Department of Latin American and Latino Studies

Latin@s in Film
LAC 319/LTS 319
Summer 2026
Prof. Magdalena Sagardía

Class times: ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

Office Hours: Virtual and in-person office hours – By appointment

Office location: Carman Hall, Room 288

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Credits: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore how Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine ethnicities have been constructed in films historically and to the present. In this interdisciplinary course, students will explore the representation of Latinos in film over time. We will also explore the participation of Latinxs in film production as performers, producers, support personnel and other kinds of laborers. We will view films and write critically about them. We will develop an understanding of the role of visual media and the arts in constructing, reinforcing and defying stereotypes. We will understand the role of film in specific moments in history to engage in civic discourse, influence opinions and foster social participation.

Asynchronous course

This is an asynchronous course, which means that all assigned work will be completed online and with no in-person contact with the professor. However, you can always contact me by email and we can also meet by Zoom.

Outcomes:

1: To gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view. Students will view films, read film criticism as well as interdisciplinary social science and literature related to each film.

2: To evaluate evidence and arguments critically and be able to appraise their usefulness. Students will critically analyze each film and develop scholarly critiques of them. They will then develop their own argument drawing on multiple films which they will prove drawing on reasoned analysis and social theory.

3: To produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions. Students will develop written arguments in a series of scaffolded assignments utilizing a Latin@

studies framework, which is interdisciplinary, requires knowledge of the histories of Latin@s in the US, and draws upon history and social science approaches.

4: To demonstrate familiarity with methods of artistic criticism and historico-cultural analysis analyses of works of art. Students will develop as writers by rehearsing then demonstrating proficiency in writing in the genre of film criticism, a subset of artistic criticism that deploys historico-cultural analysis and context.

5: To understand the role of art in society and public policy or public concerns in which aesthetics play a role. Students will become proficient in the history of Latin@ representation in films and the ways that representation intersects with and relates to public policy and concerns.

6: To produce an essay or written piece of research or other creative work, in "scaffolded" stages, demonstrating both an ability to express complex ideas for an educated audience as well as the ability to evaluate and utilize a variety of information of an aesthetic nature. Students will write a final paper that draws on a series of scaffolded assignments that develop different skill sets necessary to the kind of writing required: summaries, scholarly critiques, synthetic analysis and finally a critical analysis that draws on an understanding of historical and social context.

Course Materials:
Required for Purchase: None. All readings will be available online.
You will not be required to purchase a textbook for this course. All of the readings are on Brightspace and the films are available for free at CUNY Libraries or online. Some films may require a small rental fee (usually about $2.99). To find out about availability online, search the Lehman Library first, or do a Google search: Watch <name of film> online and you will see a list of viewing options. Since physical copies of some of the films are available for free from the college library, I suggest you view them on campus if your schedule permits. Please note that to watch films in the library, you must adhere to the schedule and opening hours of the Leonard Lief Library at Lehman College. Since all of you will be watching the same films, I encourage you to coordinate to watch in pairs or small groups.

It is your responsibility to watch each of these films to complete the assignments in a timely fashion.

See below for complete schedule of readings and assignments. If there is a problem with any of the readings (such as missing pages, broken links, etc.) it is your responsibility to notify me. If I have not been notified, I will assume the readings were available and hold you responsible for having read them.

Brightspace and the library can be accessed through the Lehman website at www.lehman.cuny.edu. If you have any questions about your Lehman email address or your password, or if you have any problems accessing the site please call the IT helpdesk at 718-960-1111.

Schedule:

Follow Instructions in each module on Brightspace.

Look for *What's Due When?* in each module

Week 1 (July 13-July 19) – Due July 19

- Introduction: Latinos in Hollywood and What is a stereotype?
  Berg, Charles Ramírez. *Latino images in film: Stereotypes, subversion, and resistance*. University of Texas Press, 2002. Introduction and Chapter 1.

