

Introduction to Hispanic Film
MWF 1:00-1:50 | KAUKU 038

INSTRUCTOR: Brian Cope, Ph.D.

E-MAIL: bcope@wooster.edu

COURSE WEBSITE: <https://hispanicfilm.voices.wooster.edu>

OFFICE HOURS: MWF: 10-11 (or by appointment)

OFFICE: 303 Kauke Hall

Course Description: In this course, we will focus on three predominant tendencies in contemporary Spanish and Latin American cinema: 1) Neo Realism; 2) Historical Film; 3) and Postmodernism. We will explore the theoretical bases and cinematic precedents of each of these three genres as a prelude to viewing a selection of uniquely representative films. General topics include: film as a means to explore pressing social issues; film as a poetic means to explore modernity, collective identity, and the self; film as a vehicle of social and political change; and finally, the art and craft of filmmaking. The course fulfills the requirement for study in cultural diversity and counts toward the majors in Comparative Literature and Spanish as well as the minor in Film Studies.

Course Objectives: 1) to gain experience in analyzing film, specifically in seeing and articulating relationships between content and form; 2) to gain an appreciation of film as an artistic medium with the power to promote awareness, challenge predominant worldviews, and stimulate critical reflection; 3) to learn about Hispanic and Latino cultures and histories through film; 4) to understand cinema's inherent strengths and limitations for representing culture and history; 5) to gain an understanding of Hispanic and Latino cultures against the broader context of globalization as well as to develop an understanding of some of the various types of marginalization that occur in Spain, the US, and Latin America as a result of global processes.

Context and Forewarning: Spanish language cinema encompasses twenty-one countries where Spanish is the official language and the United States. As a cinema that reaches across numerous national borders and geographical boundaries, it explores social and cultural realities as varied as the regions and cultures to which it belongs. Despite the potential enormity of its viewing public, however, Spanish language cinema enjoys only a small share of its domestic markets, which like everywhere else are saturated with Hollywood blockbusters and controlled by laws that favor Hollywood corporations and distributors. Naturally the popularity of a Spanish language film increases dramatically when it receives recognition from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences or one of the many eminent international film festivals (i.e. Cannes). Although receiving such recognition lends a certain mystique to the film and heightens its appeal to both domestic and international audiences, many films of high artistic merit often receive no such recognition and are hardly seen in their respective countries of origin. In this course, we will see films that have received abundant recognition as well as films that are largely obscure. Spanish language cinema, because of its non-mainstream status, tends to occupy an aesthetic niche that belongs more appropriately to art-house cinema, which demonstrates a stronger tendency to challenge its viewers in unconventional, unanticipated, and sometimes uncomfortable ways. The films that we will study in this course deliberately push boundaries and require critical distance and intellectual maturity. Many contain scenes of graphic violence, sex and nudity that may trigger strong emotional responses. Since this is fundamentally a film studies course, all students are required to view all of the assigned films. **NOTE:** Any student who objects to viewing films with graphic content should drop the course today.

Expectations and Required Work: All assignments must be completed before class on the dates indicated on the day-by-day. Generally, preparing for class entails the following: 1) actively viewing the assigned film and taking notes; 2) completing a written analysis of the assigned film (1-2 pages); 3) carefully reading any assigned articles; 4) reading or skimming any links to the film or the director found on the day-by-day. As a discussion-based course, it is expected that you come to class ready to share your ideas on the films and assigned readings. It is also expected that you bring copies of the assigned readings to class along with your notes. **NOTE:** Each class session will require a minimum of 3-4 hours of careful preparation.

