

**Inter-American Studies:
Visual Culture and Performance in the Americas**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This upper-division English majors course introduces students to a range of contemporary visual culture and performance forms in the Americas. Thematic units focus on select examples of performance, digital and visual art, and popular and mass culture, while also familiarizing students with basic terms and concepts associated with performance studies and visual cultural analysis. Among the specific topics that we consider are Mexican *lucha libre* and its interactions with WWE; carnival; diva fan culture; cosplay and the real-life superhero movement; funerary and mourning spectacles; political cabaret, and socially engaged, avant-garde, digital, and performance art. The assigned texts include artists' websites and exhibition catalogs, videos and movies (many available online), and critical essays. Assignments include quizzes, short essays, and a final research project. Two weeks at the end of the semester are reserved for student workshop sessions and presentation of final research projects. In addition to English, this course fulfills requirements for International Studies and Latina/o Studies.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Jennifer A. González, *Pepón Osorio*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013.
- Laura G. Gutiérrez, *Performing Mexicanidad: Vendidas y Cabareteras on the Transnational Stage*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2009.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

In addition to the assigned readings, we will frequently view slides, videos, DVDs, and internet media in class, and I will also ask you to review online media as part of your homework. The movies and videos that appear on the syllabus are on reserve in the UI Main Library, and, almost all of the artists whom we study this term have a significant internet presence. Since you will eventually be selecting a particular artist or performance for your final paper topic, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the websites and YouTube videos of artists and performances discussed in this class. The Hemispheric Institute of Performance Studies at NYU also has a great number of resources available via its video archive (<http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/hidvl>).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Three two- to three-page response essays (10% ea. for a total of 30%). Your response essay should address the assigned reading/viewing for the week in which it is due. In addition to submitting your essays via Dropbox, please bring a personal copy of your essay to class with you. You should be prepared to comment on your response essay during group discussion.

Reading quizzes to be given throughout the semester (seven quizzes; each quiz counts 2.5% for a total of 15%; lowest score is dropped). I will give seven quizzes without prior notice on T or Th throughout the semester in the weeks noted on the syllabus. These brief quizzes assess whether you have done the assigned reading/viewing and also serve as a lead-in to group discussion. There are no quizzes during the first week of class, mid-term exam week, the last two weeks of the semester, and the four weeks in which a reader response is due. Please note that I do not offer make-up quizzes without a written medical excuse.

Midterm exam given in class (20%). This exam will assess the course material covered from weeks 1-8. The exam will consist of identification of key terms, concepts, and passages or scenes from our reading and viewing and short-answer questions. The content and format of the exam will be discussed in class prior to the exam date.

Seven-page final paper; this assignment will be discussed in class. The final two weeks of instruction will be dedicated to work on the final paper. Students meet individually with the professor to discuss their final paper topic during Week 15. Class time during Week 16 is dedicated to small group workshop sessions in which students exchange feedback about draft pages of their final papers.

Participation (15%). The participation grade is based upon your demonstration of having done the assigned course reading; making frequent, productive, and unsolicited contributions in class; demonstrating collegiality toward me and your fellow students; and showing attentiveness in class. Depending on class size and classroom dynamics, I may assign in-class writing exercises or small-group activities, which also fall under the participation requirement. I assign a comprehensive participation grade at the end of the semester; if you would like to inquire about your participation grade at any point during the semester, please see me during office hours.

Attendance. Good attendance will not boost your grade, but poor attendance will hurt it. More than two unexcused absences in a semester will lower your final grade by one-third grade (a plus or minus point). After that, your final grade will continue to drop by one-third grade per each two absences. If you find yourself in a situation that affects your ability to attend class over a period of time (e.g., a hospitalization), please advise me early in the process, so that we can work out an arrangement for you to make up missed coursework.

Screenings. Please note that there are several screenings scheduled on Tuesday evenings throughout the semester. If you are unable to attend a screening due to a schedule conflict, it is your responsibility to view the assigned movie or video before class on Thursday.

S Y L L A B U S

Week 1 Introduction to the course

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Introduction to course and presentation of syllabus

Th

Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, "Acts of Transfer"

Week 2 Scenarios of contact

Quiz week

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Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, "Scenarios of Discovery: Reflections on Performance and Ethnography"

John Terborgh, "Out of Contact," *New York Review of Books* 59.6 (5 April 2012): 48-51.