- *Salt of the Earth* (1954)
  Boisson, S. "Salt of the Earth: The movie Hollywood could not stop." *American History Magazine* (2002).

- *West Side Story* (1964) (2021)
  Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. "Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses." *Social Text* 18.2 (2000): 83-106.

  https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/12/09/puerto-rican-filmmaker-west-side-story-its-hard-think-that-this-is-still-what-were-talking-about/

- *El Norte* (1983)
  Brakel, Arthur. "" El Norte", Deracination and Circularity: An Epic Gone Awry." *Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* 28.2 (2004): 166-175.

- *Sleep Dealer* (2005)
  Rueda, Carolina. "The everlasting Sleep Dealer: Alex Rivera's visionary mind and fantasy nightmares in present times." *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas* 14.3 (2017): 333-348

Week 2 (July 20 – July 26) – Due July 26

- *Nueba Yol* (1992)
  García-Crespo, Naida. "Caribbean transnational films and national culture, or how Puerto Rican or Dominican can you be in" Nueba Yol"?." *Centro Journal* 28.1 (2016).

- *My Crazy Life* (1994)
  Roman, Ediberto. "Who exactly is living la vida loca: The legal and political consequences of Latino-Latina ethnic and racial stereotypes in film and other media." *J. Gender Race & Just.* 4 (2000): 37.

- *My Family* (1995)
  Valdez, Avelardo, and Jeffrey A. Halley. "Teaching Mexican American experiences through film: Private issues and public problems." *Teaching Sociology* (1999): 286-295.

- *Selena* (1997)
  Paredez, Deborah. "Remembering Selena, Re-membering Latinidad." *Theatre Journal* 54.1 (2002): 63-83.

  Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. "Jennifer's butt." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 22.2 (1997): 181-195.

  Beltran, Mary. "The Hollywood Latina Body as Site of Social Sturggle: Media Constructions of Stardom and Jennifer Lopez's" Cross-over Butt"." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 19.1 (2002): 71-86.

Week 3 (July 27 – August 2) – Due August 2

- *Gun Hill Road* (2011)
  Simpson, Katherine. "Media images of the urban landscape: The South Bronx in film." *Centro Journal* 14.2 (2002): 99-113.

- *Raising Victor Vargas* (2002)
  García-Crespo, Naida. "Caribbean transnational films and national culture, or how Puerto Rican or Dominican can you be in" Nueba Yol"?." *Centro Journal* 28.1 (2016).

- *Real Women Have Curves* (2003)
  Viladrich, Anahí, et al. "“Do real women have curves?” Paradoxical body images among Latinas in New York City." *Journal of immigrant and minority health* 11.1 (2009): 20-28.

- *La Guagua Aérea* (1993)
  Barreneche, Gabriel Ignacio, Jane Lombardi, and Héctor Ramos-Flores. "A New Destination for" The Flying Bus"?: The Implications of Orlando-Rican Migration for Luis Rafael Sánchez's" La guagua aérea"." *Hispania* 95.1 (2012): 14-23.

- *Debí Tirar Más Fotos* (2025)
  Gonzalez, Skye L. "A Love Letter to Puerto Rico: Reggaetón as a Platform for Anti-Colonial Protest and Bad Bunny's Advocacy for Indigenous Sovereignty." (2025).

Week 4 – Final Reflection (August 3-August 6) Due August 6

**You may watch the films in any order you choose. When you watch a film, complete the corresponding reading and Discussion Board Post.*

Grading Policy:

- Discussion board posts 50%
  (Minimum of 350 words each, 12 are required. Complete more for extra credit)
- Film Reflections - 50%
  (Minimum of 350 words each, 12 are required. Complete more for extra credit)

EXTRA CREDIT
You may complete extra discussion board posts for extra credit. Also, from time to time, I will let you know of events and activities happening in New York City that are relevant to the course. Attendance at one of them, followed by submission of a one-page reflection, can result in extra credit,

Academic integrity:
All work in this course is entirely individual. While I encourage you to form viewing and study groups, you are graded individually and on the assumption that the work you submit is your own. You may use AI for some course-related tasks and part of our work will be identifying and practicing appropriate and ethical uses of AI. There is no ethical or appropriate use of AI to generate written texts in a research setting. Any use of generative AI to write is prohibited and assignment will not be credited. Any use of AI as a research tool must be cited as per instructions given in the assignment.