Required Films:

1. *Ladri di biciclette (The Bicycle Thief)*, Vittorio de Sica (Italy, 1948)
2. *Los olvidados (The Young and the Damned)*, Luis Buñuel (Mexico, 1950)
3. *Cidade de Deus (City of God)*, Fernando de Meirelles and Kátia Lund (Brazil: 2002)
4. *B-Happy*, Gonzalo Justiniano (Chile, 2003)
5. *El violín (The Violin)*, Francisco Vargas (Mexico, 2005)
6. *A Better Life*, Chris Weitz (USA, 2011)
7. *Los lunes al sol (Mondays in the Sun)*, Fernando León de Aranoa (Spain, 2002)
8. *El espíritu de la colmena (The Spirit of the Beehive)*, Víctor Erice (Spain, 1973)
9. *Central do Brasil (Central Station)*, Walter Salles (Brazil, 1998)
10. *Machuca*, Andrés Wood (Chile, 2004)
11. *My Family*, Gregory Nava (USA, 1995)
12. *La historia oficial (The Official Story)*, Luis Puenzo (Argentina, 1985)
13. *Como agua para chocolate (Like Water for Chocolate)*, Alfonso Arau (México, 1992)
14. *La ley de Herodes (Herodes’s Law)*, Luis Estrada (Mexico, 1999)
15. *Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)*, Luis Buñuel (France, 1929)
16. *Viridiana*, Luis Buñuel (Spain, 1961)
17. *El Calentito*, Chus Gutiérrez (Spain, 2005)
18. *Todo sobre mi madre (All About My Mother)*, Pedro Almodóvar (Spain, 1999)
19. *Amores perros (Love’s a Bitch)*, Alejandro González Iñárritu (Mexico, 2000)
20. *Matando cabos (Killing Cabos)*, Alejandro Lozano (Mexico, 2004)
21. *Hable con ella (Talk to Her)*, Pedro Almodóvar (Spain, 2002)
22. *La teta asustada*, Claudia Llosa (Perú, 2009)
23. *También la lluvia (Even the Rain)*, Iciar Bollain (Spain and Bolivia, 2010)
24. *El laberinto del Fauno (Pan’s Labyrinth)*, Guillermo del Toro (Spain, 2006)
25. *Los amantes del Círculo Polar (Lovers of the Arctic Circle)*, Julio Medem (Spain, 1998)
26. *Blancanieves (Snow White)*, Pablo Berger (Spain, 2012)
27. *Magical Girl*, Carlos Vermut (Spain, 2014)

Required Readings (provided):

1. Ratner, Megan. “Italian Neo-Realism.” *Green Cine* [www.greencine.com/static/primers/neorealism1.jsp]
2. Zavattini, Cesare. “Some Ideas on the Cinema.” *Vittorio de Sica: Contemporary Perspectives*. 2000.
3. Buñuel, Luis. “Cinema, Instrument of Poetry.” *European Cinema Reader*. 2002.
4. Benítez, Tomás. “East L.A.: Past and Present.” *American Family: Journey of Dreams*. PBS.
5. Crow, John A. “The Political and Social Background of the Second Republic.” *Spain: The Root and the Flower*. 1963.
6. Rosenstone, Robert A. “To See the Past.” *History on Film / Film on History*. 2006
7. Goldman, Francisco. “Children of the Dirty War.” *The New Yorker* (March 19, 2012)

NOTE: *These are the principal required readings; additional readings will also be assigned.*

Grade Distribution (standard 10 point scale with + and -; below 60 is a failing grade):

Peer-to-Peer Engagement and Class Participation.....	10%
Timed Writings (film analyses).....	15%
Midterm Exams.....	40%
Research Presentation.....	10%
Research Paper.....	25%

Film Screenings: Since watching movies on a large screen and with others enhances the viewing experience, I strongly encourage you to attend any scheduled film screenings (dates and times TBA) and to engage your peers in impromptu conversations afterwards. While I also recognize that it is not always feasible to attend the scheduled film viewings, I would stress that I expect you to exercise resourcefulness in fulfilling your responsibility to view each of the assigned films on time. All of the films are on reserve in the library, and at least some of the films can be seen for free on *Youtube* and *Vimeo*. Also, almost all of the films can be ordered or streamed for a nominal fee via *Netflix* or *Amazon*. **NOTE:** Failure to watch the assigned films prior to the scheduled viewing dates will result in a reduction in your class-participation grade and a zero on the corresponding homework assignment, unless excused due to a documented illness or an extraordinary

situation reported to the Dean of Students Office.

