

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

Winter Quarter 2014—Wednesday 3:00-5:50, SH 134

Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Instructor; email at gggonzal@uci.edu

Office: 4123 SSPA, EXT: 4-5273 Office Hours: By Appointment

Pablo V. Torres, TA, email at pvictori@uci.edu; SST 611, Hours: Thursday 2-4 pm

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 an 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, labor importation, incorporation into the working class and 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%)

Required Book:

Mark Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera: The History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

January 8

Introduction

Professor Gonzalez will briefly discuss the goals he has outlined for the course. His presentation will be followed by four brief films that present distinct explanations for Mexican migration and depict the ensuing political and social consequences.

Camino and Why People are Leaving Mexico

A brief 9 minute film examines the role of NAFTA, the social consequences for the peasantry of Mexico and the ensuing upsurge of migration to the US. The film offers an entirely distinct interpretation for migration, one that places the U.S. at the center of migration for the past thirty years.

“Bush Touts Guest Worker Program Proposal. MSNBC Video April 9, 2007

President Bush says that a comprehensive immigration bill is needed and the first element is making sure that the border is secure. The President is speaking at the Arizona border with Mexico.

Border Patrol: Protecting the Homeland

A brief Border Patrol commercial seeks to attract recruits to join the BP. The scenes illustrate the various tasks and responsibilities taken by the Patrol as they “Protect the Homeland.”

Los Deportados en Tijuana (The Deported in Tijuana)

What happens to the deported when they are sent across the border? The deported often have no other remedy than to become homeless. They then construct shanty towns; this documentary tells of the deported setting up camps on the Tijuana river front dividing the two nations.

Readings:

Victor Quintana, “Why the Mexican Rural Sector Can’t Take it Any More!”, Frente Democrático de Chihuahua, Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Ciudad Juárez.

Linda Carlson, “Nafta is Starving Mexico,” *Americas Program*, October 10, 2011.

Alex M. Zaragoza, “Cultural Representation and Mexican Immigration,” in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera*.

January 15

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

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

Brian Bennett, “Young Migrants Kept at Lockups for Adults,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2013.

Laura Carlsen, “Private Prison Companies Profit Off Laws that Define Immigrants as Criminals,” *Programa de las Americas*, October 12, 2012.

<http://www.cipamericas.org/archives/8566>

January 22

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:

Helen B. Marrow, "Race and the New Southern Migration, 1986 to the Present," in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera*.

January 29

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

Stacy Finz, "Farmers scrambling to find harvest labor," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27, 2012.

Sarah Grieco, "How Many Homeless Kids are Really in California?", NBC7.com, San Diego, December 17, 2011

Alena Samuels, "Children of Immigrants hit an Economic Ceiling," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 2011.

February 5

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:

Eithne Luibheid and Robert Buffington, “Gender, Sexuality and Mexican Migration” in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera*.

David Bacon, “Stories from the Borderlands,” *NACLA*, July/August 2005

February 12

Professor Gonzalez and present a power point discussion on the causes of Mexican migration originating in the late Nineteenth Century into the 20th Century followed by the week’s film.

Los Mineros

Much of the history of the western United States centers on the mining of precious metals, but mine development also involved the exploitation of large work forces. Here is the story of Mexican-American miners and their struggles to shape the course of Arizona history. Spanning half a century, this program recounts the story of copper mining in the Clifton-Morenci region of Arizona, and how it dominated the lives of all the inhabitants Here is the story of Mexican American miners and their union struggle to change the course of Arizona mining history. In a saga that spans nearly half a century, this documentary 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.

Reading:

Gilbert Gonzalez, “Mexican Labor Migration, 1876-1924,” in Mark Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera: A History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*,” Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fernando Saul Alanis Enciso, "The Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States and Mexican Nationalism, 1929-1940," in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera*."

February 19

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.

Reading:

“The Integration of Mexican Workers into the U.S. Economy,” in G.G. Gonzalez and R. Fernandez, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations and Migration*, Routledge, 2004.

February 26

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]

Reading: Paul Buhle, “California Fields Ablaze,” *New Left Review* 75, May-June 2012

March 5

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:

Gilbert Gonzalez, "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

Michael Snodgrass, "The Bracero Program, 1942-1964," in Overmeyer-Velazquez, *Beyond La Frontera*.

March 12

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

Nidya Sarria, "Femicides of Juarez: Violence Against Women in Mexico," *Council On Hemispheric Affairs*, August 3, 2009.