T Evening SCREENING: *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*. Dir. Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia. Chicago: Video Data Bank, 1993.

VIEW ON YOUR OWN: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman, "The Hottentot Venus."* Dir. Zola Maseko. New York: Icarus Films, 1998.

Th

Discussion of movies in class

Robert Rydell, "Fairs in the Age of Industrialism's Advance," in *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States*. Ed. Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2000. 14-44.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 17-78.

Week 3 The visual cultures of the new world baroque
Essay week

T

Serge Gruzinski, "War," *Images at War: Mexico from Columbus to Blade Runner (1492-2019)*. Trans. Heather MacLean. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. 30-60.

Silvia Spitta, "GuadalupeNation: Disappearing Objects, National Narratives" and "Guadalupe's Wheels: Runaway Image, Undocumented Border Crosser, Miracle Worker," *Misplaced Objects: Migrating Collections and Recollections in Europe and the Americas*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. 96-137.

Th

Review Alma López website: <http://www.almalopez.net>

Laura G. Gutiérrez, "Sexing Guadalupe in Transnational Double Crossings," *Performing Mexicanidad*

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, "Devil in a Rose Bikini: The Second Coming of Our Lady in Santa Fe," *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma López's Irreverent Apparition*. Ed. Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Alma López. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. 212-248.

Alma López, "It's Not about the Santa in My *Fe*, but the Santa Fe in My *Santa*," *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma López's Irreverent Apparition*. Ed. Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Alma López. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. 249-292.

Week 4 From baroque to neobaroque: Pepón Osorio
Quiz week

T

Jennifer A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, 1-59.

Th

Jennifer A. González, *Pepón Osorio*, 60-94.

Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Installation Art and Experience," *Installation Art: A Critical History*. New York: Routledge, 2005. 6-13.

Week 5 Lucha libre
Quiz week

T

Heather Levi, "Of Charros and Jaguars" and "The Wrestling Mask," *The World of Lucha Libre: Secrets, Revelations, and Mexican National Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. 103-176.

T Evening SCREENING: *Tales of Masked Men: A Journey Through Lucha Libre*. Dir. Carlos Avila. Los Angeles: Echo Park Films/PBS, 2012.

Th

Discussion of *Tales of Masked Men* in class

Esther Gabara, "Fighting it Out: Being Naco in the Global Lucha Libre," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 26 (May 2010): 277-300.

Nell Haynes, "Global Cholas: Reworking Tradition and Modernity in Bolivian Lucha Libre," *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 18.3 (2013): 432-446.

Week 6 Performance as immanence
Essay Week

T

Review YouTube clips of Eddie Guerrero, Rey Misterio, Sin Cara, and Alberto del Río in WWE (e.g., WWE Battleground)

VIEW ON YOUR OWN: *Super Amigos*. Dir. Arturo Pérez Torres. Las Américas Film Network, 2007.

Th

Discussion of *Super Amigos* in class

Review real-life superhero websites: <http://rlshorg.wordpress.com/> and <http://www.reallifesuperheroes.com/>

Review Cosplaying While Black Tumblr: <http://cosplayingwhileblack.tumblr.com/>

Review Cospobre website: <http://www.cospobre.com/>

Nicolle Lamerichs, "Stranger than Fiction: Fan Identity in Cosplay," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 7 (2011): [doi:10.3983/twc.2011.0246](https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2011.0246)

Lynne Segal and Peter Osborne, "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler," *Radical Philosophy* 67 (summer 1994): 32-39.

Response essay #2 due in Dropbox

Week 7 Devotion to divas: Selena and surrogation

Quiz week

T

Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, "False Identifications: Minority Populations Mourn Diana"

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Celebrity," *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2009. 271-286.

VIEW ON YOUR OWN: *Selena*. Dir. Gregory Nava, Los Angeles: Warner Brothers, 1997.

Th

Discussion of *Selena* in class

Debra Paredez, "Becoming Selena, Becoming Latina" and "'Como la Flor,'" *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. 126-186.

José Esteban Muñoz, "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position," *Signs* 31.3 (spring 2006): 675-688.

Week 8 Political cabaret: Astrid Hadad

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Laura G. Gutiérrez, "Gender Parody, Political Satire, and Postmodern *Rancheras*," *Performing Mexicanidad*

Roselyn Costantino, "Politics and Culture in a Diva's Diversion: The Body of Astrid Hadad in Performance," *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*. Ed. Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 187-207.

