

Course title: Cinematic Creativity in Spain: Authorship, Industry, Politics

Language of instruction: English

Professor: Pol Capdevila, Sasa Markus

Professor's contact and office hours: sasa.markus@upf.edu Monday 10 – 11 AM.

Course contact hours: 45

Recommended credit: 6 ECTS credits

Course prerequisites: there are no prerequisites for this course

Language requirements: Recommended level in the European Framework B2 (or equivalent: Cambridge Certificate if the teaching language is English, DELE or 3 semesters in the case of Spanish).

Course focus and approach:

The course examines creativity and authorship in Spanish cinematography through historical and contemporary examples, analyzing their aesthetic, industrial, and political dimensions. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach, it integrates film theory and aesthetics, philosophy, sociology, economics, and theories of collaborative creativity.

Course description:

Is film a collaborative effort or the vision of a single author? Who deserves more credit: the director, writer, or producer?

Controversies related to filmic creation are explored through examples from Spanish cinema. Film as both creative and industrial product is studied through silent period and CIFESA studios (1932-1961). Auteur theory, which positions the director as the primary creator, is examined through the works of Buñuel and Saura, while postmodern directors like Almodóvar and De la Iglesia challenge this idea. Political contradictions include creativity under dictatorship, cultural policies in democracy, and women's contributions. Contemporary debates cover realistic tendencies (Sorogoyen, Simón), digital media's impact, and film as a collaborative art.

Students will also engage in creative course assignments to deepen their understanding.

Learning objectives:

- To understand a specific type of cinematographic creativity, its theory and practice as well as its political, psychological, industrial, social and cultural dimension
- To acquire knowledge of cinema in the Spanish state: historical development and contemporary qualities
- To get to know the basis of film theory, to present a variety of ideas about authorship and diverse theories of collective creativity
- To acquire experience of filmic creativity through class assignments

Course workload: Students will engage in class discussions on screened films and readings, write brief academic papers, and collaborate on creative film proposals. They will have the option to create short films or screenplays and participate in conversations with guest speakers - film professionals. Additionally, they will submit written reflections on field trips related to the course.

Teaching methodology: The course combines lectures, film screenings, and class discussions, supplemented by conversations with industry professionals and field trips. In-class exercises include viewing full-length films and writing analytical reflections. Readings provided by professors will serve as a foundation for discussions. Additionally, students will receive tutorials to support their creative assignments.

Assessment criteria:

25% Mid-term Assignment: Argumentative paper analyzing the creative aspects of a selected Spanish film.

30% Term Assignment: Students choose between:

a) Writing a short script for a Spanish film or creating a brief film using their phone (creative model).

b) Writing a short essay on a course-related topic (theoretical model).

25% Group Project: Groups develop an original film concept (Spanish, Catalan, or involving Spain) and present a production overview, including plot summary, funding model, production style, and key creative personnel. The project must contextualize the film's relevance in contemporary Spanish and global cinema.

20% Class Participation and In-Class Exercises.

BaPIS absence policy:

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student's final grade as follows:

Absences	Penalization
Up to two (2) absences	No penalization
Three (3) absences	1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Four (4) absences	2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Five (5) absences or more	The student receives an INCOMPLETE ("NO PRESENTADO") for the course

The BaPIS attendance policy does not make a distinction between justified and unjustified absences. All absences—whether due to common short-term illnesses or personal reasons—are counted toward the total amount and cannot be excused. Therefore, students are responsible for managing all their absences.

Only in cases of longer absences—such as hospitalization, prolonged illness, traumatic events, or other exceptional situations—will absences be considered for exceptions with appropriate documentation. The Academic Director will review these cases on an individual basis.

Students must inform the Instructor and the International Programs Office promptly via email if serious circumstances arise.

Classroom norms:

- Students will be asked to close their computers during film screenings

Weekly schedule:

WEEK 1

Cinema: A Creative Machine?

Session 1.

Introduction to the course contents and main focus. Presentation of the Syllabus, requirements and method of assessment.

Session 2.

The beginnings of cinema: is the 'artificial eye' creative? Formation of filmic language. Development of industry and the star system. Gestalt: early film theories and the psychology of cinematographic creation. Examples from Spanish silent cinema, authors Benito Perojo, Segundo Chomón, Florian Ray and others.

WEEK 2

Troubles in the *Dream Factory*: Arguments on Co-creation, Authorship and Copyright in Studio System Surroundings. The Case of CIFESA (1932-1961)

Session 1.

Cinema: between collective creation and individual authorship. Talent and serial art-production: labor division in Studio Systems. Development of new artistic professions.

