaps or notes of our synchronous class sessions to students who were absent. Regardless of absences, all students are expected to upload any homework to Canvas by the due date to receive credit for their work. After the first week of classes, students are allowed two absences without a penalty. The third absence will lower your final semester grade by one half-letter grade, the fourth by one letter grade, and so on. Arriving late disrupts the class as well. Three tardies equals one unexcused absence.

- **Participation & Preparation**

Thoughtful preparation and active participation in class (discussion, pair/group work) is critical to a positive and productive learning environment. You are expected to view the weekly films, read any assigned readings, and prepare assignments prior to class. Class meetings will be devoted to a discussion of the films and readings. Be prepared not only to summarize, but also offer interpretative comments. Classroom participation is evaluated based on **what you demonstrate**, not what you know in your head.

You can demonstrate your preparation and participation through synchronous engagement during our regularly scheduled class (e.g., voluntarily responding to questions or prompts by professor or peers, participation using the live audio/video functions or chat). You can also show your engagement with the course material asynchronously by completing and uploading your written homework to Canvas prior to class, by participating actively in discussion forums, and by promptly responding to email communications from your peers and professor. In general, please let me know if you feel lost, confused, overwhelmed, or uncomfortable in class. You are not alone! What you may feel is a “wrong” answer is not necessarily so, and asking is the most effective way to clear up doubts.

- **Student (aka Office) Hours**

The traditional phrase "office hours" can be misleading, as it seems to indicate that it is when I am working in my office, not to be disturbed. But, in fact, "office hours", or what I prefer to call "Student Hours" refers to the protected time during the week that **I am available to meet with my students**. I have set this time aside specifically to chat **with you**, to answer questions you have about the course or college life, to guide you towards helpful resources for having a successful semester, and to discuss assignments, readings and of course Latin American film!

I enjoy getting to know my students outside of the regular classroom dynamic, and I know that college can be a very challenging time in your life. On top of that, our remote learning circumstances will require additional guidance and one-on-one interaction in order for you to learn deeply and challenge yourself to grow. If that's not convincing enough, research shows that taking advantage of office hours during college can result in higher grades and more compelling letters of recommendation, as well as improve your communication and networking skills. Still not convinced? Attending office hours at least one time **before March 1** is one of our course requirements... so please give it a try!

Student Hours: **Mondays 3:30-4:30pm, Thursdays 1-2pm, or by appointment**. Zoom link is posted on our Canvas website. You can drop in to Student Hours anytime. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO SIGN UP**. If these days/times do not work with your schedule, just email me and we will set up an alternate time to chat via Zoom or by phone.

## EVALUATION & GRADING

		Range	
		A	100% to 95%
		A-	< 95% to 90%
		B+	< 90% to 87%
		B	< 87% to 84%
		B-	< 84% to 80%
		C+	< 80% to 77%
		C	< 77% to 74%
		C-	< 74% to 70%
		D+	< 70% to 67%
		D	< 67% to 64%
		D-	< 64% to 61%
		F	< 61% to 0%
Article Presentation (1)	5%		
Film Moderator (1)	10%		
Puntos de enfoque	10%		
Digital Homework	10%		
Attendance & Participation	10%		
<i>(includes attendance, participation, preparation)</i>			
Film Reviews (2)	20%		
Final Project	35%		
<i>(includes research question, annotated bibliography, storyboard, curatorial statement, and video essay)</i>			

## REQUIRED COLLEGE-WIDE INFORMATION

### Statement about Recording of Classes

Consistent with applicable federal and state law, this course may be video/audio recorded as an accommodation only with permission from the Office of Accessibility Services.

### Student Attendance at Class and Excused Absence Policy

<https://catalog.holycross.edu/requirements-policies/academic-policies/#coursepolicies>

### Academic Integrity

<https://catalog.holycross.edu/requirements-policies/academic-policies/#academicintegrity>

All education is a cooperative enterprise between faculty and students. This cooperation requires trust and mutual respect, which are only possible in an environment governed by the principles of academic integrity. As an institution devoted to teaching, learning, and intellectual inquiry, Holy Cross expects all members of the College community to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any violation of academic integrity undermines the student-faculty relationship, thereby wounding the whole community. The principal violations of academic integrity are plagiarism, cheating, and collusion.

Work prepared for this class should be written in Spanish and without the aid of external translation tools (other than a dictionary). Your work should be your own and should be prepared specifically for this class. Whenever you make use of outside sources for language, **ideas** (including web sites, books, etc.) or as part of your video-essay (film clips, music, interviews), you must acknowledge them in formal citations, following the MLA bibliographic guidelines. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic offense. First-time plagiarists earn a zero on the assignment, a letter in their college file, and two semesters of academic probation. If you ever have questions about what needs to be cited and what does not, please ask me.

### Office of Accessibility Services

<https://www.holycross.edu/health-wellness-and-access/office-accessibility-services>

The Office of Accessibility Services (formerly named Disability Services) encourages the “development of the whole person” by helping students identify and appreciate their unique characteristics and request appropriate accommodations when necessary. Students should submit all accommodation requests to the Office of Accessibility Services. Students requesting accommodations should review the guidance provided by the Office of Accessibility Services regarding the requirements for documentation.

### Office of Academic Services and Learning Resources

<https://www.holycross.edu/support-and-resources/academic-services-and-learning-resources>

The Office of Academic Services and Learning Resources helps each Holy Cross student take the next step toward academic success. Whether you’re a first-year student looking for a tutoring workshop, a sophomore Honors student looking for advice on choosing a major, a junior athlete seeking to improve time management skills to become a stronger leader, or a senior trying to balance your current courses with planning for life after Holy Cross, the office has something to offer you.