

**Che at the Movies (HIST 365.01):
Che's Women**

*“At the risk of seeming ridiculous,
let me say that the true revolutionary
is guided by a great feeling of love.”*
-- Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1963)

Spring 2014, Truman State University
OP2121, W 6:00p - 8:50p
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Description

Since his death in Bolivia in 1967, the Argentine guerrilla leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara has become a bigger than life icon. In recent years several of his diaries have been republished, and three feature films and numerous documentaries have been made about his life. In this class, we will watch these films and read his diaries with the double purpose of understanding twentieth-century revolutionary movements as well as the relative strengths and weaknesses of different media in portraying historical events. In particular, we will examine the question of whether Che’s idea of the Socialist New Man included women. After analyzing Che’s own diaries, feature films based on his diaries, secondary works about Che’s life, and documentaries that assume a broader perspective, we will create our own film that reflects Che’s views on gender.

Requirements

Our goal in this class is to challenge existing assumptions, engage alternative viewpoints, and encourage critical thinking. Through the study of history, we seek to empower ourselves to be better citizens, and to provide ourselves with the skills necessary to play a positive and educated role in society. We need to be active constituents rather than mere recipients of our education. To accomplish those tasks, we should strive to create an open and supportive learning environment. Regular attendance and active participation are also necessary. Please drop me a note if you are unable to attend, or if you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the class.

Readings

The following are the required books for this class. We will run this course as a seminar (rather than a lecture course) in which class time will be focused on discussion, so it is critically important that you keep up with the readings.

Guevara, Ernesto Che. *The Awakening of Latin America: A classic anthology of Che Guevara’s writings on Latin America*. Melbourne, Vic: Ocean Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-9804292-8-2

_____. *The Motorcycle Diaries: Notes On A Latin American Journey*. Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-1-920888-10-7

_____. *Diary of a Combatant: From the Sierra Maestra to Santa Clara (Cuba: 1956-58)*. Melbourne, Vic: Ocean Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-9870779-4-3

_____. *Congo Diary: Episodes of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*. Melbourne, Vic: Ocean Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-9804292-9-9

_____. *The Bolivian Diary*. Melbourne, Vic: Ocean, 2006. ISBN: 978-1-920888-24-4

Assignments and grades

Course grades will be based on the following assignments. You can check your grade progress on the class Blackboard web page (there is a total of 1000 possible points in the class). Assignments are due at the beginning of class, and I do not accept “drop and run” papers or papers submitted without the physical presence of the student. Grades on late assignments will be penalized 10 percent for each day that they are late. Successful completion of all assignments is required to receive credit for this class.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Film presentation	100
Response papers (5 x 100 pts ea)	500
Book report and presentation (April 16)	200
Final project (May 7)	200

Film presentations (100 pts): Each student will present and lead the discussion of one feature film or documentary that we watch in class. An introduction should help set up the historical context for what we will watch, and the discussion should focus on the relative merits of the film including its ability to present and interpret historical events. Preview the film in advance, and write up a list of discussion questions or themes for the class. Consider questions such as these in preparing for your presentation:

- Who is the director? What else has this person made and how does this film fit into that genre?
- What evidence is there of historical research that the filmmaker conducted in the process of producing the film?
- What is the potential and limitations of the medium of film for interpreting history as portrayed through this specific film?
- What are the cinematographic virtues of the film?
- How have other reviewers critiqued this film?

Please Note: It is your responsibility to pick up the film from Pickler library and bring it to class for viewing. In order to be sure that the film is not checked out when we need it in class, it is a good idea to put a hold on the film for a day or two before we watch it.

Response papers (100 pts each): For every book we read and the accompanying film we watch, critique how they present this part of the story of Che’s life with a particular focus on the issue of the relative strengths of different media to communicate and analyze historical events. The essays should be about three pages long, typed, double spaced, follow good essay form (have an intro, thesis, conclusion, etc.) and include citations, a bibliography, and page numbers.

Book report and presentation (200 pts): Select one book about Che Guevara from the

following bibliography. Have me approve your selection, and then write an essay critiquing its argument. The essays should be about three pages long, typed, double spaced, follow good essay form (have an intro, thesis, conclusion, etc.) and include citations, a bibliography, and page numbers. On April 16, we will discuss your findings in class.

Final project (200 pts). As a class, make a film about Che's views on gender. This will include conducting research on the topic, writing a script, designing costumes, filming the story, and finally editing the film (100 pts for your individual contributions, 100 pts for the project as a whole).

Class Schedule

Wk1 (Jan 15) Introduction

Screen: *Chevolution* (2010, 90 min, F2849.22.G85 C548 2010)

Wk2 (Jan 22) Revolutionary theories

Discuss: Guevara, *The Awakening of Latin America*

Screen: Pierre Kalfon, *El Che; Investigating a legend* (1997, 90 min, F2849.22.G85 C54)

Wk3 (Jan 29) Motorcycle Diaries

Assignment due: Response essay 1

Screen: Walter Salles, *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2005, 127 min, F2224 .G783 2005)

Wk4 (Feb 5) Motorcycle Diaries

Discuss: Guevara, *Motorcycle Diaries*; Guevara, *The Awakening of Latin America*, 28-40, 69-88

Wk5 (Feb 12) Cuba

Assignment due: Response essay 2

Screen: Steven Soderbergh, *Che Part One* (2009, F1787.5 .G83132 2009)

Wk6 (Feb 19) Cuba

Discuss: Guevara, *Diary of a Combatant*

Wk7 (Feb 26) Africa

Assignment due: Response essay 3

Screen: Jihan El-Tahri, *Cuba, Une Odyssée Africaine* (2008, 190 min., F1776.2 .C83 2007)

Wk8 (March 5) Africa

Discuss: Guevara, *African Dream*

Wk9 (March 19) Bolivia

Assignment due: Response essay 4

Screen: Steven Soderbergh, *Che Part Two* (2009, F1787.5 .G83132 2009)

Wk10 (March 26) Bolivia (documentary)

Screen: Richard Dindo, *Ernesto "Che" Guevara: The Bolivian diary* (2009, 94 min., F2849.22.G85 E76 2009)

Wk11 (April 2) Bolivia

Discuss: Guevara, *Bolivian Diary*

Wk12 (April 9) Film production

Screen: *Che Guevara: A Guerilla to the End* (1999, 51 min., F2849.22.G85 C44 1999; online: <http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=15581&xtid=9043>)

Assignment due: Response essay 5

Wk13 (April 16) Book report presentations

Screen: *Cuba: Daughters of Fidel* (1998, 60 min., online: <http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=15581&xtid=7021>)

Wk14 (April 23) Film production

Screen: *A Rebel with a cause: death of a man, birth of a legend* (1999, 26 min, online: <http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=15581&xtid=10523>)

Wk15 (April 30) Film production

Screen: Eduardo Montes-Bradley, *Che, rise and fall* (2007, 52 min., F2849.22.G85 C444 2007)

May 7: Film premiere

Bibliography (works marked with a * are key works)

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