Cheating and plagiarism—whether intentional or unintentional—will not be tolerated and the consequences will range from receiving no credit for an assignment or exam to receiving a failing grade in the course, depending on the severity of the act. This is true also of anyone who aids or abets cheating or plagiarism. Citation formats and methods for proper use of primary and secondary source material will be provided in detail on Brightspace. Please review the Lehman policy on academic integrity:
http://www.lehman.edu/lehman/about/policies_pdf/CUNYAcademicIntegrityPolicy.pdf

Communication:
You are expected to be in communication with me about any issues (personal or academic) that may impact your performance in the class and completion of the course requirements. If you do not let me know when you're having trouble completing work, I cannot help you. The longer you wait to talk to me, the less time I have to assist you before the end of the term. You may email, or come to my office hours to discuss questions, problems, suggestions and ideas.

You are responsible for completing all of the work of the class. It is your responsibility to keep track of your work: deadlines, assignments, and more.

Difficult issues/Triggers
In this course, we discuss topics and watch films that may include content that is upsetting or triggering for some students, including sexual and physical violence and abuse, as well as issues related to politics, immigration, discrimination, racialization, etc., that can be controversial and personal for many students. If you would like to know what sorts of sensitive issues might be part of each film, I recommend an app and website called Common Sense Media.

Our learning environment, including all online spaces, is a safe space, meaning: no topics are off limits, but whatever we discuss, we will do so with sensitivity and respect for each other and in acknowledgement that our own views/experiences are not the same as those of others. Any personal information that is revealed stays among those here. If we disagree, we do so respectfully. I encourage anyone who is distressed, or would like support in general to visit the Lehman College Counseling Center Old Gym Building, Room 114, Tel: 718-960-8761, E-mail: counseling.center@lehman.cuny.edu.

Etiquette
Every time you write is an opportunity to exercise your writing skills. Please be conscientious about employing these skills in all communications, discussion board postings and assignments: sloppy or grammatically incorrect writing reflects poorly on you. When writing to me, you must do the following:

1. Write only from your Lehman College email account (or the "email" function in Brightspace).
2. Put the name of the course in the subject heading and a brief description of what the message is about.
3. Take this opportunity to write in the formal register as you will need to do whenever you communicate with any professor, employer, etc. Address me as "Dear Professor," or "Dear Prof. Sagardia and write in complete sentences without slang or text-message-style abbreviations. Be sure to sign off your email with your first and last name.
4. Messages that do not conform to these requirements may not be answered or may end up in my spam folder.

URGENT NEEDS
It is difficult to study if you are hungry, unhoused, or unsafe. A recent study found that many CUNY students regularly experience food insecurity and other crises, and since the pandemic these numbers have risen. It is expensive to live and study in New York! There is no shame in taking advantage of resources available to you and your family. There are a lot of resources available to you at Lehman College if you are experiencing any kind of food security or other issues. Here are important resources available to you on campus:
• Basic Needs Center: https://www.lehman.edu/student-affairs/basic-needs-center/

• Food Pantry: https://www.lehman.edu/student-affairs/basic-needs-center/food-bank/

Accommodating Disabilities
Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, phone number, 718-960-8441.

The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and the Science Learning Center (SLC)
The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and the Science Learning Center (SLC) are two of the tutoring centers on campus. The ACE provides appointment-based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing and academic skills workshops. The SLC provides drop-in tutoring for natural science courses. To obtain more information about the ACE and the SLC, please visit their website at http://www.lehman.edu/issp, or please call ACE at 718-960-8175, and the SLC at 718-960-7707.