Attendance: Regular attendance and participation are essential for success in this and any course taken at The College of Wooster. Therefore, daily class attendance is required. Absences due only to a documented illness or injury, or a situation or circumstance reported to the Office of the Dean of Students, may be excused. Please keep in mind that absences due to co-curricular activities are not automatically excused. I will assess the individual merit of each request in accordance with the College's policy regarding conflicts with academic responsibilities (see below). If you anticipate missing more than two classes due to involvement in an official co-curricular activity, I encourage you to make an appointment to see me during office hours to discuss your situation. Please understand that I am extremely reluctant to excuse more than any two such absences, as success in this course is predicated on your fullest possible commitment. **NOTE:** Accumulating nine unexcused absences will result in an automatic **F** in the course (no exceptions). If absent, it is your responsibility to contact one of your classmates in order to ascertain whether the assignment was altered in any way and what was covered in class. Also, habitual tardiness or habitual coming and going during class (i.e. leaving to go to the bathroom) will result in a reduction of your class participation grade. It is imperative for your success and for the success of the course that you be present and focused for the entire class period. As a discussion based course, your peers need you to be present—in mind and body—everyday.

Peer-to-Peer Engagement and Class Participation: Your success in this course depends on your daily preparation and active participation. In class, you will discuss the assigned readings/viewings with your peers in a structured and guided manner. In order for learning to take place, it is crucial that all parties involved have a genuine interest in the subject matter and do the assigned work consistently and conscientiously. As a way to prepare for the discussions, you will be asked to complete a timed writing at home, which will be collected at the beginning of class, graded, and returned to you at the next class meeting. In class, I will assign you to small groups (which will continually change in order for you to hear the perspectives of all of your classmates) and give you specific questions or topics to address, with group leaders being designated to facilitate the conversation. To that end, professional classroom etiquette is expected on your part at all times. Any type of behavior that is disruptive, distracting, counterproductive, or disrespectful to your peers will lead to penalties in your class participation grade. Such conduct includes arriving late, leaving the room during class, using your laptop computer or any other electronic device without the permission of the professor, speaking English, eating, or exhibiting a withdrawn or passive demeanor. While you discuss the assigned texts, I will circulate between the groups, joining in or listening briefly. Above all, I expect you to show initiative and to contribute substantively to the class discussions on a regular basis. You can expect to find a relaxed, informal atmosphere in the classroom, and the general understanding will be that each of us bears equal responsibility for bringing forth a stimulating and lively discussion. As the professor, my role is to facilitate discussions, lend my support to you as you acquire the ability to recognize, read and interpret assigned readings and visual texts, and set the intellectual parameters within which you will engage in your own inquiries and reach your own unique understanding of the assigned material. In other words, the purpose of the course is not for me to share with you everything that I know about each assigned topic, but rather to help you make your own discoveries in a controlled, systematic and relevant way. You will earn points for your contributions, presence, and engagement with peers for every class period. **Note 1:** The only way to earn points for peer-to-peer engagement and class participation is by attending class. Because the work done in class cannot be recuperated, there is simply no way to make up points missed for days that you do not attend class, even if your absence is excused. **Note 2:** Your engagement with peers and class participation will be assessed on a twenty-point scale for each of the 40 class sessions (for a total of 800 possible points) and your lowest assessment will be dropped at the end of the semester. This means that you will receive one free absence or will be forgiven for one uncharacteristically off day. A written evaluation of your peer-to-peer engagement and class participation will be provided to you at least once during the semester. You may also inquire about your ongoing class performance during office hours. The following explains how the grades for peer-to-peer engagement and class participation are assigned:

20-19 points (A): Student participates voluntarily and enthusiastically and is noticeably well prepared; student remains focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are informed, rational, relevant and to the point; student displays a sound knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student arrives on time, remains focused throughout the duration of the class and does not take any questionable intermissions (i.e. bathroom breaks).

