

Latin American Documentaries

Last Updated: Fri, 08/01/2025

Course prefix: Span

Course number: 4405

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
91499

Instructor First Name: Juan

Instructor Last Name: Rodriguez

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

Documentaries are audiovisual arguments, modes of expressing ideas and feelings using images and sound. In this course we will study the documentary traditions of Latin America to learn about the history of Latin American societies. Students will also learn how to classify documentaries according to their formal properties. Students will analyze Latin American documentaries based on various concepts of documentary studies: persuasion, rhetoric, evidence, authority, and ethics. We will use an interdisciplinary focus to investigate the role of geography, history, politics, technologies and social identities in the creation and reception of documentaries. At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to create their own documentary projects based on Dr. Rodríguez DILAC project Vieques Struggle: A Digital Video Archive, focusing on the social movement against demilitarization in the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Course learning outcomes:

Identify different types of documentaries from different regions of Latin America

Apply concepts of documentary theory (persuasion, rhetoric, evidence, authority, and ethics) to the analysis of specific Latin American documentaries

Analyze through readings and writing the impact of history, geography, politics and economics in Latin American documentary

Investigate and analyze the representation of ethnic, racial, class, regional and gender identities in Latin American documentary

Work in a global context grounded upon a theoretically informed and comparative understanding of languages, media, cultures, and technologies

Develop basic skills to create a documentary project in Spanish

Required course materials:

BOOKS (Readings available in canvas)

Nichols, Bill. *Introducción al documental*. Mexico: Libros UNAM, 2013.

Spence, Louise and Navarro, Vinicius. *Crafting Truth: Documentary Form and Meaning*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2011.

DOCUMENTARIES

All documentaries are available online and the professor will provide link to watch them. Students are responsible to watch all documentaries assigned prior to the day in which each documentary will be discussed, in order to complete the homework and come fully prepared to discuss them in class.

NOTAS DE CLASE

The professor has prepared class notes on all the readings and concepts and some of the documentaries that will be discussed in class. It is recommended that students consult class notes to complete their homework and come prepared to participate in class discussion.

Grading policy:

EVALUATION (Undergraduate students)

6 Homeworks (In-class discussion) 24% (4 points each)

3 Reflections 48% (3 essays of 500-800 words, each 16%)

Final Documentary Project 28%

Attendance policy:

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Unexcused absences are not welcome and will affect your final grade (Attendance means 10% of the final grade). See the evaluation section in the syllabus.

To have an absence excused, you need to (1) get my approval beforehand or (2) bring in a note documenting a medical or comparable emergency ***the class directly following your absence.***

Two tardies of more than 5 minutes equate to an absence.

Not having the assignment ready in class equates to an absence.

Note: Language courses require daily contact with the target language. In case of problems that may affect class attendance (chronic absences due to personal situations), I invite students to consider taking the course in another semester, when they will be able to come to class regularly. Absences not only affect your grades but also your possibilities of improving your language skills. Please see your academic advisor before making any decisions regarding your status in this course. We can also meet and discuss your situation.

Please refer to the Institute Attendance policy for more information:

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.