Indigenous Cinemas of the Americas: Performing Self-representation Through Media

Classes: Fridays 9:30am-12:15pm, Bobst LL140.

Instructor: Amalia Cordova, amalia.cordova@nyu.edu, (212) 998-8685.
Office hours: Fridays, 4-5pm, 53 Washington Sq. South, Rm. 409, or by appointment.

Course Description: This course focuses on the practices of film, video, and digital expressions emerging in the past decades from indigenous communities and independent Native artists in the Americas. Notions of imperfect, Third and Fourth cinema, indigenous self-representation, collective authorship, Indigenous people’s representation in mainstream films and other forms of exhibition such as museums, installation and photography will be explored. Students will research specific authors or media projects, and how institutions present this work through exhibitions, events, festivals, and publications. The course features guest lecturers and requires class and off-site viewing of films and videos that are otherwise unavailable on the market.

Course Objectives: This course will provide students with an introduction to both the history and theory of indigenous cinema. Students will gain not only an understanding of the motivating factors that led to the emergence of this cinema and become acquainted with both its major movements and representative filmmakers, but also be able to recognize several of the aesthetic and narrative practices in these films. In addition, we will revisit the concepts of Fourth cinema and imperfect cinema, examining at the significance of these concepts in contemporary cultural and political debates. A key goal of this course is to introduce and gain familiarity with the critical tools that might help us situate indigenous audiovisual practices against our experiences with Hollywood and European cinemas.

Course policies: Active participation is strongly encouraged. Attendance to all class lectures and screenings is mandatory. Absences and tardiness will be penalized. If you unable to come to class due to illness or some extenuating circumstance, contact me by e-mail as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements may be made. If you must leave early due to illness or for any other cause, it is your responsibility to inform me as to the reason. All work must be handed in on time except in the case of serious illness, medical emergency, or unforeseen circumstances. Incompletes will not be granted unless there are extraordinary circumstances. Please note that proposals for final projects will require an in-class presentation and sign-off from the professor. Assignments will be submitted in both paper and electronic form.

Films shown during class are a key part of class. Silence and refrain from using mobile devices during class time and screenings.

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website:
Required reading

Articles (provided):


Cordova, Amalia, “Towards an Indigenous Film Festival Circuit,” Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism, St. Andrews, 2012.


Books:

Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn, Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film, University of Nebraska Press, 1999.


**Websites:**

Conversations with the Earth: [http://www.conversationsearth.org/](http://www.conversationsearth.org/)
The Brown Pages: [http://www.brownpages.co.nz/](http://www.brownpages.co.nz/)
IsumaTV: [http://www.isuma.tv/](http://www.isuma.tv/)
Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian’s Film & Video catalog: [http://nmai.si.edu/explore/film-media/](http://nmai.si.edu/explore/film-media/)
Third World Newsreel catalog: [http://www.twn.org/catalog/subjects/SubjectIndex.aspx](http://www.twn.org/catalog/subjects/SubjectIndex.aspx)

**Recommended readings:**

Worth, Sol, and Adair, John, *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film and Communication and Anthropology*, University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

**Requirements:**

- Class attendance and participation: 20%
- One 3-page response paper on a film/filmmaker or an event review: **25% due Oct. 3.**
- Proposals for final research project **due Oct. 31** for class workshop session.
- Reflection paper (5-6 pages) on a media project/director, film or screening attended: **25% due Nov. 14.**
- Final Research Project and class presentation: **30%, due December 13. No exceptions.**
- Active participation in the public exhibition of our final projects.
A site visit to invitational screenings at the National Museum of the American Indian and the American Museum of Natural History’s Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1 – Sept. 5, 2014: **Native Americans on Film: silent and contested spaces**

Class 2 – Sept. 12: **Native Narratives in North American Cinema**
Read: Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn, *Celluloid Indians* ch. 4 (pp. 65-100) and ch 6 (pp 178-232); Shohat & Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media*, pp.1-54; Milestone Films website [www.milestonefilms.com/movie.php/exiles/](http://www.milestonefilms.com/movie.php/exiles/) and [http://www.exilesfilm.com](http://www.exilesfilm.com);

Class 3 – Sept. 19: **Experimental ethnographies**
*Visit: “Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today,” at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, open through October 1, 2014 (recommended).*

*9/25, Special lecture: *Esta Ruka Llamada Chile*, with Mapuche journalist/critic Pedro Cayuqueo, at NYU (location TBD).

