



DIVERSITY STATEMENT | Dr. Francisco López-Ruiz

A first decision to seek equity, inclusion and diversity in my courses is to expand the canon beyond the obvious auteurs, including innovative, powerful and active filmmakers. For example: [Linda Yvette Chávez](#), who was born in Norwalk, California, but whose parents are Mexican emigrants. Chávez studied an undergrad in writing at Stanford; then she went on to study Writing for Cinema and Television at USC, earning her MFA and receiving the Jack Nicholson Award for merit in writing. Chávez created, wrote and produced the TV bilingual dramedy *Gentefied* with America Ferrera attached as executive producer. All these aspects, together and separately, are now very important when designing my courses.

With a more careful review, I found that numerous valuable female film directors, screenwriters, producers, cinematographers and art directors are innovating the industry despite the structural disadvantages they face. For example: in September 2023 Alejandra Márquez Abella won the Ariel for Best Picture with *Northern Skies Over Empty Space*, beating even Iñárritu's *Bardo*. Two weeks later she premiered *A Million Miles Away* on Amazon Prime Video about engineer José Hernández, «the first migrant farmworker to be an astronaut». I investigated in wonder that the director, instead of shooting the film in the US, brought Hollywood to Mexico. Abella shot the entire feature in Mexico City, Texcoco and her native San Luis Potosí. The director and screenwriter also proposed a supportive vision of success instead of the rugged individualism that usually dominates biopics. Even if Alejandra Márquez Abella does not yet receive all the attention she deserves—in the media or in academia, in Mexico or in the US—I am moved by the way her vision enriches the film production by improving the lives of all of us. In my last seminar on transnational Mexican filmmakers, women creators occupy an equal place to men in the quality of their proposals, as can be seen in the [syllabus](#).

Inclusion and belonging are fundamental human needs for self-esteem and well-being. We all need and deserve to be valued and to belong, even if our appearance does not correspond to the mainstream trends. Screen examples in class should be drawn from a diverse array of mediamakers, with casts, characters, and aesthetics that include a range of representation. In my previous research I have dealt with the invisibility of contemporary native peoples (for example, at the [National Museum of Anthropology](#) in Mexico City). I am currently conscious of making visible the way in which “the indigenous” is biased and stereotyped in film and TV industries. In my courses, directors like Ángeles Cruz are very important because of their multicultural vision, their authority about indigenous perspectives—many times from non-binary gender positions—even if films like *Nudo mixteco* (2021) have not been commercially successful.

My audiovisual essays include different, "marginal" positions: [Obāchan](#) about the output of young Mexican filmmaker Nicolasa Ruiz; [My Home is Somewhere Else](#) (Carlos Hagerman and Jorge Villanueva, 2022) on migration; [Maité Alberdi](#) highlighting the work of the Chilean documentary filmmaker; [Radical](#) (Christopher Zalla, 2023) and subversive hybrid independent films [499](#) (Rodrigo Reyes, 2020) and [Epitafio](#) (Yulene Olaizola and Rubén Imaz, 2015), among others. My hope, as an educator, is to improve understanding about the richness of identities and life experiences, so that today's students can build, during the 21st century, more just, inclusive and happy societies.