18-17-16 points (A- to B-): Student participates less voluntarily than what is expected but is noticeably well prepared; student remains focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are informed, rational, relevant and to the point; student displays at the very least an emerging knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have failed to arrive on time or failed to remain present or focused throughout the duration of the class.

15-14 points (C to C-): Student participates reluctantly or not at all, and is not noticeably well prepared; student remains mostly focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are less than well informed, rational, relevant and/or to the point; student displays less than a minimal or emerging knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have arrived to class more than ten minutes late or might not have remained focused or present throughout much of the class period.

13-12 points (D): Student participates reluctantly or not at all, and is not noticeably well prepared; student might not remain focused on the task at hand and/or might not work constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are not well informed, rational, relevant and/or to the point; student displays little to no knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have arrived to class significantly more than ten minutes late or might not have remained focused or present throughout much of the class period.

11-0 points (F): Student does not participate, and is not noticeably well prepared; student might not remain focused on the task at hand and/or might not work constructively with peers; student might have been present for only a short duration of the class.

Timed Writings (film analyses): For each of the assigned films, you will write a short analysis (1-2 pages, double-spaced) that examines the formal aspects of the film that stand out to you. You can focus your analysis on the film's use of **sound** (music, noise, silence, language, narrator, sound effects), **editing** (continuity of sequences, rhythm, montage, order and duration of shots), **cinematography** (camera focus, camera angles, camera movements, framing, color), **mise-en-scène** (selection and arrangement of objects in the scene, composition and design of the set, lighting, appearance and movement of people, acting, gesture, costume), or **narration** (story, point of view, dramatic appeal, motivation of the protagonists, closure). In addition to analyzing some of the formal aspects of the film, you should also attempt to answer the following question: What do you discern to be the purpose of the film and how, exactly, does the film make its case? The purpose of these short papers is to gain practice analyzing films and expressing your ideas about them in an organized fashion and using precise film terminology. It is highly recommended that you spend time reviewing the terms that appear on the film terminology link on the course website during the first few weeks of the semester and periodically thereafter in order to strengthen your ability to accurately and articulately convey your understanding of the assigned films. While the assignments are open-ended and intended to give you an opportunity to explore and express your ideas, the final product should demonstrate argumentative and analytical cohesion. These assignments are due at the beginning of class and will not be accepted late. **NOTE:** 1) Assignments will not be accepted by email; 2) unstapled pages will receive an automatic grade reduction that will get more severe as this tendency persists; 3) the heading of each paper should be single-spaced and be limited to student's name, date, and title of the film; 4) the minimum length for these assignments is one page of *content*; 5) papers can be written in English or Spanish. Each homework assignment will be graded on a 10-point scale, and the following explains the meaning of each of the possible outcomes:

9-10 points (A): Student has completed a thoughtful, well-written essay of at least one paged in length (double-spaced) that demonstrates close familiarity with the assigned viewing and discusses, in a meaningful way, at least one of the film's formal aspects (sound, editing, cinematography, mise-en-scène, narration). Also, the student briefly discusses his or her expectations going into the film and the film's purpose or message. Finally, the essay demonstrates cohesion and contains a clear beginning, middle and end, uses correct grammar and punctuation, is original and insightful, and serves as an excellent point of departure for the forthcoming class discussion.

8 points (B): Student's essay shows a few modest deficiencies in the above areas, but overall is good.

7 points (C): Student's essay shows numerous modest deficiencies in the above areas, but overall is acceptable.

6 points (D): Student's essay shows a few grave deficiencies in the above areas and is unacceptable.