Class 4 – Sept. 26: **Latin America: resistance and collective voice**
Read: Wilson and Stewart, *Global Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics and Politics*, ch. 1 (Salazar & Cordova), 7 (Murillo) & 9 (Smith); Schiwy, Freya, “Decolonizing the Technologies of Knowledge: Video and Indigenous Epistemology.”
View: *Indigenous Peoples: This is How we Think* (2000, 8 min., Bolivia) by CEFREC-CAIB; *Llanthupi Munakuy/Loving Each Other in the Shadows* (2001, 47. Min, Bolivia) by Marcelina Cardenas (Quechua); *Newen* (2004, 4 min. Chile), by JAAS (Mapuche).

Class 5 – Oct. 3: **Video in the Villages**
View: *Video in the Villages presents Itself* (2008, 14 min., Brazil) by Vincent Carelli and Mari Correa; *Marangnotxingo Mirang/From the Ikpeng Children to the World* (2002, 35 min., Brazil) by Kumaré Txicão (Ikpeng), Karané Txicão (Ikpeng), and Natuyu Yuwipo Txicão (Ikpeng); *O Mestre e O Divino* (2013, 85 min., Brazil), by Tiago Campos featuring Divino Tserewahu (Xavante).

*** First film/event response paper due***
Class 6 – Oct. 10: **Pioneering Women Directors**
*Recommended:* Lewis, Randolph, *Alanis Obamsawin: The Vision of a Native Filmmaker,* Preface, ch.1 (pp.1-35), ch. 4 (pp. 88-121).

Class 7 – Oct. 17: **Indigenous performance and exhibition spaces**
View: *4-Wheel War Pony* (2008, 8 min. US) by Dustinn Craig (White Mountain Apache/Navajo); *Emendatio,* video-performance of James Luna (Luiseño).
*First response papers returned and discussed, site visits discussed.*

Class 8 – Oct. 24: **Festival Observational** (Offsite session)
**Attend a screening at the Margaret Mead Film & Video Festival (Oct. 23-26) and prepare reviews.** Class meets at the American Museum of Natural History unless otherwise indicated.

Class 9 – Oct. 31: **Spaces of Circulation: Festivals and Distribution**
View: Trailers and clips from indigenous festivals; *Those with Voice* (2007, 55 min. US) by Jeff Arak [clips].

Class 10 – Nov. 7: **First Nations Firsts: Atanarjuat and IsumaTV**
***Second film/screening reflection paper due.***

Class 11 – Nov. 14: **Migrant Video**
Read: Cordova, Amalia, with Gabriela Zamorano, “Mapping Mexican Media,” (online); Wortham, E., *Indigenous Media in Mexico,* Part 1; Global Indigenous Media: ch. 8 (Halkin); Kummels, I., “Cine Indígena: Video, Migration and the Dynamics of Belonging between Mexico and the USA” (online).
Class 12 – Nov. 21: Exhibition planning session.
*** Bring your final project in its current state for internal class review. Come prepared to commit to a project for your final work. We will help you with any exhibition issues that may come up. Exact dates of exhibition TBD.

Nov. 28 - No class, “Thanksgiving” Break.

Class 13– Dec. 5: Indigenous Media in New York
Guest Speaker: Robert Cangiano, Urban Indians

Class 14 – Dec. 13: Final Exhibition planning session and class evaluation
***FINAL PRESENTATIONS. Final papers/projects due. Walk through and exhibition space assignments.

Our PUBLIC EXHIBITION will be mounted the week of Monday, December 16 –Friday, December 20, exact dates and locations forthcoming. We celebrate!