

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

Winter Quarter 2012--Wednesdays 4:00-5:50 SSL 290

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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 Mexican 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, lectures 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 thirty-five 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; transnational relations by the immigrant community; labor; gender and labor; political organization, labor unions and their activities.

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

Course Requirements

---Weekly attendance and participation in class discussions.

---Weekly written papers of 1 to 3 pages on the films, readings, class discussion, lectures.

---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: The discussion papers should be based on, but not limited to, the course films, assigned readings, outside readings and class discussions. Students are encouraged to select a theme or themes emerging in the films, gather together readings, etc, and begin preparing a project as soon as possible.

Grades will be based on weekly assignments (20%), the mid-term discussion paper (30%) and final discussion paper (50%)

Assigned Books:

Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (Penguin Books, 2000)

Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy* (Ballantine Books, 1971, reprinted)

Course Presentations and Readings

(Subject to change)

January 11

Presentation on U. S. Mexico Relations and Chicano Latino History

The instructor will present slides taken from photographs illustrating the economic domination of the U. S. within Mexico at the turn of the century. This domination continued throughout the twentieth century and is evident today by way of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The argument contends that Chicano history evolves in relation to this imperial economic relationship.

Readings:

“Empire and the Origins of Twentieth Century Migration from Mexico to the United States,” from Gilbert G. Gonzalez and Raul Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History* (emailed)

Part 1 from Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*.

Part 1 and 2 from Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy*.

January 18

Film: 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 copper company towns like Clifton-Morenci. Life within the Mexican American community is seen through the eyes of the miners and their families.

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). (emailed)

"The Integration of Mexican Workers into the U.S. Economy," from *A Century of Chicano History*. (emailed)

January 25

Film: 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 organise 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 in the *Los Angeles Times* on July 2, 1976.

Readings:

Part II from Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*.

February 1

Theme: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964 [Part One]

Hidden within the historical accounts of minorities, workers and immigrants in American society is the story of the millions of Mexico's men and women who experienced the temporary contract worker program known as the Bracero Program. Established in 1942 to replace an alleged wartime labor shortage, research reveals that several million men, the largest state managed migration in history, were imported from 1942 to 1964 to work as temporary contract workers primarily in agriculture. Meanwhile, wives and families were left to cope for unknown periods of time on their own. Several nationally broadcast newsreels and an infomercial created by a California growers association present a positive take on the Program. Indeed, the U.S. government which managed the program and the growers who employed braceros were prepared to make the case that the program was ideal, that it benefitted the U.S. and Mexico equally. The images which you will see are the public relations versions of the Bracero Program. Next week we will view the documentary *Harvest of Loneliness: The Bracero Program*.

Short Films/Power Point

Wetbacks. Hundreds of Alien Workers Rounded Up, Universal Newsreel (Ca. 1950)

Labor Supply. U.S. Eases Entry of Mexican Farm Hands, Universal Newsreel (Ca. 1951)

US Tightens Patrol on the Mexican Border, Paramount Newsreels (ca. 1951)

Agricultural Life, a publication of citrus growers in Southern California, power point presentation (1957)

NBC Evening News with Chet Huntley (Nov.19, 1963)

Evening News in Stockton, CA (Nov. 19, 1963)

Why Braceros? Produced by the California Council of Growers (1959)

Readings:

Henry Anderson, "Social Justice and Foreign Contract Labor; A Statement of Opinion and Conscience" (1958) (to be emailed)

"Hiding Modern Slavery," by Gilbert Gonzalez in Paul Lopez, "*Que Fronteras?*" *The Bracero Program and the Legacy of Migration* (2010) (emailed)

February 8

Theme: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964 [Part Two]

Film: 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. (emailed)

Ana Rosas, "Breaking the Silence: Mexican Children and Women's Confrontation of Bracero Family Separation," *Gender and History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2011 (emailed)

February 15 (Mid Terms Due)

Film: Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, Part 3. "Taking Back The Schools"

"Taking Back the Schools," is the best of the four parts. It 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, 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:

"Confronting the Inequality Juggernaut: A Q&A with Jonathan Kozol," Anthony Cody, July 18, 2011 (emailed)

"The Ideology and Practice of Empire," from G.G. Gonzalez and R. Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History*, New York: Routledge, 2004. (emailed)

Parts III, IV and V from Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy*.

