



FS/WS 326 ALMODÓVAR AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES: THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN SPANISH FILM
IES Abroad Madrid

DESCRIPTION:

This course addresses two of the most intriguing aspects of contemporary Spanish cinema: the study of Pedro Almodóvar, one of Spain's most internationally acclaimed directors, and an exploration of representations of Spanish women –primarily in films made by women– within this cinematic tradition.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: Spanish

PREREQUISITES: Proficiency in Spanish

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

The course methodology is based on the analysis of films (feature films, short films, and episodes from series) to explore representations of women in contemporary Spanish cinema, with a special focus on the films of Pedro Almodóvar and works directed by female filmmakers over the past two decades. Theoretical explanations serve as a tool for the theoretical and practical study of these representations through the viewing of significant films. Each session begins with the professor providing an introduction on the historical and/or thematic context of the film, as well as its cultural, political, aesthetic, and ideological framework. After the screening, a collective analysis of the film's formal and thematic elements is conducted, requiring student participation. The class dynamics are open at all times to student suggestions. The 3-hour session includes a fifteen-minute break.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10%):** Attendance and active participation in class are essential. Punctuality and engagement are expected. Refer to the official IES attendance policy on Moodle for further details.
- **WEEKLY ESSAYS OR FINAL ESSAY (30%):** Students may choose between:
 - 1) An essay or analysis of a Spanish film, ranging from 5 to 10 pages, addressing a relevant topic from the syllabus. The topic must be approved by the professor. This final essay should reflect personal insights and precise ideas. Students are encouraged to include quotes from books or other sources (academic journals, internet texts, newspapers) and films beyond those screened in class. Topics might include specific themes in a director's work (e.g., women, education, religion, sexual identity, rural life), filmographies of female directors, character studies in Almodóvar's films, or genre analysis in his work.
 - 2) Weekly commentaries. Students will submit at least four commentaries throughout the course, analyzing specific aspects (aesthetics, ideological or cultural background, etc.) of films viewed during the week.
 - 3) **MIDTERM EXAM (20%):** Covers class content and films analyzed in the first half of the syllabus.
- **FINAL EXAM (40%):** A written exam covering films and topics discussed in class throughout the course.

Course Element

The primary aim of this course is to provide students with the tools to understand Pedro Almodóvar's cinema and situate it within the broader context of contemporary film. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze the aesthetic and cinematic elements that have made him one of the most important Spanish directors in recent decades. They will also trace the roots of many of his themes to the social, cultural, and political context of post-Transition Spain.

The course also offers an introduction to some of the most interesting female Spanish filmmakers of recent years. Given the



current surge in films directed by women in Spain, students will be equipped to identify trends, including influences directly attributable to Almodóvar's work.

Another key objective is to help students express themselves with greater academic rigor and depth when analyzing films. Conceptual and discursive tools will be provided to facilitate this task.

Finally, the course seeks to spark or deepen students' interest in Almodóvar's cinema as a lens for understanding Spanish society and culture, while also exploring emerging female filmmakers whose works have achieved international recognition.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the key elements of Pedro Almodóvar's cinematic language and his international success.
- Grasp the historical, social, cultural, and aesthetic context that gave rise to Almodóvar's films.
- Situate Almodóvar's work within the landscape of Spanish cinema from 1975 to 2024.
- Identify issues of gender depicted in Almodóvar's films.
- Analyze the portrayal of Spanish women in Almodóvar's films and in those directed by female filmmakers since 2000.
- Discover current Spanish female directors offering compelling portrayals of women in their films.
- Develop a personal, reflective, and critical discourse applied to cinematic texts.
- Enjoy Almodóvar's films and those of emerging female directors as artistic spectacles.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, attendance is **mandatory for all IES Madrid classes**, including course-related excursions. Absences will only be excused in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. Any assessed work, including exams, tests, and presentations, will be rescheduled if the absence is justified; otherwise, it will be graded as 0. You are allowed a maximum of 1 unexcused absence for once-a-week courses and 2 unexcused absences for twice-a-week courses. Each additional absence will deduct 5 points from your final grade. **Accumulating 7 or more absences in twice-a-week courses, or 4 or more in once-a-week courses, may lead to a failing grade.** Students arriving more than 11 minutes after the scheduled start time will be marked as 'late.' Three 'late' arrivals will be counted as 1 absence. Any student arriving 30 minutes or more after the scheduled start time will be marked as 'absent.' For more information, please refer to the full [Attendance and Punctuality Policy](#) document.

Trigger warnings:- Many of the films screened in the course contain explicit sexual imagery and scenes of violence that may be uncomfortable for some students. Some films also include scenes of death, suicide, or controversial topics. All mandatory and optional films can be substituted with others. Students who find a particular film troubling or offensive can opt out of viewing it but must replace it with other recommended works provided by the professor.

