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International Film Series to be screened at UTPA

For eight years Susan Weeks Coulter has worked to bring films from underrepresented countries to the surface. As the founder of Global Film Initiative, a non-profit film distributor, she has chosen a series of films every year from developing nations. The Global Lens film series will make its UT System debut on Sept. 9.

By [Yngrid Fuentes the pan american](#)

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The University of Texas-Pan American will join the efforts to promote cross-cultural awareness, as the first university in the UT System to show the Global Lens Film Series. With films from all over the world, the series offers a window into different traditions and rich cultural lessons.

Starting Sept. 9 at 7 p.m. with "Becloud (Vaho)," a Mexican film directed by Alejandro Gerber Bicecci, the series films will be screened admission-free at the Student Union Theatre, and will be open to the public and UTPA community.

"This would be the best venue to see something on the big screen that I know of in the whole Valley, for a constant menu of foreign films, and well done films too," media and marketing librarian Virginia Gause said. "Just because people come here from many countries doesn't mean the general public understands all these various cultures,"

Based in San Francisco, the Global Film Initiative is a non-profit film distributor created in 2002 by Susan Weeks Coulter, a former Peace Corps volunteer who decided to start the organization after the events on 9/11.

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Courtesy of Global Lens Film Series

CULTURAL LEANINGS - The first film in the series, Becloud (Vaho), a tangled story of three Mexican neighbors, will be shown in the Student Union Theatre Sept. 9 at 7 p.m. and on the 10th at 3 p.m. The film is an enthralling mix of history, memory, and atonement."

support countries and regions that are typically underrepresented within the international film community," Global Lens Series manager Jeremy Quist said. "We wanted to help support some of those countries and help promote their films and make them more accessible to the U.S."

With the purpose of promoting cross-cultural understanding through cinema, Global Lens strives to acquaint American audiences with the taste of international films, building awareness about the world beyond America's borders.

"Ironically, it is the United States, and specially its youth, that suffers disproportionately from this lack of exposure to other cultures," says a statement on the organization's Website. "The stability of America's ethnic mosaic depends on deep cross-cultural understanding, particularly between young Americans and the children of recently arrived immigrants."

Each year the initiative puts together a series of foreign films from developing nations. After the first series, in 2003 and 2004, the group has collected over 65 films from around the world.

"We're always looking for more countries, but they have to be from the regions that we support, which are Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and a little bit in central Western Europe as well," Quist said. "We're looking for a really strong story, a really strong narrative with a strong cinematic and artistic quality behind it, and we're looking for an authentic voice, for some sense of cultural authenticity, we're interested in the films that could have only come from and could only have been made from the countries that they come from."

The 2010 series at UTPA features 10 films that will be screened on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and Fridays at 3 p.m. once a month. Each screening will include educational activities and presentations related to the country in turn. For a full schedule visit (<http://php.lib.utpa.edu/globallens/>)

After each release, UTPA will be able to keep the films, and they will be available for students at the university library.

"We plan to circulate them just like we do with other films," Gause said. "And we plan to release them as they are screened so that they can be immediately used." For more information contact her at vgause@utpa.edu.

The success of the films and the reception of the audience will determine future screenings of the series.

"We're very excited about it, and we hope to get as many people interested and really appreciate and enjoy the concept of these series." Business analyst Nadia Gallegos said.

"We love it and its been great exposing the project, and we're looking forward to make it happen every month," Gallegos continued, " its just a matter of getting the funds, and we're gonna work hard to get them and keep promoting it." For more information contact ngallegos@utpa.edu.

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