

CLS 114/SS 173G Film and the Chicano Latino Community

Winter Quarter 2013—Monday 1-3:00 SSL 228

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Course Description

The course is not intended to be a study of film per se, rather to use film as a resource for the study of ethnic Latino community. The course centers on the use of film, primarily documentaries, for class discussion and writing projects. By gleaning information and insight from films and by critically examining and analyzing the content and political perspectives of the films (and filmmakers), combined with selected readings and class discussions, students will be better informed regarding the current and past political, economic and social issues facing the Latino community. Filmmaking and historical studies related to the Chicano Latino community in large measure originated with the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and since then has changed curriculum in higher education. This course is an offshoot of that political era.

Although serious analysis of the Latino community by filmmakers has only a forty year history, there is an abundance of material that can be incorporated into a course. Given that film provides the medium for much of current social analysis it is indeed fitting that it be utilized as a tool for university instruction. Be aware that a number of themes appear throughout the course presentations such as: the U.S. as an empire/imperialist power; U.S.-Mexico economic relations; migration in its various forms; transnational relations by the immigrant community; gender and labor; political organization, labor unions and their activities.

Note that the themes center on U.S. economic relations with Mexico, and includes migration, incorporation into the working class, labor and political activism related to class.

Course Requirements

---Weekly attendance and participation in class discussions; study groups of five to six students will be organized to facilitate discussions.

---Midterm: A discussion paper five to 10 pages in length on a theme based on the films, slides, readings and discussions due on the fifth week of class.

---Final: A discussion paper of from ten to fifteen pages based on the films, slides, readings and discussions due on the scheduled date of the final exam.

NOTE: Students are encouraged to select a theme or themes emerging in the films, gather together readings, etc, and begin preparing for midterm and final discussion paper as soon as possible.

Grades will be based on contribution to class discussion (10%), the mid-term discussion paper (40%) and final discussion paper (50%)

January 7

Introduction

La Ciudad-The City

The film by David Riker tells four stories about recent Latino immigrants to New York City: a group of day-laborers working for a day labor contractor who scavenge for bricks; two teenagers from the same hometown who meet and fall in love; a homeless father who tries to enroll his daughter in school; and a garment worker who seeks justice in the sweatshops. Originally released in 1998, the documentary has gathered numerous awards.

Readings:

“WHY THE MEXICAN RURAL SECTOR CAN’T TAKE IT ANY MORE!” Victor Quintana, Frente Democratico de Chihuahua , Universidad Nacional Autonoma, Ciudad Juarez

“Private Prison Companies Profit Off Laws that Define Immigrants as Criminals,” Laura Carlsen, *Programa de las Americas*, October 12, 2012. <http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/8566>

January 14

Harvest of Empire: The Untold Story of Latinos in America

The documentary directed by Peter Getzels & Eduardo López and produced by Wendy Thompson-Marquez & Eduardo López is based on a book written by Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: The History of Latinos in America*. The work delves into the central role played by the U.S. in creating the migratory flows from Latin America. Among the themes covered are the military interventions as well as the economic policies implemented by the US in Latin America

and the widespread social consequences. One major consequence is the century of migration from Mexico, Central America and beyond.

Readings:

Gilbert G. Gonzalez, "Mexican Migration, 1876-1930," in Mark Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond the Border: The History of U.S.-Mexico Migration*, Oxford University Press (1910)

"“FREE TRADE” AND IMMIGRATION: A primer," Prepared by Raul Fernandez for the Hemispheric Social Alliance (Alianza Social Continental) (1/26/08)

"The Economics, Politics and Culture of U. S. Imperialism", Edited by Gilbert Gonzalez, A compilation of nationalistic quotes from the first decade of 2012 and the late 19th and the early 20th century that address the U.S. as an imperialist nation

January 21

Los Mineros

Here is the story of Mexican American miners and their struggle to change the course of Arizona mining history. In a saga that spans nearly half a century, this program recounts the rise and fall of segregated copper company towns like Clifton-Morenci. Life within the Mexican American community is seen through the eyes of the miners and their families. Produced and directed by Hector Galan.

Readings:

"The Integration of Mexican Workers into the U.S. Economy," Gilbert Gonzalez and Raul Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History*.

January 28

Salt of the Earth

"Salt of the Earth, based on a 1951 zinc miner's strike that took place in Silver City, N.M., was made in 1953 at the height of the McCarthy era. The film was denounced as subversive and subsequently blacklisted because it was sponsored by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (which had been expelled from the CIO in 1950 for alleged Communist-dominated leadership) and was made by filmmakers who figured as 'unfriendly' witnesses before the House Un-American Activities Commission. Ironically, because it also deals with the struggle of women, specifically the miners' wives, for recognition, dignity and equality, the film

is a focus of renewed interest 22 years later. *Salt of the Earth* impressively counterpoints the strike itself and the relationship between a striking Mexican-American miner and his wife.