CONTENT:

Choose an item	Content	Assignments
Session 1	Introduction • Presentation of the course: content, syllabus, etc. • Explanation of the evaluation system. • Overview of Pedro Almodóvar's work: early stages, cultural traditions, styles, themes, and evolution. Viewing of film excerpts and documentaries about the director.	• Viewing and Analysis of Almodóvar's Short Films: Students will watch, analyze, and comment on Pedro Almodóvar's short films and selected excerpts from his feature films. • Reading Assignments: Selected readings from Pedro Almodóvar's book <i>Patty Diphusa</i>.

Choose an item	Content	Assignments
Session 2	The 1980s and Almodóvar's Early Films - Understanding Spain's social and political context: the Transition and the social changes of the 1980s, including La Movida Madrileña. - Exploring key trends in Spanish cinema from 1975 to 1985. - Analyzing the style of Almodóvar's early films ("costumbrismo" and postmodernity).	- Projection and Commentary on Excerpts of Almodóvar's films from 1980-1987. - Commentary on excerpts from representative films of the Spanish Transition period, including cine del <i>destape</i> and cine <i>quinqui</i>. [These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]
Session 3	International Success: <i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i> - Understanding the reasons for the international success of this Almodóvar film. - Examining the evolution of Almodóvar's aesthetic style: cinematography, color, and portrayal of female characters. - Analyzing the themes in this film that define the "Almodovarian universe" (loneliness, gender relations, the search for love, the postmodern city)	Projection and Commentary on <i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i> (1989). [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]
Session 4	The World of Women in Almodóvar's Cinema Analyzing the representation of women in Almodóvar's films, focusing on <i>Todo sobre mi madre</i>.	Projection and Commentary of <i>Todo sobre mi madre</i> (1999). [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]]
Session 5	The Political Almodóvar: The 1990s - Tracing Almodóvar's evolution from hedonistic to socially engaged filmmaking. - Examining the political themes of Almodóvar's films, such as historical memory. - Contextualizing Almodóvar's cinema from 1990 to 2000 within Spain's socio-political landscape.	Projection and Commentary of Excerpts of <i>Carne trémula</i>, <i>Madres paralelas</i>. [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]]
Session 6	Almodóvar and the Roots of His Cinema Understanding the key elements of Almodóvar's more introspective films (presence of rural settings, Manchegan identity, rural-urban contrasts).	Projection and Commentary of Excerpts of <i>Volver</i> y <i>La flor de mi secreto</i>. [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]

Choose an item	Content	Assignments
Session 7	The last Almodóvar - Identifying the characteristics of Almodóvar's most recent films (2010-2025). - Comparing the portrayal of women in these films with that in his earlier works.	- Projection and Commentary of Excerpts of <i>de La piel que habito</i>, <i>Los abrazos rotos</i>, <i>Los amores pasajeros</i>. - Projection and Commentary on <i>Dolor y gloria</i>. [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]]
Session 8	An Almodóvar “school” - Discovering filmmakers influenced by Almodóvar’s films. - Exploring the contributions of Almodóvar’s production company, El Deseo, to Spanish cinema. - Discussing whether a distinctive Almodóvarian style can be found in other filmmakers’ Works.	Projection and Commentary of Excerpts from <i>Foodie Love</i> and <i>Mi vida sin mí</i> (Isabel Coixet), <i>Perdona bonita, pero Lucas me quería a mí</i> (Ayaso y Sabroso). [Trigger warnings: These films contain adult content. Alternative options will be available for students who find the material uncomfortable]]
Session 9	Spanish Female Filmmakers Learning about the most notable Spanish female filmmakers from three key generations (Transition filmmakers, the 1990s generation, and millennial filmmakers).	Projection and Commentary of Excerpts from Spanish Female Directors: Films from the period 1975-2008.
Session 10	New Spanish Female Filmmakers - Exploring the most prominent Spanish female directors of recent years (2010–2024). - Situating these directors within the broader context of women-directed Spanish cinema since the Transition.	Projection and Commentary of Excerpts from Spanish Female Directors: Films from the period 2008-2025.
Session 11	The Generational Perspective of New Female Filmmakers Highlighting recurrent themes in Spanish female filmmakers’ works from 2010 to 2024: intergenerational misunderstandings, challenges in a globalized world, and generational issues.	Viewing and Commentary of <i>Las distancias</i>.