February 22

Film: The Global Assembly Line

A documentary filmed in electronics and garment factories, homes, and communities in Mexico's northern border. The film follows with detail and intimacy the lives of working women and men in the 'free trade zones' of two developing countries, Mexico and the Philippines. In the assembly lines workers are working for American companies to produce goods for the American market, goods consumed in the US. In a sense, the American economy has extended itself into Mexico to produce goods that would otherwise cost more to produce in the US. The greatest benefit for the U.S. companies is that the cost of production is lowered although the price of the good remains the same. For Mexico, the workers are paid minimal wages guaranteeing them a life in poverty. Meanwhile, they are not allowed the 'luxury' of a union or the right to strike for better pay or working conditions. All union organization must be under company and governmental supervision.

Readings:

David Bacon, "Hunger on the Border: An Interview with Julia Quinones" January 25, 2006 (emailed)

Nidya Sarria, "Femicides of Juarez: Violence Against Women," *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, August 3, 2009 (emailed)

February 29

Film: Los Trabajadores/The Workers

"We build the buildings, we do the hardest jobs, and still they don't want us." These are the words of Juan Ignacio Gutierrez, a Nicaraguan profiled in the film *Los Trabajadores/The Workers*, winner of the International Documentary Association David Wolper Student Award. *Los Trabajadores* tells the story of immigrant day laborers, placing their struggles and contributions in the context of the economic development of Austin, Texas. Through the stories of Juan from Nicaragua and Ramon from Mexico, and through the controversy surrounding the relocation of a day labor site from downtown to a residential neighborhood, the film examines the misconceptions and contradictions inherent in America's dependence on and discrimination against immigrant labor. As Juan says, 'they say Austin is growing, but thanks to whom?'"

Readings:

Terry McCarthy, "Stalking Day Laborers," *Time*, November 28, 2005 (emailed)

March 7

Film: Letters from the Other Side

"Heather Courtney's film interweaves video letters carried across the U.S.-Mexico border by the film's director with the personal stories of women left behind in post-NAFTA Mexico. The video letters provides a way for these women to communicate with both loved ones and strangers on the other side of the border, and illustrates an unjust truth - as an American Courtney can carry these video letters back and forth across a border that these women are not legally allowed to cross. Focusing on a side of the immigration story rarely told by the media or touched upon in the national debate, the film offers a fresh perspective, painting a complex portrait of families torn apart by economics, communities dying at the hands of globalization, and governments incapable or unwilling to do anything about it."

Readings:

Victor Quintana, "Why the Countryside Can't Take it Anymore," from Gilbert G. Gonzalez, et al, Eds., *Labor Versus Empire: Gender, Race and Migration*, New York: Routledge, 2004. (emailed)

David Bacon, "How US Policies Fueled Mexico's Great Migration," *The Nation*, January 4, 2012.

March 14

Film: Lost in Detention

The Obama administration has released new figures showing U.S. deportations of immigrants reached a record high. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement says it deported nearly 400,000 people in fiscal year 2011, the highest total in the agency's eight years. The data was released the same day a coalition of Latino and immigrant rights groups held a National Day of Action to protest Obama's immigration policies. The protesters called for an immediate end to the "Secure Communities" program, which requires local police to forward fingerprints of every person they arrest to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. More than one million immigrants have been deported during Obama's tenure, even as efforts to reform immigration policy have languished. A new PBS Frontline documentary, "Lost in Detention," investigates the immigration program under Obama. Maria Hinojosa, the award-winning broadcast journalist, led the investigation.

Readings:

Part III, "Harvest (La Cosecha)" from Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire*

Marisa Gerber, "Vaya con Mom," *OC Weekly*, October 20, 2011 (emailed)

Richard Marosi, "Trying to Get Back the Only Life He Knew," *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 2012

And Conclusion