

# The Documentary Tradition in Latin America

J340J, J395, LAS 322, LAS 381.22 (07985, 083195, 40355, 40555)



**This course carries the Global Cultures flag.** Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

## **Professor Donna DeCesare**

**Lecture/Discussion:** Tuesday 3:30 pm -6:30 pm CMA 4.146

### **Office hours:**

BMC 3.366 Tuesday 1:00-3:00 pm

Please use the [electronic sign up sheet](#) listed on Canvas for an appointment during a time slot desired once you scroll to the date you want.

If you have a class conflict with office hours times please email to arrange a meeting at mutually convenient alternative time.

**Email:** [donna.decesare@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:donna.decesare@austin.utexas.edu)

**Phone:** 512 471-1980

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We see Latin America through the eyes of newsmagazine reportage and Television coverage of crises, but we in North America seldom see the magical diversity or complex sufferings of our southern neighbors through the eyes of local journalists, artists, witnesses or protagonists. Visual reportage and documentary video have a long tradition in Latin America, yet we remain ignorant of the complex and multi-faceted ways that Latin Americans view themselves and their reality.

This course will begin an exploration across that divide. We will look at still images and video documentaries about Latin America made by North Americans for North American media, look at works by independent North American photographers or videographers who spend committed time documenting war or other social issues in Latin America, and most

importantly will view still and video works about Latin American reality by Latin Americans themselves.

There will be a significant writing and reading component in this course. Weekly reaction papers to the still and video imagery we view in class will be required. We will read essays and reporting by Latin Americans-- Alma Guillermoprieto's *NEW YORKER* and *New York Review of Books* coverage of the region and the journalism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez among others. We will also do some short visual reporting assignments on Latin American culture/issues effecting diaspora communities in the United States.

### **Learning Goals:**

- Class presentations and discussions will engage and challenge assumptions and stereotypes prevalent in reporting from Latin America.
- Students will consider form and content, context and intended audience, and issues of authenticity and verification that storytellers and reporters face in relations to the non-fiction work of varying genres that we discuss in class.
- Students will become familiar with and sensitive to the challenges of understanding, documenting, and communicating with other cultures respectfully and fairly in the process of their own non-fiction creative projects for class.
- Students will become aware of the rich and varied documentary tradition that exists in Latin America and the perils of approaching the region with naive ignorance of its history and diverse cultural identities.

### **Student Evaluation:**

Student evaluation will be based upon completion of class assignments and participation in discussion and critiques. This means that attendance impacts your grade. The class assignments fall into three categories:

- **Final Research Project or Production project--photo essay or multimedia piece: (40%)**

**For those opting for an academic research project**—It must be a 10 page research paper excluding bibliography and footnotes. You must be prepared to make an 8 minute oral class presentation exploring the themes of historical memory, cultural identity, representations of violence or another topic approved in advance by the professor in relation a body of documentary work by an established Latin American photojournalist, documentary photographer, filmmaker, writer or essayist. All work must be original and must be produced exclusively for this course. The 8-minute oral presentation should be timed and should include a visual component-- (multimedia, video, or PowerPoint) illustrating the concepts you discuss with examples of the documentarian's work. **Your topic must be approved before October 10<sup>th</sup>**. Make an appointment to discuss in office hours

**Those who are working on an in-depth documentary photographic project** related to this course may submit proposals in advance to do their own photo documentary for the class—but it may not be work you are doing for credit in another professor's class or another professor's independent study. The project must be substantially original new reporting work rather than a reconfiguration or edit of images recycled from earlier projects. It must also represent at least six weeks of active ongoing work on a non-fiction visual project not focused on yourself but focused on a single topic for which you have secured access. **Your topic must be approved before October 10<sup>th</sup>**. Make an appointment to discuss in office hours.

The final project must present a well-developed narrative with thoughtfully sequenced images and a cogent oral presentation. The project must involve research and reporting as well as ethnography. A written story of 500 -1,000 words must accompany the images. You must be prepared to present your work for class critique –format as with research projects is 8 minutes.