Choose an item	Content	Assignments
Session 12	New Representations of Women in Films by Spanish Female Directors - Examining the new perspectives on women in films by Spanish female directors from 2008 to 2024. - Identifying characteristics of female characters in these films (empowerment, independence).	Viewing and Commentary of <i>La novia</i>.
Session 13	Nostalgia and Memory in the Films of New Spanish Female Directors - Analyzing the use of nostalgia and historical memory in the works of new female filmmakers. - Exploring the sociocultural traits of 1990s Spain, where these directors grew up and were shaped. - Lesson Objective(s)	Viewing and Commentary of <i>Verano 1993</i> and <i>Las niñas</i>.

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- None

REQUIRED READINGS:

- SÁNCHEZ NORIEGA, J. L., *Universo Almodóvar. Estética de la pasión en un cineasta posmoderno*, Madrid, Alianza, 2017.
- STRAUSS, Frédéric, *Almodóvar on Almodóvar*, Faber and Faber, NY, 2006.

FILMOGRAPHY

a) Films by Pedro Almodóvar:

- *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988)
- *La flor de mi secreto* (1995)
- *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999)
- *Volver* (2006)
- *Julieta* (2016)
- *Dolor y gloria* (2019)
- *Madres paralelas* (2021)

b) Films of Spanish female filmmakers

- *La novia* (Paula Ortiz, 2015)
- *Las distancias* (Elena Trapé, 2018)
- *Las niñas* (Pilar Palomero, 2020)
- *Mataharis* (Icíar Bollaín, 2007)

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- ALMODÓVAR, Pedro, *Patty Diphusa*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 1991.
- AGUILAR CARRASCO, Pilar, *Mujer, amor y sexo en el cine español de los 90*. Fundamentos, Madrid, 1998.
- ALLINSON, Mark, *Un laberinto español. Las películas de Pedro Almodóvar*, Madrid, Ocho y medio, 2003.
- ARRANZ, Fátima, *Cine y género en España*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2010.
- BALLESTEROS, Isolina, *Cine (ins)urgente. Textos filmicos y contextos culturales de la España postfranquista*, Madrid, Fundamentos, 2001.
- BALONGA FUGUEROLA, M^a Asunción, *El mito de la supermujer. Desde el cine con amor...*, Madrid, Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, 2003.
- BERZOSA, Alberto, *Homoherejías fílmicas: cine homosexual subversivo en España en los años setenta y ochenta*, Madrid, Brumaria, 2014.
- CASTEJÓN LEORZA, María, *Más fotogramas de género. Representación de feminidades y masculinidades en el cine español de los 90*, Logroño, Siníndice, 2015.
- CASTRO, Amanda, *La representación de la mujer en el cine español de la transición*, Oviedo, KRK Ediciones, 2009.
- COLAIZZI, Giulia (ed.), *Feminismo y teoría fílmica*, Valencia, Episteme, 1995.
- GARCÍA DE LEÓN, M. Antonia, *Pedro Almodóvar: la otra España cañí*, Ciudad Real, Diputación Provincial, 1989.
- GIL GASCÓN, Fátima, *Españolas en un país de ficción. La mujer en el cine franquista (1939-1963)*, Sevilla, Comunicación Social Ed., 2011.
- HEREDERO, Carlos F., *La mitad del cielo. Directoras españolas de los años noventa*, Málaga, Festival de Cine Español, 1998.
- HOLGUÍN, Antonio, *Pedro Almodóvar*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1994.
- KUHN, Annette, *Cine de mujeres: feminismo y cine*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1991.
- MARKUS, Sasa, *La poética de Pedro Almodóvar*, Barcelona, Littera Books, 2001.
- MARTÍN-MÁRQUEZ, Susan, *Feminist Discourse and Spanish Cinema. Sight Unseen*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- MORRIS, B. y VERNON, K., *Post-Franco, Post-modern: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar*, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1995.
- POYATO SÁNCHEZ, Pedro, *Identidad visual y forma narrativa en el drama cinematográfico de Almodóvar*, Madrid, Síntesis, 2015.
- RODRÍGUEZ, Jesús, *Almodóvar y el melodrama de Hollywood: historia de una pasión*, Valladolid, Maxtor, 2004.
- SEGUIN VERGARA, Jean-Claude, *Pedro Almodóvar o La deriva de los cuerpos*, Murcia, Filmoteca Regional, 2009.
- STRAUSS, Frédéric, *Conversaciones con Pedro Almodóvar*, Madrid, Akal, 2001.
- YARZA, Alejandro, *Un caníbal en Madrid. La sensibilidad camp y el reciclaje de la historia en el cine de Pedro Almodóvar*. Madrid, 1999.
- ZURIÁN, Fran A. / VÁZQUEZ VARELA, Consuelo (comp.), *Almodóvar. El cine como pasión*, Cuenca, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2005.
- ZURIÁN, Francisco A. (ed.), *Miradas de mujer. Cineastas españolas para el siglo XXI*, Madrid, Fundamentos, 2017.
- www.pedroalmodovar.es