

Sighting Gender and Sexuality in Latin American Film

Course Code: SMLM 011

Synopsis

Major films and landmark documentaries have projected the workings of gender and sexuality in Latin American political history in novel and complex ways. Moving away from such clichés as Latin American *machismo*, this course explores other perspectives on gender and sexuality opened by Latin American Cinema and also by renowned directors in the international circuit, Roman Polanski being a case in point. The focus will be on Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. The course initially analyzes codings of masculinity and power in representations of popular revolutionaries, notably Che Guevara, and of State authoritarianism, emblemized by General Pinochet; it also surveys representations of the encounter of the revolutionary and the libidinal in the lives of earlier twentieth century feminine icons Frida Kahlo and Olga Benario. The course then features important unfoldings of feminine agency in the context of dictatorships later in the century in major documentaries and award-winning commercial films: the politicization of motherhood and widowhood in response to violations of human rights; women engaging in armed struggle; women traumatized by rape during torture confronting its perpetrators. It also discusses film representations of homosexual persecution by the dictatorship in Argentina and the representation of sexual excess on the Brazilian screen as challenges to the repressive State.

Outline

1. **Latin American revolutionaries: power and masculine codings on the screen**
Che Guevara in *Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, 2004) or *Che* (Steven Soderbergh, 2008)
2. **Revolutionary women: the encounter of the political and the libidinal**
Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera in *Frida Kahlo* (Julie Taymor, 2002)
Olga Benario and L. Carlos Prestes in *Olga* (Jayme Monjardim, 2004)
3. **Masculinity and the authoritarian State: General Pinochet on the screen**
It is Raining over Santiago (Helvio Soto, 1976)
4. **Woman confronting torturers and the trauma of rape in Chile**
Death and the Maiden (Polanski, 1995)
5. **The politicization of widowhood and the recasting of symbols of womanhood during dictatorships in Latin America**
Landmark documentaries: *Twenty Years Later* (Eduardo Coutinho, 1964-1984) and *Threads of Hope* (Andrew Jackson, 2000)
6. **Political readings of womanhood and sexual excess**
Dona Flor and her Two Husbands (Bruno Barreto, 1976)
7. **US funding: depoliticizing and de-sexualizing the Brazilian revolutionary woman**
Four Days in September (Bruno Barreto, 1997)

8. **Violation of human rights and the politicization of motherhood and grandmotherhood during Argentina's Dirty War**
Official History (Luis Puenzo, 1985) and the landmark documentaries *The Voice of the Shaws* (Marcelo Céspedes and Carmen Guarini, 1992), *Spoils of War* (David Blaustein, 2000) and *Nietos* (Benjamin Ávila, 2004)
9. **The repression of homosexuality during the dictatorship in Argentina**
The Kiss of the Spider Woman (Hector Babenco, 1985)
10. **Political readings of the disavowal of sexuality in Argentina**
We Don't Want to Talk About It (María Luisa Bemberg, 1994)
11. **Sexuality as guilt in post-dictatorship Argentina**
The Holy Girl (Lucrecia Martel, 2004)

Basic Bibliography

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Corradi, Juan E. Patricia Weiss Fagen, y Manuel Antonio Garreton, eds. *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992.

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Nixon, Susan. 'Exhibiting masculinity'. In Hall, Stuart (ed.). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. 291-336

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Vieira, Else R. P. *Post-2001 Argentina: The Boom of the Documentary as Political Action and Reconstruction*. Interviews and Introductory study by Else R. P. Vieira. Translation, Annotation and Glossary by Guillermo Olivera. CCC Press (forthcoming, text will be available to students).

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