0-5 points (F): Student's essay shows grave deficiencies in the above areas and is unacceptable.

Midterm Exams: Three exams covering the assigned films and readings will be given during the semester. Preparing effectively for these exams entails: 1) careful and systematic viewing of the assigned films (which means taking notes and in some cases seeing the films more than once); 2) careful study of all reading assignments; 3) careful completion of the timed writings; 4) active participation in the class discussions. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that upon completing each reading assignment you write a detailed summary of it or write down bullet points of the most important information. Finally, it is also recommended that: 1) you challenge yourself to think about how the readings apply to the films viewed in the course to date; 2) you try to think of ways that the films connect to one another; 3) you take diligent notes during class and pay close attention to your peers' remarks on the films and readings; 4) you make time to review all of your notes periodically.

Research Presentation: Each student will give a 5-minute presentation during the last two weeks of class on a pre-arranged research topic that focuses on a particular aspect of contemporary Hispanic film. This presentation will serve as a prelude to the final research paper. On that note, one purpose of the presentation is to share your work *in progress* with your peers and solicit their constructive feedback before bringing the project to full fruition. With that said, the project should be far enough along so as to be able to lend itself to a substantive and intellectually engaging presentation. You are encouraged to follow your own intellectual curiosity and exercise your own intellectual creativity in devising the scope of this project. You are also strongly encouraged to venture beyond the list of films assigned for the class and develop a topic around a film or films not discussed in class, with the stipulation that the chosen film or films must be in Spanish or Portuguese. Please plan to discuss your research topic with me briefly during office hours prior to **April 1**. The criteria used to evaluate the class presentations can be found on the course website.

Final Paper: Each student will write a research paper (8 pages) that is **due on Wednesday, May 9, at 4pm**. The topic of your paper will be the same as that of your presentation, and the expectation is that you will have significantly added to it in length, depth and complexity. All papers must follow MLA guidelines with regard to documentation and formatting. All papers must have at least three relevant and peer-reviewed academic bibliographical sources that come from the library databases. It is highly recommended that you use the MLA International Bibliography to search for articles on your chosen topic and Ohio Link to search for related books. *Wikipedia* or any other encyclopedia can and should be consulted during the developmental stages of the project. However, you will not receive credit for encyclopedia entries in your bibliography. The criteria used to grade the final paper is the same as that used to grade the analytical essays and can be found on the course website.

Extra Credit: Students who are in good standing in the class and have no unexcused absences may complete an extra credit assignment worth up to two percentage points of the final grade. Any student interested in doing extra credit must first propose a project to me that contains a writing component and obvious applicability to the class. All projects must be given pre-approval by me in order to qualify to receive extra credit upon their completion. No proposals may be submitted after April 8.

Guidelines for All Written Assignments: All essays must be word-processed, double-spaced, and stapled. The required font is Times 12 with standard margins of 1 inch (left and right) and 1 inch (top & bottom). All papers must follow the MLA rules of citation and formatting. Papers that do not adhere to MLA guidelines may incur a significant loss of points or may not be read at all. For each essay, the quality of writing will be evaluated along with the quality of interpretation, analysis and insight. **Whenever possible please print your papers using both sides of the page.*

Professor Cope's Teaching Philosophy: My role is to support students in their endeavor to acquire proficiency, fluency, or mastery of the subject matter as well as to challenge them to realize their maximum learning potential. I feel an obligation to hold my students to high (but reasonable) standards, but more than this, I expect them to hold themselves to reasonably high standards. I invest my time in mentoring, tutoring, advising, and coaching any and all of my students who seek me out for these purposes. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think I can be of assistance. I also welcome any student who comes to me in the interest of advocating for him/herself.

