

HUM2461 List of Latin American Humanities Films

Latin American films approved for homework or film reports:

- 1) *Doña Bárbara* (1943 film made in Mexico based on 1929 novel of same title by Venezuelan writer Rómulo Gallegos). Spanish only; no subtitles. A very good film adapted by Gallegos himself from his novel. Dir. Fernando de Fuentes. Starring the great film star María Félix (Mexico, 1914-2002), with Andrés Soler, María Elena Marqués, and Miguel Inclán. Filmed in Mexico simulating the Llano and Sabana cowboy country of Venezuela.
- 2) *Las doce sillas*. (1962). Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Starring: Enrique Santioesteban, Reynaldo Miravalles. Music: Juan Blanco. Cuban film comedy about the absurd search for one of twelve chairs in which a deceased mother-in-law has hidden her diamond treasure. The film illustrates the transition from capitalistic society to early Cuban communistic society and their respective values. 97 min.
- 3) *La muerte de un burócrata*. (1966). Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Starring Salvador Wood, Silvia Plana, Manuel Estanillo. Music: Leo Brouwer. Wonderful Cuban comedy an exemplary worker who symbolizes the (communist) proletariat who is buried by his widow with his pension papers entombed with him. The plot follows the absurd attempt by his nephew to get the body exhumed and reinterred so that his aunt can get her the state pension due her. The film was intended to satirize the antiquated capitalistic bureaucratic system with the unstated notion that early Cuban communistic society would avoid such absurd bureaucracy. 85 min.
- 4) *Lucía* (1968). Cuban film. Directed by Humberto Solás. Story of three women, all named Lucía, at three key times in Cuban history: war of independence, the turmoil of the 1930's, and the Cuban Revolution. Music by Leo Brouwer. Starring Raquel Revuelta, Eslinda Núñez, and Adela Legrá. A selection of the Havana International Film Festival. 160 minutes.
- 5) *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968 black and white Cuban film). Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Story of a Cuban who decides to stay in Cuba after the Revolution even when his whole family leaves Cuba. Music by Leo Brouwer. Starring Sergio Corrieri, Daisy Granados, and Eslinda Núñez. 104 minutes.
- 6) *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1969, British production; 97 min.). Directed by Irving Lerner, the movie is based on a famous play by the same title written by British playwright Peter Shaffer. It was premiered in England in 1964. It was filmed on location in Perú (spectacular visuals of Perú) with Robert Shaw as Pizarro, Christopher Plummer as the Inca emperor Atahualpa, and Nigel Davenport as Hernando de Soto. In my view, the play is more rewarding than the movie, but this depiction of the conquest of Incas and the intense conflict between civilizations and especially between Pizarro and Atahualpa is worth the experience. When you report on this film you can explain what's right and what's wrong with the PR blurb on the DVD box.
- 7) *The Green Wall / La muralla verde* (1970). Perú. Drama about family's struggles in Perú's rain forest. Slow, but beautiful art film. You have to check this film out from Dr. Little.
- 8) *The Assassination of Trotsky*. (1972). Starring Richard Burton, Alain Delon, Romy