All written papers or text materials for either research or reporting projects must be uploaded to the appropriate CANVAS link by the deadline indicated on the Assignment description on CANVAS usually 24 hours before class presentation. There is also another slot for all students to upload their visual materials, powerpoints, pdfs or links with downloadable image or movie files you intend to play in class as part of your presentation. All links to

video or still images must be added to this assignment page as a downloadable link at google drive or You Tube or Vimeo.

I must be able to download your movie and image files in order to queue up all presentations before class for maximum time screening efficiency given class size and our time limitations. Please respect my 24 hour before class deadline rule. I do not have TA assistance and teach another early morning class followed by office hours. I need to download and queue your work BEFORE I leave my home in the morning so that I can make the class run smoothly for everyone. Please be courteous to me and your fellow students.

- **Production work or Research presentations (2 assignments) (30%)**

All class participants are required to do two shorter projects and may elect either a production or research based project.

**Research based short projects:** Students may elect to do a short research paper and a short audiovisual oral report about a topic or the work of a Latin American documentarian. Class presentation limited to 5 minutes. Some topic ideas might be: a biography of a Latin American documentarian, an exploration of how diversity of culture perspectives influences work on a theme, or a critical exploration of prevalent stereotypes in reporting from Latin America or work which challenges stereotypes. Topics must be pre-approved by Instructor. The research paper should be approx. 1500 words plus bibliography and footnotes. Visual examples to support your argument must accompany your oral presentation.

**Visual production projects:** Students may elect to do 2 short visual feature stories about Latino issues or culture in Austin. (I do not want to see clichéd or overdone stories—no food trucks for example.). For the reporting features—if providing still imagery you need at least five superior images that follow the narrative strictures of excellent photojournalistic essays accompanied by a vivid piece of writing –minimum of 250-500 well chosen words which contextualizes your photo captions and visual reporting. The story subject may involve arts/culture, daily life, or social issues. Stories must be compelling and publishable. You are also welcome to produce multi-media or web-based video projects. You will need to limit the length to screen and make your comments within the 5 minute presentation limitation to allow us a few moments to respond with constructive feedback.

**All papers must be uploaded to Canvas, All visual components must be uploaded to Canvas or provided for download by posting the link to Canvas assignment tab for the Oral/visual presentation.**

**• Response papers (10 in total I drop the lowest grades if you do more than 10 papers) (20%)**

All class participants are required to write a 500-1000 word weekly reaction paper responding to films, photographs and websites viewed as part of the class. This may include writing about classmate presentations on days we do class critiques or may involve watching films outside class lecture time. The weekly Canvas module page will signal what you are responding to each week.

As a rule of thumb, reaction papers will be uploaded to our Canvas site by midnight of the day following the class in which the materials were viewed. On critique days when you may be assigned to watch films outside of class time check Canvas for any change in the deadline. Canvas lets me know when you submit late and this impacts your final grade. Check canvas every week to be sure of your deadline.

If you do all of the assigned reaction papers I will take the 10 highest graded ones for your grade. There is no extra credit given in class but doing extra response papers can offset lost points in some cases.

You will be expected to draw upon what you are learning through our class lectures, discussions, readings and weblinks when you respond to the films or photographs that are a major focus each week. I am looking for critical and creative thinking not plot summary. From the point of view of craft consider the relation of form to content, the impact and strengths and/or weaknesses of the works we view. Also consider how visual works influence or are relevant to your own understanding of current issues in Latin America.

**All reaction papers must be uploaded to Canvas.**

**• Class Discussion/Participation in Critiques of Class work (10%)**

This part of your grade will be determined by class attendance, and demonstrated knowledge of the required readings, and participation in our class discussions.

