

The Documentary Tradition in Latin America

J340J, J395, LAS 381.22 (08173, 08307, 40625)



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 2 pm -5 pm BMC CMA 4.150

Office hours:

BMC 3.366 Wed 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.

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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 Spring Break.**

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. It 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.. There must be 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 must be uploaded to CANVAS by the deadline indicated on the Assignment description on CANVAS 24 hours before class presentation. All visual materials in movie file formats must be uploaded to the CLASS SHARES folder AT LEAST 24 hours before the in class presentation.

This is so that so that I have time to download and view material before we meet. You may upload powerpoint or PDF still image presentations to Canvas. (Check with me in advance if you have questions about file size.)

All work must be labeled/tagged or file named with your last and first names in the file naming of all individual project components so that when I download I can identify the student author without opening the file. This is an important work flow habit for your professional life so I will deduct points if you do not follow this.

- **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 the 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 screen and make your comments within the 5 minute presentation limitation.

All papers must be submitted to Canvas, All visual components must be uploaded to Canvas unless you are using sharing movie files which must be uploaded to Class Shares.

- **Reaction papers / peer critiques (10 in total) (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 will include writing about classmate presentations on days we do class critiques.

Reaction papers will be uploaded to our Canvas site by midnight of the day following the class in which the materials were viewed. If you do all 12 assigned reaction papers I will take the 10 highest graded ones. You will be expected to reference readings as relevant in writing your reactions. I am looking for critical and creative thinking not plot summary. I want you to discuss the relation of form to content, the impact and strengths and/or weaknesses of the works we view and pertinence to understanding 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.

Graduate students will be required to read and lead discussion of the Additional weekly readings for Graduate students which are listed on Canvas. There are higher expectations for the level of critical thinking, originality and/or creative sophistication for Graduate Class project work.

The Grading Matrix weighting reiterated:

40% of Grade Primary Research/Reporting Project

30 % Two Shorter research or production projects.

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 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: 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

Graduate Students are required to Read and Discuss in Class at least one of the following books and /or specialized readings or Documentary Films listed on the Canvas site

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. Some materials may not be available online. I do not provide my lecture notes. I expect all students to pay attention and take notes on points covered in class.

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.”