

Span 922: The Discreet Charm of Modernity and Other Stories of Spanish Cinema

Prof. Jorge Pérez

M 4:00-7:00

Histories of Spanish cinema pivot around the concept of modernity (or lack thereof). The Spanish film industry is usually cast as underdeveloped in relation not only to Hollywood, but also to other European national cinemas. The negative impact of the Civil War on the emerging film industry and the state control on film during Francoism have been typical ingredients of those narratives that often date the beginning of modernity from a cinematographic point of view with the arrival of the young directors of the so called *Nuevo Cine Español* in the 1960s. From that moment onwards, modernity will be associated with formal experimentation, while popular cinema will most likely be rendered as reactionary. In the post-Franco period, modernity will be often (con)fused with postmodernity, but it will still remain as a powerful conceptual tool of analysis. In this course will trace the development of Spanish Cinema from the Francoist period until present-day manifestations paying particular attention to and questioning these narratives of modernity. We will approach the notion of modernity (too often used in histories of Spanish cinema as an under-theorized concept or limited to aesthetic features) with an intersectional approach, taking into account how the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality, and race, among others, take a part in those “stories of modernity” of the Spanish film industry.

Films: a representative selection including films by Luis Buñuel, Luis García Berlanga, Carlos Saura, Víctor Erice, Pilar Miró, Pedro Almodóvar, Icíar Bollaín, and Alejandro Amenábar, among others.

There will also be a number of readings about film theory, cultural theory, and film criticism that will provide students with the basic theoretical tools and methods to conduct a formal analysis of films.

Students will watch the films outside of class time, as a preparation for the class period. The evaluation will include active class participation, several oral presentations, and a final research paper (20-25 pages).