**SPECIAL NOTE TO GRAD STUDENTS:**

**Expectations for the level of background knowledge, critical thinking, originality and/or creative sophistications are higher for Graduate project work.**

**Graduate Students are required to Read and Discuss in Class at least one of the additional books listed in the syllabus bibliography or another book I approve as part of your Final project.**

**In addition each week there are additional specialized readings and Documentary Film links on canvas that are listed as required for graduate students.**

**The Grading Matrix weighting reiterated:**

**40% of Grade Primary Research/Reporting Project and oral Visual presentation.**

**30 % Two Shorter research or production projects and oral and visual presentation**

**20% Weekly Critical Response Essays**

**10% Attendance/Participation** (attendance and active weekly participation in class discussion. Roll call will compute your attendance and Lateness score. I will manually track your active participation and add this component at the end of the semester.

**This class meets once a week for 3 hours so one day missed counts heavily. If you miss more than 3 classes you will be unable to pass the class.**

**Grading:**

A (94 to 100): Excellent work that shows creativity and originality as well as control and mastery of sophisticated critical and creative challenges in fulfilling course assignment objectives.

A- (90 to < 94): Very strong work that exceeds the requirements and shows creativity and understanding of assignment objectives.

B+ (87 to < 90) Good work which meets the requirements of the assignment occasionally going beyond the requirements.

B (84 to < 87) Work meets the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates effort and critical thinking / writing / visual production skill and some originality/creativity.

B- (80 to < 84) Work meets the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates limited effort and/or some issues with critical thinking / writing / visual production skill and minimal originality/creativity.

C + (77 to < 80): Work is of average quality; meets minimal requirements but critical thinking /writing/production skill is inconsistent/weak. Originality/creativity seldom apparent.

C (74 to < 77): Work is of average quality; meets minimal requirements but critical thinking/ writing/ visual production skill is weak. Creativity is not apparent.

C - (70 to < 74): Work is below average quality; meets some minimal requirements but critical thinking/ writing/ visual production skill is weak. Creativity is not apparent.

D (60 to < 70): Work shows lack of effort or does not display adequate understanding assignment. Work is incomplete or does not follow requirements.

F (< 60 ): Unacceptable work that displays a lack of understanding of assignment objectives and/or is not complete.

All cell phones must be turned off during class. Web surfing is prohibited during class time. We are in a lab classroom with computers but this is a seminar so unless you are looking something up to contribute information that no one in the class is aware of in order to advance the class discussion,

I will ask you to refrain from surfing on computers. We want your full attention on the class discussion.

Please come to class on time. Lateness will impact the participation portion of your grade. Chronic lateness and absence will negatively impact your ability to pass the course.

Contacting me as soon as you know of a class conflict but at least 24 hours before the time of the class that will be missed is the only way to negotiate an excused absence for any reason other than the medical, bereavement and religious observance absences allowable under UT policy. These absences will only be excused if you provide documentation upon your return to class and follow all the advance notifications stipulated by UT policy. You are responsible for arranging to make up missed class work.

### **Required Books**

Danner, Mark, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*  
This book is available at our libraries, from amazon and at the coop.

**Suggested Further Readings some required for Grad students:** This list of non-fiction books and a list of visual books and/or documentary films will be on Canvas in a separate Bibliography file. I invite all students to send suggestions and links to add

*Looking for History*, Alma Guillermoprieto

*A Distant Mirror*, Alma Guillermoprieto

*The Heart that bleeds: Latin America Now*, Alma Guillermoprieto

*Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*. Jon Lee Anderson (Argentina, Cuba, Bolivia)

*Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana* by Ann Louise Bardach

*The Motorcycle Diaries: A Latin American Journey*. Ernesto Che Guevara

*Unsettled/Desasosiego: Children in a World of Gangs*, by Donna De Cesare

*The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to*

*Three Continents*: John Dinges (Chile, Argentina, Uruguay etc.)

