

**GESM 120g: Seminar in Humanistic Inquiry**  
**Trauma and Memory in Latin American and Spanish Cinema**  
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## Objectives

This seminar focuses on the ethics and politics of trauma and memory by looking at some examples of Latin American and Spanish cinema since the 1980s to the present. We explore the way that these cinematic texts function as a mode of witnessing the traumatic past, thereby mediating between subjective and collective experiences at a local, national or trans-national level. The seminar will ask: how do these cinematic texts reflect and respond to complex and contradictory political and social concerns with remembering the victims of war and/or state terror and those silenced, persecuted, executed, forced to migrate or to exile, anonymously buried in common graves, or rendered invisible within public history and social memory? How do these cinematic texts articulate the way that state terror impinges on concrete and intangible realities, as Suely Rolnik suggests? Is trauma a helpful theoretical concept to think about how the effects of state terror, whether in Chile, Argentina or Spain, impact on the present, or to reflect on the experiences of victims of war or state terror, or are we reducing and distilling complex, multilayered and contentious historical, social and cultural processes to the category of trauma? What are the affective, emotional and critical implications in effective witnessing practices? How does cinema represent horror and traumatic experiences without running the risk of objectifying the victim, the other or the horrific? Can historical memory be interpreted as symptomatic of the way in which

the public use of history could be reduced to its commemorative dimension, or does cinema function as a thoughtful cultural practice that brings together subjective and collective memories and discourses as constitutive forces for a rethinking of the fragments of history? These questions will be considered by looking at the films indicated below. The seminar will allow students to become familiar with current theoretical debates on memory and trauma in the US and on the ethics and politics of memory and amnesia in Spain and Latin America.

**Films to discuss in the seminar: We will divide the films by country (Chile, Argentina and Spain) and will arrange them chronologically**

Chile:

- Missing by Costa-Gavras (1982)
- Death and the Maiden by Roman Polanski (1994)
- Chile the Obstinate Memory by Patricio Guzman (1997)
- Machuca by Andres Wood (2004)

Argentina:

- The Official Story by Luiz Puenzo (1985)
- The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo by Lourdes Portillo (1985)
- Chronicle of an Escape by Adrian Caetano (2006)
- Clandestine Childhood by Benjamin Avila (2011)

Spain:

- The Devil's Backbone by Guillermo del Toro (2001)
- Bad Education by Pedro Almodovar (2004)
- Pan's Labyrinth by Guillermo del Toro (2006)
- The Mexican Suitcase by Trisha Ziff (2011)