- Schneider. Directed by Joseph Losey. Mexico. NR (my rating: PG13). Not, strictly speaking, a Latin America film, but of international and Latin American interest. Dramatization of the assassination in 1940 of Leon Trotsky by a Spanish Stalinist in Mexico City; featuring portraits of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, plus the Mexican social and political context of Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas.
- 9) *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (1972 original title: "Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes;" 1977 release in the USA). Writer and Dir. Werner Herzog. The Spanish conquistador Don Lope de Aguirre organizes and leads an obsessive and brutal expedition to cross the Andes from Perú and descend the Amazon in search of El Dorado. Starring Klaus Kinski, Ruy Guerra, and Helena Rojo. This is a tireless, relentless, brutal, and painfully (deliberately) slow film. 93 min; not rated.
 - 10) *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*. (1976). Staring Sônia Braga. Directed by Bruno Barreto. Brazil, R (my rating: PG13). A sensual comedy about Dona Flor and her unfaithful husband.
 - 11) *La última cena*. (1976). Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Starring: Nelson Villagrà, Silvano Rey, Luis Alberto García. Music: Leo Brouwer. Cuban film and historical Cuban melodrama 18th century slave coffee plantation in which the plantation owner causes chaos among his slaves when he reenacts the Christian Last Supper with his slaves freed for a meal to eat with his hyper-righteous, seemingly good-intentioned slave owner. 120 min.
 - 12) *Cecilia* (1982 in Cuba). A Cuban historical drama about 1830's Havana during the independence movement where a mulatto with very light skin uses santería to seduce Leonardo Gamboa, the Don Juan son of a powerful and proper colonialist family. Adapted from the major Cuban novel about race relations, *Cecilia Valdés* (1882), by Cirilo Villaverde. Dir. Humberto Solás. Starring: Imanol Arias, Raquel Revuelta, Daisy Granados.
 - 13) *Gabriela* (1983). A Brazilian romance based on novel by Jorge Amado. Dir. Bruno Barreto. Starring Sônia Braga and Marcello Mastroianni. The story of a health working who dreams of finding his soulmate. Movie about a passionate love affair with complications. NR (My rating: PG13).
 - 14) *El Norte* (1983 film made in Guatemala, Mexico, and California). Maya, Spanish, and English. A superb and long film (141 minutes) by written and directed by the famous Chicano writer Gregory Nava with excellent multilingual acting by Zaide Silvia Gutiérrez and David Villalpando.
 - 15) *Last Images of the Shipwreck/ Últimas imágenes del naufragio*. (1985). Staring Lorenzo Quinteros, Hugo Soto, Noemi Frenkel. Written and directed by Eliseo Subiela. Argentina. NR (my rating: PG13). A suicidal woman meets an Argentinian insurance agent, who is a failed/failing writer, and who, therefore, is suffering a mid-life crisis. This pair dates and begins to discover that the truth rules that the woman's suicide attempt was a stunt to attract prostitution customers. The woman's family is suffering a serious family "shipwreck".
 - 16) *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985). Brazil. Drama about two prisoners in a Brazilian prison during the twentieth-century military dictatorship. Homosexual theme in violent prison setting.
 - 17) *The Official Story* (1985). Argentina. Historical, social, political drama about children

- kidnapped by the military during Argentina's dictatorship.
- 18) *Camila* (1985). Argentina. Love story about two lovers in trouble during nineteenth-century Argentinian dictatorship. Historical drama. (Some nudity).
 - 19) *Amada* (Cuba, 1985). Dir. Humberto Solás. Starring: Eslinda Núñez, César Évora. My Rating PG. Cuban melodrama about Amada during World War I in Cuba. She is a middle class housewife who falls in love with her cousin, who is an idealist fighting the corrupt Cuban government in the early years of independence from the United States. 105 min.
 - 20) *The Mission* (Paraguay, Anglo-French production; 1986). Dir. Roland Joffé. Written by Robert Bolt. Music: Ennio Morricone. Starring: Robert De Niro, Jeremy Irons, Ray McAnally, Aidan Quinn, and Liam Neeson. Rating PG. Historical drama of the Jesuit missions in 18th century Paraguay among the Guaraní people and their destruction by Spanish and Portuguese slave traders.
 - 21) *Un hombre de éxito (A Successful Man)* (1986). A Cuban drama about political and personal decisions made by two brothers before the Cuban Revolution, one conservative the other a revolutionary. Dir. Humberto Solás. Starring: César Évora, Raquel Revuelta, Daisy Granados. 103 min.
 - 22) *La ciudad y los perros* (1987). Perú. Film made from Vargas Llosa's novel (1966) of the same name about difficulties faced by boys in an internship school in mid-twentieth century Lima. A dark art film with some violence.
 - 23) *Ana Mendieta* (1987). Cuban-American documentary about Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), Cuban-American artist by Nereyda García-Ferraz, Kate Horsfield, and Branda Miller. Released and distributed by Women Make Movies, New York. 49 minutes.
 - 24) *El Dorado* (1988). Carlos Saura. Spain / México. Spain's premier auteur director's historical movie about Spanish conquest and conquistadors in South America in the sixteenth century.
 - 25) *Old Gringo / Gringo Viejo* (1989). México / Hollywood. Jane Fonda's movie of Carlos Fuentes' novel with Gregory Peck dealing with revolutionary events during Mexican Revolution. Some violence.
 - 26) *Cabeza de Vaca* (México, 1992). Dir. Nicaolás Echavarría. Starring: Juan Diego. R Rating. In Spanish only. No English subtitles. The story of the Spanish explorer/conquistador Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca who explored, in utter misery, the region from Florida to New México, eventually arriving at Spanish outpost in northern México. Lots of violence, graphic nudity, and no sex, but some Spanish profanity (in Spanish). Cabeza de Vaca's own diary is the basis for the story, but the film is created in Mexico in part from a Mexican cultural perspective about the Discovery and Conquest.
 - 27) *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993). Contemporary Cuba. The delicate political and social problem facing homosexuals and artists in Cuba.
 - 28) *Like Water For Chocolate / Como agua para chocolate* (1993). México. Drama of border Mexican families set during time of Mexican Revolution. Historical drama. (Some nudity).
 - 29) *Guantanamo* (1995 in Cuba). Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Starring: Carlos Cruz, Mirta Ibarra, Jorge Perugorría. Comic drama about life in Cuba in the 1990's. Members of a funeral procession and truck drivers discover similarities and differences among them. Featuring a late Cuban singer, her husband, a bureaucrat in charge of getting the body back to Havana for burial. 104 min.