*Century of the Wind*, Eduardo Galeano (Uruguay)

*The Art of Political Murder*, Francisco Goldman (Guatemala)

*Bitter Fruit*, Stephen Kinzer (Guatemala)

*The Rainy Season*, Amy Wilentz (Haiti)



*News of a Kidnapping*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia)  
*Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia*. Stephen  
Dudley (UT grad and Miami Herald Andean region bureau chief Colombia)  
**Available as electronic book from UT library**

### **In Spanish about Colombia**

*Pals de Plomo*, Juanita de Leon  
*Los Ninos de la Guerra*, Guillermo Gonzalez Uribe

### **Class Equipment and production lab access:**

We do not have a teaching lab associated with this class. However all students are welcome to use their current production knowledge and use the free Lynda.com resources to troubleshoot if you have some production experience and opt to do production assignments. All students in this class will have access to the photojournalism lab and CMA video labs during open lab hours and will also have access to audiovisual equipment checkout for this class. You must follow all Lab guidelines and rules for use of UT equipment. Failure to do so will result in your being barred from further checkout and may involve financial responsibility for equipment damaged or not returned. I encourage a spirit of collaboration and peer support on tech issues so please do help each other. Please let me know asap if you have never used Moody College equipment in the past.

**The full class schedule of dates and readings are linked on Canvas. Please access the Modules for links to the readings and materials we are covering each week.**

**This is a seminar /production class. It is not a correspondence course. I expect all students to be present every week. Links on canvas may support points covered in class visual lectures and discussion but are not in themselves a substitute.**

**Class and Assignment Schedule: Professor De Cesare may make changes to this schedule to take advantage of visiting speakers, opportunities to skype with Latin American visual journalists or any other enrichment opportunities as they arise.**

**Assignment deadlines will not change.**

**First project screening September 26**

**Second project screening October 17**

**Final project rough cut screening November 21**

**Final project Screening December 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**REMINDER: All students must make an appointment for office hours to discuss their final project ideas before October 10<sup>th</sup> our 6<sup>th</sup> class week**

### **Week one: Course Overview: Our Work Ahead**

**09/05 Lecture/Discussion:** Introduction to themes of the class Latin American Politics, and Humanist Tradition. Stereotypes. What starts here changes the world.....

**Your Canvas Module page will have two sections. One describing and providing links where possible to materials we covered in that day's class and below the Text in Red that says Read /View before our next class you will find links to materials on the Canvas site and off site that you must read and view before our next class meeting.**

**Graduate students: There will always be some links that are required for graduate students and that I expect referenced in your response papers in addition to discussing the visual works we view in class or online.**

**Screening:** Even the Rain Response paper due

### **Week Two: Issues in the News / Challenges Mexican Journalists Face**

**09/12 Lecture/Discussion:** We will discuss last week's film, this weeks readings and will view several books and works in class related to violence and human rights in Mexico, work by Fernando Britto, AP interactives, Periodistas de a Pie etc.

**Guest Lecture or film screening:** visit with Melissa del Bosque and Jen Reel of the Texas Observer about their journalism covering the border and the drug war.

Alternately class or online screening of the film **Reportero** response to whichever option we follow.

**Week Three: Broad Historical Overview of Photography in Latin America: from Colonialism to Revolution, Dictatorships and Dirty Wars Class tour of the HRC exhibition Mexico Modern.**

**09/19 Lecture/Discussion:** The Latin American 19<sup>th</sup> century documentary tradition. European and North American influences. Overview themes. The Exotic, Chaotic, Erotic. Modern vs. Traditional Local themes: Mestizaje, Preservation of Memory, The Supernatural and Mystical.

**Field Trip:** Curator tour of the HRC exhibition **Mexico Modern.**  
Response paper due

**Week Four: Screening of your 1<sup>st</sup> projects due Monday before class.**

**09/26 Critique: First assignment class presentations**

**Online module this week:** See Canvas page. Read and view all works referenced including the film *Chile Obstinate Memory* for your response.

**Please read all additional readings to prepare for our discussion lecture and screening next week.**

**Week Five: Heroes and Villains: The Value of Historical Memory; the Making and Unmaking of El Che as Revolutionary**

**10/03 Lecture/Discussion:** We will begin screening the film and then discussing discuss Guzman's earlier film as well as books on Historical memory in Argentina, Peru and Chile. We will also begin looking at the impact of the Cuban Revolution on Latin American Photography and the Documentary movements focused on injustice. We will consider the image of Che Guevara and examine stereotypes and ideas about Cuba to be continued next week. .