A little bit about Professor Cope: I spent eight years completing M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Spanish. My area of research is modern Spain; I wrote my dissertation on the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno; and in my research and scholarship I explore intersections of philosophy and literature/film. As an undergraduate, I majored in Art History and Spanish and I direct-enrolled for one year at the University of Salamanca. I am from Prunedale, California (pop. 17,000), which is located in a predominantly agricultural region along the Central Coast. My maternal grandparents migrated to CA from Nogales, Mexico and spoke Spanish as their first language. My first language is English, and I consider myself to be a lifelong learner of Spanish. I genuinely enjoy helping students learn Spanish, at all levels. My pronouns are he/his/him. I plan to run-walk-crawl the LA marathon this coming March (and I am scared). This is my 13th year at The College of Wooster.

Cheating and Plagiarism: All of the written work that you submit for a grade in this course must be entirely your own. If I suspect that someone else did your work for you, you will be asked to see me during office hours and if in the course of our conversation my suspicion is confirmed, then penalties will be imposed, which may include failure on the assignment and meeting with the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement. Plagiarism, on the other hand, is the copying of a sentence (partial or full) or segment of discourse from another source without giving proper credit to its origins. The college has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. *Indisputable* cases of deliberate plagiarism will receive an automatic **F** on the assignment and will be referred to the Dean for Curriculum and Academic Engagement.

Policy on Acceptance of Late Work: All written assignments are due when specified on the day-by-day. Points will be deducted, as follows, for work received after the established deadlines: ten points for papers turned in **6 hours late or less**, fifteen for papers turned in **6-12 hours late**, twenty for papers turned in **12-24 hours late**, and twenty-five for papers turned in **24-48 hours late**. All papers turned in more than 48 hours late will receive an automatic **F**. Remember, too, that sliding a paper under my door does not mean that it has been received and that late papers can be turned electronically so that the time of submission is documented.

Policy Regarding Conflicts with Academic Responsibilities: The College of Wooster is an academic institution and its fundamental purpose is to stimulate its students to reach the highest standard of intellectual achievement. As an academic institution with this purpose, the College expects students to give the highest priority to their academic responsibilities. When conflicts arise between academic commitments and complementary programs (including athletic, cultural, educational, and volunteer activities), students, faculty, staff, and administrators all share the responsibility of minimizing and resolving them. As a student you have the responsibility to inform the faculty member of potential conflicts as soon as you are aware of them, and to discuss and work with the faculty member to identify alternative ways to fulfill your academic commitments without sacrificing the academic integrity and rigor of the course.

Academic Integrity at The College of Wooster: Members of The College of Wooster community are committed to the high standards of academic integrity and to this end have accepted a Code of Academic Integrity, which can be found at: <https://www.wooster.edu/students/diversity/iss/academic-concerns/integrity/>. As a student at The College of Wooster you are a part of this tradition and are expected to be familiar with the Code, to understand what constitutes academically dishonest behavior, and to avoid such behavior. Confirmed violations of the code will result in appropriate punishment and may constitute grounds for failure in the course. If you have any questions about the code and what it prohibits please contact me or your academic advisor.

IMPORTANT:

- 1) The structure of the course and its governing policies are designed to accomplish the proposed objectives and assure the fair and equal treatment of the students as responsible adults. Your presence in the class is an indication that you understand and agree to the requirements of the class as stipulated in the syllabus.
- 2) Cell phones and any communication devices must be turned off and out of sight at all times. No exceptions. Points will be deducted from your class participation grade whenever I see or hear your cell phone during the semester.
- 3) The Learning Center offers services designed to help students improve their overall academic performance. Sessions are structured to promote principles of effective learning and academic management. Any student on campus may schedule sessions at the Learning Center.
- 4) If you are a student with a documented disability, please register with the Learning Center. The Learning Center is located in APEX and is the office that will assist you in developing a plan to address your academic needs.
- 5) It is expected that students will demonstrate courtesy, respect and professionalism towards their peers at all times, in accordance with the Wooster Ethic. As the professor of the course, I will do and expect the same. In general, a constructive attitude is appreciated by all.