- 30) *The Postman / Il Postino* (1995). Italy / Chile. Love story based on novel about the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda based on Skarmeta's novel. Politics, poetry, and love blend in this pleasant movie.
- 31) *Guantanamera* (1995). Cuban film. Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez and Juan Carlos Tabío. A romantic comedy (called a “screwball comedy”) about a famous but aging singer who returns to her home town in Cuba and an amazing funeral procession from her home town to the capital, Havana. Music by José Nieto. Starring Conchita Brando, Jorge Perugorría, and Mirta Ibarra. 104 minutes.
- 32) *Four Days in September* (1998). Brazil. Political intrigue in days of Brazilian dictatorship. American film starring Alan Arkin.
- 33) *Central Station* (Brazil, 1998). Dir. Walter Salles. Starring: Fernanda Montenegro. NR (My Rating PG13). In Portuguese. The drama of a man looking for his father and a woman looking for a second chance. Nominated for two Academy awards for Best Foreign Film.
- 34) *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999). Cuba. Traditional internationally renowned musicians centered in La Habana, Cuba, before and after the Cuban Revolution of 1959.
- 35) *Caramuru: A Invenção do Brasil* (2001). Brazilian romantic comedy adaptation of a 1781 Brazilian epic poem by Brazilian friar Santa Rita Durão. Dir. Guel Arraes. Starring Selton Mello. 85 min.
- 36) *Miel para Oshun* (2001). A Cuban drama about identity in which a young American taken from Cuba by his father returns to Cuba to reconnect with his mother, who refused to leave. Dir. Humberto Solás. Starring: Jorge Perugorría and Isabel Santos. 119 min.
- 37) *Cidade de Deus (The City of God, 2002, Brazil)*. A Brazilian crime drama. Director Fernando Meirelles from 1997 Brazilian novel by Paulo Lins. The theme and action involve organized crime in a violent and poor suburb (favela) in Rio de Janeiro, which is known as Cidade de Deus in the decade of the 1970s. Actors: Alexandre Rodrigues, Leandro Firmino da Hora, Alice Braga, and Seu Jorge, including many residents of the crime-ridden neighborhood. In 2004, the film was nominated for four Academy Awards: best cinematography, best directing, best editing, and best adapted screenplay, but it didn't win any Oscars. Rated: R for violence, sex, drugs, and profanity.
- 38) *Frida* (2002, USA), Dir. Julie Taymor. Starring Salma Hayek, Alfred Molina, Geoffrey Rush. Biopic of Frida Kahlo, showing her injury, her marriage to Diego Rivera, and her spectacular, personal, idiosyncratic art. Roland Zwick (2002) said this in his review of the movie: “Frida' is worth seeing for the marvelous sense of history it provides, chronicling the turbulent period of the 1920's and 1930's when socialism was the `in' cause for the art world to rally around - at least until the arrival of Stalin when the pipe dream of a worker's state and a classless society fell victim to the murderous brutality of a regime more totalitarian in nature than the one it had replaced. Director Julie Taymor keeps the political issues of the era front and center, perfectly integrating them with the tumultuous relationship at the story's core..” 123 min. R rated.
- 39) *Three Marias / As tres Marias*. Brazil (2003). Three daughters seek revenge for politically-motivated murder in modern Brazil. Dark and disturbing experimental art film. Violence.
- 40) *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004). An international co-production (Argentina, United States, Germany, Chile, Perú, and France). Biopic about a young Che (Ernesto) Guevara

during his 1952 motorcycle ride throughout South America, an adventure that motivated him to become a communist. Screenplay based on Guevara's own *Diarios de motocicleta* and a travelogue by a friend. Directed by Brazilian director Walter Salles; written by Puerto Rican playwright José Rivera. Robert Redford is one of the executive producers. Starring Gael García Bernal and Rodrigo de la Serna.