Creative disputes: building the copyright. Who authors the film: producer, director, stars? Film director: artist or craftsman? The status of stars in Studio Systems.

Session 2.

Founding of CIFESA: The Spanish Hollywood. Contracts between CIFESA and Columbia pictures. Starting Spanish production: *Sister San Sulpicio* (*La hermana San Sulpicio*, Florian Ray, 1934). CIFESA stars: Imperio Argentina, Rafael Durán.

Organization within the studio and the relationship with the state before and during the Dictatorship.

Readings:

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217-252.

Pacouret, Jerome. 'Conflicts of Authorship and the Autonomization of Cinema'. *Biens symboliques*, n° 4, 2019
<https://www.biens-symboliques.net/342?lang=en#page-header>

WEEK 3

Film Director as a Star? Auteur Theory and Modern Spanish Cinema

Session 1.

The roll of the Author in modern art and in modern cinema. Characteristics of cinematographic modernity in Spain and worldwide. The view on Film director as an *auteur*, the principal creator of film's artistic dimension. The rise of 'New Spanish cinema' as confronted to Franco's regime.

Session 2.

Case studies: works of Luis García Berlanga, Juan Antonio Bardem and Carlos Saura. The circumstance of Luis Buñuel and his film *Viridiana* (1961).

Readings:

Bazin, Andre. 'De la politique des auteurs', *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 70, April 1957, pp. 9–11

<http://www.newwavefilm.com/about/la-politique-des-auteurs-bazin.shtml>

WEEK 4

Talent under Repression: Creative Ways to Elude Franco's Censorship

Session 1.

Mechanisms and levels of censorship in Franco's Spain.

Berlanga's and Erice's strategies in avoiding censorship. Case studies of *The Executioner* (*El Verdugo*, Luis García Berlanga, 1963) and *The Spirit of the Beehive* (*El espíritu de la colmena*, Victor Erice, 1973). The state's influence on film's final cut: censor as the co-author?

Session 2.

Censorship in the realm of distribution: Spanish versions of *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931, USA) and *Mogambo* (John Ford, 1953). Dubbing of foreign productions

as a form of state-based control and as a creative intervention. Dub-actors as local stars.

WEEK 5

A Creative State? Innovation in Cinema Cultural Politics During and After the Spanish Transition. Production in autonomous communities.

Session 1.

Spanish state as a creative agent: diverse mechanisms of support for national cinematography. *La ley Miro* and the system of state subventions in Spain. Goya's awards. Spanish cinema during the Transition to democracy, La Movida and early works of Pedro Almodóvar.

Session 2.

De – centered creativity. Production system and autonomous communities: how the production system works? The case of Catalonia. Isona Pasola, Agusti Villaronga, Cesc Gay.

WEEK 6

Geniuses of Plagiarism: Postmodern Authorships in Spanish Cinema

Session 1.

Postmodern notions on authorship in art and as applied to cinema. Parody, pastiche, plagiarism and other derivative art-forms as expressive vehicles for postmodern auteurs. Re-inscription of the notion of modern authorship in postmodern times.

Session 2.

Case studies: the works of Pedro Almodóvar, Julio Medem, Alex de la Iglesia

Readings:

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image/Music/Text*. Fontana, 1977. pp. 142-148.

WEEK 7

Authoring True Stories: Contemporary Realism and Spanish Cinema

Session 1.

Originality and authorship in the context of cinema 'based on true events'. Film director as an intermediary between reality and spectatorship: a new paradigm?

Session 2.

Case studies: the films of Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Isaki Lacuesta, Carla Simón, Mar Coll

Readings:

Wheeler, Duncan and Fernando Canet. *(Re)viewing Creative, Critical and Commercial Practices in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. Intellect, 2014. pp. 7–34.

WEEK 8

Authorship and gender in Spanish cinema

Session 1.

Is cinema a masculine profession? Does Authorship have a gender? 4th wave feminism and Spanish cinema.

Session 2.

Female directors in the history of Spanish cinema: Ana Mariscal, Pilar Miró, Margarita Alexandre, Josefina Molina, Cecilia Bartolomé. Contemporary Spanish female film directors.

Readings: Mulvey, Laura: “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. *Screen*, Volume 16, Issue 3, Autumn 1975, pp. 6–18

WEEK 9

Collaborative Creativity – Individual Merit: is Auteur’s Theory Fair? Contemporary Views on Cinema as Collective Art.

Session 1.

Challenging the traditional conception of authorship and film production in Spain: presenting the work of the ‘Authorless Cinema Collective’. Spectatorship as a creative force: the films of Santiago Segura. Can we change the director-star paradigm? Screenwriters (Jorge Guerricaechevarría), editors (José Salcedo), music writers (Roque Baños) and other creatives in Spanish cinema.