Th

Midterm exam in class

Week 9

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 Diaspora and place-making: Ana Mendieta and Tania Bruguera
Quiz week

T

Joseph Roach, "One Blood," *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. 179-237.

Charles Merewether, "From Inscription to Distribution: An Essay on Expenditure in the Work of Ana Mendieta," *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*. Ed. Coco Fusco. New York: Routledge, 2000. 134-151.

Jane Blocker, "Where Is Ana Mendieta?" *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

T Evening SCREENING: *Ana Mendieta: Fuego de tierra*. Dir. Nereyda García Ferraz. Chicago: Video Data Bank, 1987.

Th

Discussion of *Ana Mendieta* in class

Tania Bruguera, "Postwar Memories," *By Heart/De Memoria: Cuban Women's Journeys In and Out of Exile*. Ed. María de los Angeles Torres. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 169-189.

Helaine Posner, "Introduction," in *Tania Bruguera: On the Social Imaginary*. Ed. Helaine Posner. Milan: Charta, 2009. 15-21.

Gerardo Mosquera, "Cuba in Tania Bruguera's Work: The Body Is the Social Body," in *Tania Bruguera: On the Social Imaginary*. Ed. Helaine Posner. Milan: Charta, 2009. 23-35.

José Esteban Muñoz, "Performing Greater Cuba: Tania Bruguera and The Burden of Guilt," *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*. Ed. Diana Taylor and Roselyn Costantino. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 401-416.

Week 11 Mourning and Performance: Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, H.I.J.O.S., and Teresa Margolles

T

Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, "'You Are Here': H.I.J.O.S. and the DNA of Performance"

Ana Ros, "Living the Absence," *The Post-Dictatorship Generation in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay: Collective Memory and Cultural Production*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 25-36.

T Evening SCREENING: *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*. Dir. Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo, San Francisco: Xochitl Films, 1986.

Th

Discussion of *Las Madres* in class

Review Teresa Margolles' works on the web

Amy Sara Carroll, "Muerte Sin Fin: Teresa Margolles' Gendered States of Exception," *TDR* 54.2 (summer 2010): 103-125.

Week 12 Media interventions: Nao Bustamante and Minerva Cuevas
Essay week

T

Laura Gutiérrez, "Nao Bustamante's 'Bad-Girl' Aesthetics," *Performing Mexicanidad*

View Nao Bustamante shorts in class

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VIEW ON YOUR OWN: Nao Bustamante, *America, the Beautiful*. Lima, Peru, 1995.
Available via Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library:
<http://hidvl.nyu.edu/video/001018439.html>

Th

Discussion of *America, the Beautiful* in class

Review Minerva Cuevas website: <http://www.irational.org/minerva/resume.html>

Response essay #3 due in Icon Dropbox

Week 13 Conceptual and post-conceptual art: Celia Alvarez Muñoz
Quiz week

T

Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz*, 1-52

Th

Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz*, 53-100

**Week 14 Digital and post-conceptual art: Ricardo Domínguez and Francis Alÿs
Quiz week**

T

Ricardo Domínguez, "Electronic Disturbance Theater," *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*. Ed. Coco Fusco. New York: Routledge, 2000. 284-286.

Rita Raley, "Border Hacks," *Tactical Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. 31-64.

Eyal Weizman, "Walking through Walls: Soldiers as Architects in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Radical Philosophy* 136 (March/April 2006): 8-22.

Teddy Cruz, "Practices of Encroachment: Urban Waste Moves Southbound; Illegal Zoning Seeps into North," *Tijuana Dreaming: Life and Art at the Global Border*. Ed. Josh Kun and Fiamma Montezemolo. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. 175-189.

VIEW ON YOUR OWN: *Politics of Rehearsal*. Dir. Francis Alÿs, New York, 2005.
Available online at: <http://www.francisalys.com>

Th

Discussion of *Politics* in class

Russell Ferguson, *Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal*. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2007.

Week 15 Conclusion: greater American visual culture after 9/11

T

Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, "Lost in the Field of Vision: Witnessing September 11" and "Hemispheric Performances"

Discussion of final projects, sign up for meetings with professor

Th

Individual meetings with professor

Week 16 Workshop sessions

T

Workshop groups

Th

Walk-in paper consultations in my office

Week 17 EXAM WEEK/FINAL PAPER DUE