- 41) *Barrio Cuba* (2005). A Cuban drama about Dir. Humberto Solás. Starring: Jorge Perugorria and Isabel Santos. A Cuban drama of three households in Havana including a nurse, her father, her brother and his sexual orientation.
- 42) *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2005). filmed in the United States on the Mexican border about the death of a Mexican farmhand, a border patrolman, and a rancher who seeks to resolve the mystery, get justice, and return the Mexican's body to Mexico. With Julio César Cedillo, Barry Pepper, and Tommy Lee Jones. Written by Guillermo Arriaga, and directed by Tommy Lee Jones. A gem of a cross-border story, scenery, and sensitive cultural issues.
- 43) *Lost City* (2005). American film about the beginning of the Cuban Revolution in Havana in 1959. Dir. Andy García. Starring: Andy García, Dustin Hoffman, Bill Murray, Inés Sastre. Rating R. Historical drama about Cuba in the last days of the Batista dictatorship and the chaos and decisions occasioned by the advent of the Revolution. 144 min.
- 44) *Viva Cuba*. (2005) Cuban film. Directed by Juan Carlos Cremata Malberti. Winner of a prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Two mothers search for their children, who run away because one mother plans to leave Cuba to go live with her boyfriend. The film revolves around the Cuban policy of placing severe restrictions on Cubans overseas who try to return to Cuba. 80 minutes.
- 45) *Habana Blues* (2005) Spain and Cuba film. Directed by Benito Zambrano. Story two Cuban musicians during the Revolution who want to become stars when they decide to leave or stay in Cuba. Starring Alberto Yoel, Roberto Sanmartín, and Yailene Sierra. 158 minutes.
- 46) *Bandidas* (2006). A crime thriller with Salma Hayek (Mexican) and Penélope Cruz (Spaniard) about two women outlaws in Mexico who set out to avenge the deaths of their fathers. With Sam Shepard, and directed by Joachim Roenning and Espen Sandberg. A box office success (*una película taquillera*).
- 47) *Babel* (2006). A contemporary, postmodern international film made in and about Mexico, California, Morocco, and Japan). With Gael García Bernal, Rinko Kikuchi, Cate Blanchett, and Brad Pitt. This brilliant and fairly complex film is co-written by Guillermo Arriaga and Alejandro González Iñárritu and it is directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. In this film four groups of people from different countries are linked and divided by cultural differences between seemingly isolated yet connected countries.
- 48) *El amor en tiempos del cólera* (*Love in the Time of Cholera*, 2007). A very good movie based on the great novel by the same title by Gabriel García Márquez, Latin America's greatest living novelist. This is a love story that spans 50 years from 1880 to 1930, and, in large part centers on love during old age and under dire circumstances. Directed by Mike Newell, starring Javier Bardem, Benjamin Bratt. The lead actress, Fernanda Montenegro, is an Academy Award-nominated Brazilian star. Rated: R for sex and mild profanity. 130 minutes.
- 49) *El cantante* (2007, USA). Dir. León Ichaso. This is a biopic starring singer Marc Anthony

as Héctor Lavoe and Marc Anthony's then-wife Jennifer López as Lavoe's wife Nilda Román Pérez. Jennifer López also co-produced the film, which is based on the biography of Puerto Rican singer Héctor Lavoe and his struggles with drug addiction, suicide and death by AIDS. It depicts the historical 1970's heart of the Salsa revolution by focusing on a story of romance, personal struggles, and redemption that enabled Lavoe to rise to near-legendary fame. Rated: R for drugs, profanity, and sex.