[Juan] Chacon helps organize the strike which demands that Mexican-Americans be given the same safety standards that the mining company provides for Anglo workers, but at home he refuses to end discrimination and change the status quo. Miss [Rosaura] Revueltas, pregnant with her third child, is traditionally passive and at first reluctant either to take part in the strike or to assert her rights for equality at home. But she changes and when the men are forced to end their picketing by a Taft-Hartley Act injunction the women take their place in the picket line and she joins them. The women, indeed, come out looking stronger than the men, some marching with babes in their arms, resisting tear gas and making jail so unendurable for the sheriff (deliciously played by Will Geer) that they are released.

Salt of the Earth is also a love story about the young couple divided by conflicting attitudes, traditions and roles, but under crisis finding the common cause. It is the wife who speaks for survival. 'You want to go down fighting,' she tells her husband. 'I don't want to go down fighting. I want to win.'

Michael Wilson's script is a masterful blend of passion, poignancy and restraint. The cast is comprised of five professional actors; the rest are the actual miners and their wives. All perform exceedingly well. Miss Revueltas is stunning. Her portrayal is unforgettable. The late Herbert J. Biberman directed with conviction and excellence. *Salt of the Earth*, 25 years after the ugly controversies of its birth, remains a taut and moving achievement and a milestone of American political expression."— Linda Gross, *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1976.

February 4

Factory Farms

The film tells the unique story of California agriculture, a highly capitalized, sophisticated industry with substandard wage rates that keep its workers in dire poverty and destitution. The film documents 1959 labor conditions for farm workers and reviews the history of union organizing in California agriculture. The role played by braceros in controlling the domestic labor force is examined in detail. The film directed by Harvey Richards was produced by the United Packinghouse Workers Union.

The Land Is Rich

The short film directed by Harvey Richards documents the United Farm Workers struggle to organize California farm workers. It includes their march to Sacramento from Delano in the spring of 1966. The film contrasts the economic strength of California agribusiness with the

migrant workers' poverty shown in bread lines, living conditions and the impact of extensive exposure to agricultural chemicals. This film was used by the United Farm Workers Union.

Note on Harvey Richards, the filmmaker and photographer.

“Harvey Wilson Richards began using a camera in the 1950s when he was in his mid-forties. He became a photographer after years of working as a machinist in the San Francisco shipyards, and as a merchant seaman sailing the Pacific, Atlantic and Mediterranean seas. Before moving to San Francisco in 1940, Richards also worked as a union organizer in Philadelphia and Boston....

Throughout the 1960s, it was a common sight at local demonstrations of any size to see Richards standing atop his station wagon or van, two still cameras around his neck, looking through a tripod mounted motion picture camera.

During his most active years as a photographer, from 1958 to 1978, Richards produced twenty-two films on many subjects including farm labor, the civil rights movement locally and in the southern U.S., and the peace and anti-war movements” [Quoted from the Estuary Press website]

Readings:

“California's Fields Ablaze” by Paul Buhle, Review of *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* by Frank Bardacke, Verso: London and New York 2011, *New Left Review* 75, May-June 2012

February 11

Harvest of Loneliness: The Bracero Program

Harvest of Loneliness features the men speaking of their experiences as braceros and addresses what to expect from a new temporary contract worker program. Harvest also centers the voices of wives and families who were left behind as an untold number of villages were virtually emptied of men. Villages were forced to adjust as they supplied workers for the largest US agricultural corporations. As the villages emptied of men who left to be contracted (successfully or not), wives and families, not knowing if or when they would return nor where they were going to work, were deeply distressed. Family separation became an ongoing periodic experience for many villages, and for many the separation became permanent. Many speak of wives/mothers crying at night, hiding their loneliness and sadness from their children. Over the 22 years of the Bracero Program the economy and living standards of the villages remained virtually unchanged. Today, in the face of a huge increase in undocumented immigration, the Obama Administration is prepared to launch a new temporary contract labor program and import workers from Mexico. We need to review the Bracero Program to understand what any “guest worker program” entails.

Lastly, compare the newsreel versions and *Why Braceros?* to *Harvest of Loneliness*. What are the distinctive messages in each of the versions?

Readings:

“Recruiting, Processing and Transporting Bracero Labor to the United States,” from Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor? Mexican Labor Migration to the United States*, Paradigm Publishers, 2007.