Session 2.

Guest Speaker: a person working within the frame of Spanish cinematographic industry

Readings:

Sellors, Paul. “Collective Authorship in Film.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 65, no. 3, Summer, 2007, pp. 263-271.

WEEK 10

Further than a Star System: Cinematographic Creativity and other Media

Session 1.

Authorship, Creativity and Copyright patterns in Spanish cinema and how they influenced or were transferred to television and digital media. Alternative platforms for film distribution: the case of #LittleSecretFilm. Spanish film stars and directors on TV screens. Netflix in Spain. The case of Filmin.

Session 2.

Field trip

WEEK 11

A Creative Experience

Session 1 and 2: Presentation, debate and analysis of student's group projects

Last revision: March 2025.

Selection of required readings. Professor will provide with the full material at the beginning of the course.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image/Music/Text*. Fontana, 1977. pp. 142-148.

Bazin, Andre. 'De la politique des auteurs', *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 70, April 1957, pp. 9-11

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217-252.

<https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/benjamin.pdf>

Mulvey, Laura: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". *Screen*, Volume 16, Issue 3, Autumn 1975, pp. 6-18

Pacouret, Jerome. "Conflicts of Authorship and the Autonomization of Cinema". *Biens symboliques*, n° 4, 2019

<https://www.biens-symboliques.net/342?lang=en#page-header>

Sellors, Paul. "Collective Authorship in Film." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol.

65, no. 3, Summer, 2007, pp. 263-271.

<https://is.muni.cz/el/phil/podzim2018/FAVBKalt5/um/C. Paul Sellors - Collective Authorship in Film.pdf>

Wheeler, Duncan and Fernando Canet. *(Re)viewing Creative, Critical and Commercial Practices in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. Intellect, 2014. pp. 7-34.

Recommended bibliography:

- Aaron, Michele. *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking on*. Wallflower Press, 2007.
- Aranzubia, Asier, et al. "The Collaborative Practices of the 'Colectivo sin Autor' (Authorless Cinema Collective)." *Community Filmmaking: Diversity, Practices and Places*, edited by Sarita Malik, et al. Routledge, 2017, pp. 110-126.
- Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* University of California Press, 1967.
- Campbell, Neil. 'Learning from Almería'. *The Rizomatic West: Representing the American West in Transnational, Global, Mecanical Age*. University of Nebraska, 2008, pp. 113-119.
- Cerdan, Josetxo et. al. "Censorship, Film Studios and Production Companies." *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*. Edited by Labanyi, Jo and Tatjana Pavlovic. John Wiley, 2013.
- Davies, Ann. *Spain on Screen. Developments in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. Palgrave – Macmillan, 2011.
- Ewans, Peter William. *Spanish Cinema: The Auteurist Tradition*. Oxford, 1999.
- Howkins, John. *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas*. Penguin, 2001.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of Twentieth--Century Art Forms*. University of Illinois, Chicago, 2000.
- Kerrigan, Susan. "Filmmaking as Creative Practice: Assessing Creative Magnitude and Scale." *Global Media Journal*, Vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, <https://www.hca.westernsydney.edu.au/gmjau/?p=2941> Accessed February 26th 2020.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles. *Hypermodern Times*. Grasset & Jasquelle, 2005.
- Mayne, Judith. *Cinema and Spectatorship*. Routledge, 1993.
- Mira, Alberto. *Historical Dictionary of Spanish Cinema*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.
- Nadal-Melsió, Sara. "The Invisible Tradition: Avant-Garde Catalan Cinema under Late Francoism." *Hispanic Review*, vol. 78, no 4, Autumn 2010, pp. 465.468.
- Simonton, Dean. *Great Flicks: Scientific Studies of Cinematic Creativity and Aesthetics*. Oxford, 2011.
- "Group Artistic Creativity: Creative Clusters and Cinematic Success in Feature Films." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. Vol. 34, no. 7, July 2004, pp. 1494-1520.
- Smith, Paul Julian. *Spanish Lessons: Cinema and Television in Contemporary Spain*. Berghahn, 2017.
- Stone, Rob. *Spanish Cinema*. Pearson, 2002.
- Torben, Grodal, et al. *Visual Authorship: Creativity and Intentionality in Media*. Northern Lights, 2004.
- Whittaker, Tom. *The Films of Elías Querejeta: A Producer of Landscapes*. University of Wales Press, 2011.
- Wollen, Peter. *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. Secker and Warburg, 1972.
- Zunzunegui Díez, Santos and Jenaro Talens. *Modes of Representation in Spanish Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998.