CONTEMPORARY SPANISH FILM AND LITERATURE.
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (1936-1995)
Academic Year 2016-2017

COURSE OVERVIEW

Title:
Prerequisites:
Number of Credits: 5 - 50 hours
Type of Course:
Semester:
Language: English
Instructor: Dr. Carles Murillo
Email:

Course Description

The course aims to initiate students to the history and culture of Twentieth Century Spain through the filmic and literary perspective conferred by Spanish filmmakers and novelists to the socio-historical events that took place from 1936 to the end of the 1990's. At the same time, the course presents an overview of contemporary Spanish Cinema and Literature from the 1950's until the turn of the century. These two aspects together will offer students the possibility of exploring how cinema and literature can be a lucrative method of learning until what extend Franco's dictatorship, the most influential phase of contemporary Spanish history, still reverberates across a wide range of cultural, social, and political issues in Spanish society today. Therefore, while this course invites to experience and interpret films and novels produced under the Franco's censorship and during the democracy, it offers an astonishing space to value Franco's overall impact on Spanish society, both during the totalitarian regime (1936 to 1975) and since the restoration of constitutional monarchy and transition to democracy in 1978.

A previous knowledge of film and literary theory is not required. However, the course will provide students with concepts in order to enhance their familiarity with notions of film and literary theory envisaged to develop analytical and critical skills. The movies and novels will all be available in its original version, with subtitles and translation in English.

Learning Outcomes

- Value cinema and literature as artistic expressions capable of providing critical insights into Spanish political history.
- Applying critical thinking skills within two reflective assignments and one essay by using movies and novels as a means to critically analyze and interpret Spanish history and culture since 1936.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, cultural and economic consequences of Franco's dictatorship in contemporary Spanish culture.
Assessment Criteria

Class Participation: 20%
This grade will be calculated to reflect your participation in class discussions, your capacity to introduce ideas and thoughts dealing with the required movies and texts, your ability to use language effectively, and your analytical skills in intellectual, constructive argumentation. When determining your class participation grade, traditional criteria such as material preparation, completed reading before class, and collaborative group work are all evaluated. But it is the active, meaningful and informed verbal and written contribution that you make that is most important to your overall participation grade. Indeed, willingness to share views in classroom discussions and the insightfulness of your comments and questions about assigned readings will all be taken into account when evaluating your participation. Additionally, it is important to demonstrate a positive and supportive attitude to the instructor and your classmates, and give full attention to class activities (i.e., cell-phones off, no computers allowed, no eating or drinking).

Course Assignments 40%
You will reflect upon relevant aspects of the course in two assignments. Your grade in this assignment will reflect your ability to demonstrate awareness of the ongoing historical, social, political, cultural and ideological consequences of films and book explored. Each assignment should be around 1000-1500 words in length and the instructor will provide you with additional guidelines for the topics. In terms of the 'how' you need to write the assignment: it must include an introduction (in which you clearly state your thesis or main point), a body of description, analysis and example from the movies or novels in support of your thesis, and a conclusion that pulls and links your ideas together. Relate your answer to class readings, lectures and class discussions. Be precise when talking about historical moments, events, etc. You MUST include at least two bibliographical sources from the bibliography provided by the instructor, which is the only one you can use. If you have found pertinent secondary bibliography, please discuss it with your instructor before using it. No internet sources are allowed (Wikipedia, etc).

Final essay: 40%
This research paper must focus on one of the topics discussed in class during the semester and which you want to study in more depth. It must be at least 2000 words long (8-10 pages, Palatino 12, normal 2.54 cm margins, double spaced) and include in-text citations and a bibliography of the sources used (COMPULSORY THREE BOOKS FROM THE SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY). You will submit an abstract copy to the instructor (5%), which will count towards the overall assessment of your work. In this paper you should show in detail a concrete aspect of the course as well as your critical insight and both research and writing skills. This essay must be a comparative exercise and for these reason you must use THREE movies and discuss a topic which HAS NOT been explored in previous assignments. In terms of the 'how' you need to write the essay: it must include an introduction (in which you clearly state your thesis or main point), a body of description, analysis and example from the movies or novels in support of your thesis, and a conclusion that pulls and links your ideas together. Relate your answer to class readings, lectures and class discussions. Be precise when talking
about historical moments, events, etc. Avoid plot description and reflect upon how the movies and novels are made in order to produce your argument.

Sessions

Session 1
Course Introduction.
This session will be based on a lecture in which the instructor will present a general overview of the historical reality framing the movies and novels of this course. At the same time, this lecture offers pertinent information related with the filmmakers and novelists in relation with their historical time.

Reading:

UNIT 1.
The aftermath of the war and the Experience of the war itself.
The Spanish Civil War plays a crucial role in this filmic, literary and historical course. The works of Victor Erice *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) and Carlos Saura *The Hunt* (1966) offer a crucial insight on this conflict as itself as well as how it affected Spanish once the Dictatorship started.

Session 2
Post-War Trauma.
*El espíritu de la colmena* (1973) directed by Victor Erice draws its attention to the psychological trauma suffered by the Spanish population right after the war. This movie is set in the year 1940 and presents a set of symbolic elements by which students can learn not only the fact of the post-war period, but also gain an experience of it.