**Screening:** Nostalgia for the Light response due

**Week Six: Cuba on the Verge: Complexity and Paradox**

**10/10 Lecture/Discussion:** We will begin class with a screening of Chevolution. Then we will look at some contemporary photographic work on Cuba. by Ernesto Bazan, and others who have photographed in Cuba. We will consider changes in US Cuba Relations and also Current Cuban migration

**Screening: Chevolution** response due

## **Week Seven: Your second Assignment.... Immigration and Diaspora**

10/17 **Critique: Second assignment critiqued in class**

**Online module this week** Immigration and Cuban diaspora is the topic for readings and online viewing.

**Online viewing** of the film **Balseros** in your response this week you should draw parallels with other projects you are aware of that consider Latino immigrant experience.

## **Week Eight: Storytelling The Power of Iconic Images Lessons connecting here and there.**

10/24 **Lecture/Discussion:** We will think about what we've learned from Chevolution and Balseros that can be applied to our own final projects. Ethical concerns or questions as well as story structure and craft. We will also refresh with some storytelling lessons from NPR reporters.

**Screening: Sin Pais** and/or other short student projects response

## **Week Nine: Poet of the marginalized: The photography of Sebastio Salgado**

10/31 **Lecture/Discussion:** We revisit interview techniques talk sin pais. We discuss the Ingrid Sischy critique of Salgado and look at some of his images.

**Screening: Salt of the Earth** response

## **Week Ten: The Body and Movement: Dance as cultural expression, resistance, affirmation.**

11/07 **Lecture/Discussion:** We will discuss **Salt of the Earth** and then turn to short documentaries on dance as well as images of movement.

**Online module: Danzak** response

## **Week Eleven: Our Culture is Our Resistance: Indigenous identity**

11/14 **Lecture/Discussion"** Quilombolas, Palenques and other cultures of Resistance. From Brazil, Colombia and Guatemala Works by Andre Cypriano, Jonathan

Moller, Stephen Ferry etc.

**Screening:** View all but choose 2 of 3 short films to compare for response....  
*The Last Ice Merchant, Cacao* or *The Heart of the World*.

### **Week Twelve: Rough cut screening critique of final projects in progress**

11/21 We will screen student projects for feedback and peer suggestions.

**Online module: Granito: How to Nail and Dictator response**

### **Week Thirteen: Human Rights and the practices of working photographers.**

11/28 **Lecture/Discussion: Discussion of the Massacre at El Mozote / Granito.**

**Meeting with working photographers online. We may skype with Meridith, Kohut, Danielle Villasana, Marcela Zamora and /or Rodrigo Abd who covers Latin America for the Associated Press.**

### **Week Fourteen: Engaged Documentary**

12/05 **Critique: Final assignment critique**

## **APPENDIX I Required University Notices and Policies**

### **University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

## **Documented Disability Statement**

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone),  
<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

## **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism in this Journalism course includes:**

- Plagiarizing or using someone else's material without attribution and permission from archival sources, another media source, student work or even yourself and/or representing previous work of your own as new work for this class. You can't turn in a story or research or media project using any elements of work done for a previous class without the instructor's knowledge and written permission.
- Making up quotes, sources and facts.
- Not interviewing people who appear in your stories or research projects as sources or failure write accurate photographic captions for your work.
- Not giving appropriate attribution or citation of a source or background information.
- Cheating during a quiz or an assignment.

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

**Journalism instructors report all academic honesty infractions to the Chair of the School of Journalism and also to the Dean of Students.**

## **Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin**

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

### **Use of Blackboard in Class**

This course will use Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu> —to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give you online quizzes and surveys. You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

### **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### **Religious Holy Days**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the instructor will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building.

Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.

- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office

### **Q drop Policy**

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”