Ana Rosas, “Breaking the Silence: Mexican Children and Women’s Confrontation of Bracero Family Separation,” *Gender and History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2011

February 18

Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, Part 3. “Taking Back The Schools”

"Taking Back the Schools," produced by Susan Racho and edited by Crager Couger is the best of the four part documentary series. The film covers the Los Angeles high school blow outs of 1968 thoroughly and with passion. Part 3 is also likely to be the most interesting to students because they can witness young people their own age forcefully agitating for change. It is also striking because the catalysts for the walk outs—high drop-out rate, crumbling schools, IQ testing, lack of Mexican American teachers—still resonate today. This segment is visually interesting as well because the filmmakers made a conscious effort to interview actual participants (which they do in all the segments). Here they actually go back and forth between a photo or video of a participant from the 1960s to that same person being interviewed today, and it is insightful to see how that individual changed in the intervening thirty years.

Readings:

“The Ideology and Practice of Empire,” from G.G. Gonzalez and R. Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations and Migration*, New York: Routledge, 2004.

“South by Southwest: Mexican Americans and Segregated Schooling, 1900-1950” Vicki L. Ruiz Reprinted from the *OAH Magazine of History* 15 (Winter 2001), Organization of American Historians

February 25

The Guestworkers

The film by Cynthia Hill and Charles Thompson documents the story of Mexican farm workers who enter the United States legally as part of the H-2A guest worker program, and looks at the issues surrounding the program. The story focuses on a 66-year-old man who has worked on North Carolina farms for forty years, both legally and illegally, and on his employer, who is dependent upon foreign laborers brought to the US via H2A to sustain his farm. Of special interest is the working conditions, living quarters while in the U.S. and the consequences on the quality of living standards at home in Mexico.

Readings:

Cindy Hahamovitch, “Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective”, *Labor History*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2003

David Bacon, “The Border—Dividing Line or Common Ground?”, *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 18, 2005.

March 4

The Harvest-La Cosecha

The film by U. Roberto Romano examines the problem of child migrant farm labor in the United States and notes that at least 400,000 children work in the fields across the US. Three children are followed who travel with their parents from Texas to Michigan to Florida, working in the fields and apple orchards. The film earned the Outstanding Filmmaker Award, San Antonio Film Festival, 2011 and placed on the Official Selection, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival, 2011

Readings:

“S.F. schools struggle with more homeless kids”, Jill Tucker, *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 2011

“Summer program gives farmworkers' children a taste of college. The program at the University of La Verne provides counseling and English and math courses to teenage children of migrant workers who have been in the U.S. less than three years.” Stephen Caesar, *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2012

“In the Coachella Valley, hope withers on the vine: Picking grapes in the Coachella Valley is still dirty and dangerous. In the region where the United Farm Workers' first table grape contract was signed, the pay is less than it was 40 years ago.” Mike Anton, *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 2009

March 11

“Bush Wants Comprehensive Immigration Bill: The First Order of Business is to Secure the Border”, MSNBC News, April 9, 2007

Crossing the Line at the Border

In partnership with the [Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute](#), Need to Know investigates whether U.S. border agents have been using excessive force in an effort to curb illegal immigration. The PBS documentary, first shown in April 2012, examines the killing of an unarmed Mexican man crossing the border at San Diego. Border Patrol officials maintained that the unfortunate killing was justified. Although no one has been charged two years after the killing, a number of witnesses have come forward with photographs and videos which verified that the person who died was handcuffed and was neither violent nor a danger to the Patrolmen. In two years sixteen border crossers have been killed at the border by BP officers.

Detained

In 1957 U.S. Immigration Control and Enforcement conducted a raid on a manufacturing plant in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Over 200 workers, primarily immigrants and many undocumented were impacted by the sudden raid. The documentary presents the experiences of the women and men who experienced the raid, some who were jailed for a time, through their voices. Many were deported, others were allowed free and the agony of families torn apart is central to the story. Produced by Michelle Fuentes and Directed by Jenny Alexander.

Readings:

“Vaya Con Mom, After their mother was deported to Mexico, the Brito children embarked on a two-year journey trying to navigate life in the United States on their own” Marisa Gruber, *OC Weekly*, Thursday, Oct 20 2011

“Border Enforcement at Family Sites: Social Reproductive Implications for Mexican and Central American Labor in the United States,” Olga Sanmiguel-Valderrama, *Latin American Studies* (in press)

“Young and Alone, Facing Court and Deportation,” Julia Preston, *New York Times*, August 25, 2012

“Immigration Change to Ease Family Separations,” Julia Preston, *New York Times*, January 2, 2013.