Politics 269
Latin American Politics: Past and Present through Film
Fall 2013 Second Module
Thursdays, 7:00-10:00pm in King 325
Half Course (2SS credits), CD

Prof. Kristina Mani
Office: Rice 205; Office phone: 775-8657
E-Mail: kmani@oberlin.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00pm and Thursdays 1:00-2:30pm
Students can sign up for Mani’s office hours at http://tinyurl.com/34ywc3f
Spanish language discussion leader: Victor Sergent victor.sargent@gmail.com

The end of authoritarian regimes in the 1980s marked the beginning of a vibrant new wave in Latin American filmmaking. Exploring the political and social conditions of both the dictatorship past and democratic present, this realist cinema presents powerful critiques of social justice, political power, and economic conditions in the region. We will screen and discuss 6 films during the course. Five are feature films from the New Wave cinema of Argentina and Chile: from Chile, Machuca and Post Mortem, and from Argentina El secreto de sus ojos, Mundo Grua, and Bolivia. In addition, we will screen a documentary from Chile, El edificio de los Chilenos. We will screen one film per week, and students will discuss the film in either a Spanish or English language discussion group following the screening.

The course encourages students to make interdisciplinary connections in their study of Latin America. In particular, it is intended to build linkages between the social scientific and the humanities-based study of Latin America. Through discussions and through written assignments, it brings cultural and artistic components systematically into dialogue with social science themes, particularly those explored in the following courses: HISP 318 Survey of Latin American Literature II, HIST 293 Dirty Wars and Democracy, and POLT 210 Latin American Politics. It is therefore offered primarily to students concurrently enrolled in these courses (enrollment is by instructor consent).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Regular attendance at film screenings and active participation in discussion.
   General rules for class participation:
   • Respect others’ rights to hold opinions
   • Listen carefully to what others say
   • It’s fine to disagree with others, but do so with courtesy; don’t interrupt
   • Support your statements!
   • Allow everyone the chance to talk
2) **Weekly Readings:** For some weeks, there will be a related text posted in Blackboard that you should read before class, unless otherwise noted below.

3) **Weekly Discussion Board Postings:** Students should post commentaries in the Blackboard discussion page each week, within 3 days of viewing a film. Think of this as a forum for you to bring ideas you might want to develop further in your Reflection Paper, or as a continuation of in-class discussions, or simply as responses to each other’s posts – the idea is to flesh out your interpretations of the films and their connections to your other coursework on the region. Length of posts is up to you, but as a guide 1-2 paragraphs is appropriate.

4) **Final Reflection Paper:** This paper is intended as a “looking back” on the topics of the course. Your paper should focus on a central theme: justice, memory, reconciliation, or another “anchor” of your choice. It should address this theme in relation to two or more of the films we screened, and draw from at least one of the course readings. Papers should be emailed to the instructor by 12pm on Saturday, Dec. 21st (final exam time for the course). Format: 4-5 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins.

CREDIT/GRADING MODE. This is a half course counting toward 200-level comparative politics credit in the Politics major (credit also for LATS major). Grading mode is Pass/No Pass, with work in the A+ to C– range meriting a Pass.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS. All academic work for the course must meet the standards of the Honor Code. Students must complete the assigned work in order to be eligible for a passing grade in the course. Those with a documented disability needing academic accommodations should speak with Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services (440-775-8464) and with me as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

**FILM SCHEDULE**

**October 31:** **Machuca** (Chile / Dir: Andrés Wood, 2005)
Relates the end of the Allende years through the eyes of children from two different social classes.


**November 7:** **Post Mortem** (Chile / Dir: Pablo Larraín, 2010)
A disturbing character study of an “ordinary” mortician’s assistant, set as the 9/11/73 coup unfolds. Second film in Larraín’s trilogy that began with *Tony Manero* and ended with *No.*
November 14: **El Secreto de sus Ojos** (Argentina / Dir: Juan José Campanella, 2009)
Set in present day and recalling key moments of the protagonists’ lives during the *Proceso* dictatorship, the film evokes the issue of individual and group responsibility in punishing crimes of the past.

November 21: **Mundo Grua** (Argentina / Dir: Pablo Trapero, 1999)
Set in Argentina’s working class world of the neoliberal 1990s, this story captures struggle of a middle-aged crane operator as he loses marriage and job, but not dignity and integrity.


December 5: **Bolivia** (Argentina / Dir: Israel Adrián Caetano, 2001)
Captures the experience of Bolivian immigrants in Argentina in the 1990s.

December 12: **El Edificio de los Chilenos** (Chile / Dir: Macarena Aguiló, 2010).
Towards the end of the seventies, the militants of MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria) exiled in Europe decided to return to Chile in order to support the fight against the military dictatorship. Many had children and couldn't return with them – leading them to create a community center, Project Home (i.e., Proyecto Hogares) that gathered 60 children left to the care of others who assumed the responsibility of their upbringing in the years of their parents’ absence. Director Macarena Aguiló explores this past to understand why her parents sent her abroad to be raised by strangers while they risked their lives back in Chile fighting the Pinochet regime.


*Reflection Paper due Dec 21.*