- 50) *La otra conquista (The Other Conquest)* (1998); Dir. Salvador Carrasco. Co-production Mexico (Plácido Domingo) and 20th Century Fox. Starring Elpidia Carrillo and Damián Delgado. The fictional story based on the Spanish conquest of México by Hernán Cortés and Franciscan friars between 1521 and 1530 setting up the "miracle" of the Virgen de Guadalupe in 1531. The half son of Aztec emperor and his half-sister collaborate in struggling to save the Aztecs' beliefs while the Spanish army and the Catholic friars try to convert the conquered Mexican people.
- 51) *Che* (2008; Part 1) Dir. Steven Soderberg with Benicio del Toro, Demián Bichir, and Santiago Cabrera. The Argentine Ernesto Guevara, begins as "Che" and a band of Cuban exiles (led by Fidel Castro); they reach Cuba from Mexico in 1956. Within two years, they mobilize support and an army and they overthrow the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista.
- 52) *Che* (2008; Part 2) Dir. Steven Soderberg with Benicio del Toro, Demián Bichir, and Carlos Bardem. In 1965, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara resigns from his jobs in the communist Cuban government, leaves Cuba, and secretly makes his last attempt to spread the Cuban revolution in Bolivia.
- 53) *Dance of My Heart*. (2008) American and Cuban-American film. Written and directed by Ricardo Acosta. Documentary about Alberto Alonso, his work creating the Cuban National Ballet, his self-exile from Cuba, his arrival in the United States and his work as a dance professor at Santa Fe College. Starring Alberto Alonso, Sonia Calero, Maya Plisetskaya, and Fernando Alonso. 80 minutes.
- 54) *La Vida Loca; Locked to the Streets: Life of the Maras* (2009). Dir. Christian Poveda. Documentary about the terrifying gang in El Salvador. Rating: R.
- 55) *Sin nombre* (2009) American and Mexican film. Directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga. Called and "adventure/thriller movie." Harrowing story of young woman and her father who travel by train on a threatening journey across an unnamed Latin American country trying to reach (relative) safety in the United States. Starring Edgar Flores, Kristyan Ferrer, and Paulina Gaitán. 96 minutes.
- 56) *5 Días Sin Nora* (2010, México; 93 min.) This is a gem of a small auteur art movie by director Mariana Chenillo and starring Fernando Luján, Cecilia Suárez, and Ari Brickman. A subtitled version was released in the United States in 2010 with the title.
- 57) *Nora's Will*. (2010). Literally, the title is "Five Days Without Nora," but surprisingly, the English title, with its play on words ("will" means several things) works very well. A fun aspect of the movie, aside from the honest and endearing plot, is it's Mexican inter-religious multiculturalism. In April 2010, *5 Días Sin Nora* won seven Arieles awards in the Mexican version of the Academy Awards' Oscars in the Academia Mexicana de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas.
- 58) *The Secret in Their Eyes* (2010, Argentina; 2:35). Dir. Juan José Campanella with Ricardo Darín, Soledad Villamil, Pablo Rago, Javier Godino. Combining a crime story, a

story of frustrated love, and the recent past history of Argentina and its so-called Dirty War by the military dictatorship against domestic protestors it is a superbly crafted and expertly acted film that lays bare the dangers of searching for the truth. It won the American Academy Oscar Award for best foreign language film in 2009.

- 59) *Chico and Rita* (2010). Animated film about songwriter and singer on a journey of success and trouble by directors Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal. Spain. 94 minutes. About Havana, New York City, Las Vegas, Hollywood (Ca), and Paris 1940-1950. Winner of the Spanish 2012 Goya Award for best animated film.
- 60) *From Prada to Nada* (2010). Dir. Ángel Gracia (Venezuelan-born American). Starring Alexa Vega, Camilla Belle, Wilmer Valderrama and Adriana Barraza. Written by Fina Torres and Luis Alfaro. Beautifully photographed by Héctor Ortega. Two Mexican-American sisters, who live the luxurious “Prada-style” life in Beverly Hills are expelled from their mansion when their father dies suddenly; they discover he was bankrupt; and the sisters are forced to move into their Mexican aunt’s over-crowded (but nice) old house in relatively poor East L.A. Mexican neighborhood. Dual love stories based on *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austin wherein the two sisters discover their Mexican identities. PG-13. 106 min.
- 61) *La Bestia* (2011). Also known as *El tren de la muerte* (The Death Train). Dir. Pedro Ultras. Documentary about the Mexican freight trains utilized by 500,000 migrants from Central American to the U.S. My rating: R.
- 62) *El premio* (The Prize). (2011) Argentina. Dir. Paula Markovitch. During a military dictatorship a mother and her young daughter escape Buenos Aires to an isolated shack on a beach. The daughter wants to attend school, but the mother is afraid that they’ll be found by the military and condemned along with the husband/father and cousins. Fine psychological drama in authentic rural setting. Child psychology, subdued but palpable social and political commentary. PG13 (professor’s rating for this foreign film). 99 min.
- 63) *McFarland USA*. (2015) American film based on a true story. Dir. Niki Caro. Starring Kevin Costner. Subject: a high school athletic coach is fired from a job, get the only job open to him at the high school in McFarland, an extremely poor Mexican-American farm town in California’s San Joaquín Valley, where the Chicano students must work picking crops to support their families. 129 min.