Readings:

Session 3
This session examines the metaphor of hunting as it appears in Saura’s movie in order to comprehend the concept of evil inherent in whatsoever war. At the same time, *La caza* is the first movie that indirectly tackles the Civil War from the perspective of the winners. Students will be able to experience the inner meaning of the war as well as how the winners did deal with it during the Dictatorship.

Readings:
Faulkner, Sally: ‘Ageing and Coming of Age in Carlos Saura’s *La caza*’. *MLN*, Volume 120, Number 2, March 2005 (Hispanic Issue), pp. 457-484.
UNIT 2.

Postwar Spain. Values of society and poverty.
This unit constitutes the center of the course as Luís García Berlanga’s Bienvenido Mr. Marshall (1953) and Juan Antonio Bardem’s La muerte de un ciclista (1955) and Luís Buñuel’s Viridiana (1961) tackle the most important pillars of Franco’s dictatorship.

Session 4

Unmasking the Regime.
Franco used Folklore and Propaganda in order to shadow the inefficiency and his ruthless methods to maintain power when the rest of the world entered into the Cold War. Luís García Berlanga, Bienvenido Mr. Marshall (1953) signifies one of most satiric views on the cultural depiction of Spain Franco wanted to project to the rest of the world, specially to the United States of America, who actively participated in the economic recovery of Spain when President Eisenhower did pact with Franco.

Readings:

Session 5

Guilt and Social values in Franco’s Spain.
Juan Antonio Bardem, La muerte de un ciclista (1955) is one of the first manifestations of film noir in Spain. Bardem, presents a love triangle by which the director sheds light on the double moral of the ruling classes of the dictatorship. At the same time, this movie will allow students to comprehend why Spain is a wounded nation as it opens a space of criticism to the concept of guilt and memory.

Readings:

Session 6
Franco's morals revisited by Buñuel's surrealism.
Luís Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961) was banned by Franco and the Pope. However, it is considered one of the best movies of all time. In this session students will be invited to experience Buñuel's surrealist aesthetics in order to appreciate the role of religion during the dictatorship and how the director attacks the Church for being the institution that blessed the atrocities committed during and after the Civil War.

Readings:

Session 7
Francoism: Despair and alienation. Catholic Womanhood.
Carmen Laforet, *Nada* (1944). This novel offers a unique opportunity to understand the feeling of oppression and despair suffered by Spanish women. Carmen Laforet, a writer from Barcelona, confers to her novel with a sense of entrapment and vacuity that will be analyzed in order to capture the meaning of the concept of Catholic Womanhood.

Readings:

UNIT 3
Democratic Spain and Dictatorship's cultural aftermath.
Francisco Franco died on the 20th of November of 1975 and from that date onwards Spain started its process of transition from a harsh dictatorship to the consolidation of its democracy. This unit invites to learn this political process from its cultural and sociological consequences, through the novels of Manuel Vázquez Montalbán *The Southern Seas* (1979) and Ray Loriga's *My Brother's Gun* (1994) as well as the films of Pedro Almodóvar, *What have I done to deserve this!* (1984) and Bigas Luna *Jamón Jamón* (1992).

Session 8
This session has a double target. On the one hand, it proposes a reactionary look at the transitional process by reading one of the most acclaimed Catalan writers once the censors were gone; Montalbán explores the situation of Barcelona as a paradigm of the Spanish society sense of loss and freedom during the first years of the democratic transition. On the other, this session will discuss *La Movida*, the name under which is known the cultural and artistic boom experienced in Spain during the 1980's, through the looking glass of Pedro Almodovar, the most iconic figure of this momentum. His movie will question the presence of Franco's shadow over Spain culture by tackling the role of women in society.

Readings:

Vernon, Kathleen M. ‘Melodrama against itself: Pedro Almodovar’s What have I done to deserve this?’ Film Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 28-40.

*Second Assignment*

**Session 9**


This session steps on the year 1992, when the Olympic Games took place in Barcelona. This is a crucial year to understand the evolution of Spanish society and culture as it signifies the stabilization of its democracy. Bigas Luna’s movie explores the life of what is considered to be the first sons of the democracy, placing its attention on the value and meaning of long established Spanish myths, such as machismo or bullfighting.

**Readings:**


**Session 10**


How did the younger writers of the 1990's react when Spain finally accomplished its transition if the society in which they were living has generally been considered as being manipulated by the international market? This session investigates the fiction of Ray Loriga in order to understand and learn from a Spanish fictional product that has forgotten the past and proposes questions related with the question of identity in the era of the so-called late capitalism.

Henseler, Christine, *Spanish Fiction in Digital Age. Generation X Remixed* pp. 1.27

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or, the Cultural logic of Late Capitalism*, pp. 1-55.


**Texts**

**Films**


**Novels**

6

**Bibliography**

Faulkner, Sally: 'Ageing and Coming of Age in Carlos Saura's *La caza*'. *MLN*, Volume 120, Number 2, March 2005 (Hispanic Issue), pp. 457-484.
Henseler, Christine, *Spanish Fiction in Digital Age. Generation X Remixed*
Linz, Juan J. 'Church and State in Spain from the Civil War to the Return of Democracy'. *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No. 3, Religion and Politics (Summer, 1991), pp. 159-178.


Vernon, Kathleen M. ‘Melodrama against itself: Pedro Almodovar’s What have I done to deserve this?’ Film Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 28-40.