

# ASU's Poitier Film School to host master classes, screening series with visionary filmmakers

## Guggenheim Fellow Rodrigo Reyes to kick off Borderlands Studios series in LA

By Barbara VanDenburgh, ASU News  
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Rodrigo Reyes, the acclaimed Mexican American filmmaker and Guggenheim Fellow whose 2022 documentary “Sansón and Me” won the Best Film Award at Sheffield DocFest, has built his career with films that challenge the traditions of cinema and explore the impact of systems of power to reveal the potential for transformative change.

The power of his work drew the attention of [Borderlands Studios](#), a groundbreaking initiative within The Sidney Poitier New American Film School at Arizona State University, which named Reyes one of its four inaugural Visionary Fellows.

Now, Reyes will share his art and expertise in the first of a series of spring master classes and public screenings with the Borderlands Visionary Fellows, hosted by The Poitier Film School at ASU California Center Broadway on Friday, March 21.

“I am honored to be in community with the students at ASU as part of the trailblazing Borderlands Visionary Fellowship,” Reyes said. “I hope that my visit can energize the voices of the next generation of filmmakers hoping to reimagine our world.”

Reyes will lead a [two-hour master class](#) at the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Event Center, free and open both to Poitier Film School students and members of the general public, examining his life as a filmmaker, and sharing lessons and key insights from his creative process.

Participants will have the opportunity to mix and mingle with Reyes during a catered reception following the master class. The evening will end with a screening of Reyes' film "Sansón and Me" and a talkback with the filmmaker. The inventive documentary captures the life of an immigrant serving life in prison for first-degree murder through family reenactments and serves as a powerful examination of immigration and incarceration in the U.S.

"Borderlands Studios is proud to support visionary artists like Rodrigo Reyes, whose work is deeply rooted in community and driven by a powerful, intentional storytelling practice," said Cristina Ibarra, who along with fellow filmmaker and MacArthur "Genius Grant" recipient Alex Rivera founded the initiative.

Reyes' work has received the support of The Mexican Film Institute, Sundance and Tribeca Institutes, and the filmmaker is a recipient of the Guggenheim and Creative Capital Awards, as well as the Rainin Artist Fellowship, the SF Indie Vanguard Award and the Eureka Fellowship from the Fleishhacker Foundation. Reyes has also served as board member of the Video Consortium and The Roxie Theater, and as co-director of the BAVC Mediamaker Fellowship.

The Borderlands master class and screening series will continue through the spring semester with Visionary Fellows [Cecilia Aldarondo](#) (March 28), who will screen "You Were My First Boyfriend" and reflect on the ever-present tension between aquí y allá (here and there) that permeates her films; [Aurora Guerrero](#) (April 5), who will screen her Sundance Award-nominated film "Mosquita y Mari" and discuss her "Unimaginable Journey" as a filmmaker from a working-class, first-generation background; and [Peter Bratt](#) (May 2), who will screen his Peabody Award-winning 2017 documentary "Dolores" and discuss his approach to documentary and feature filmmaking, covering topics including developing a story, fundraising, working with actors and non-actors, and using storytelling as an agent of change.

These groundbreaking filmmakers challenge, reimagine and reshape how we see the borderlands, and their in-depth master classes will offer students, artists and the public a rare opportunity to learn from some of the most innovative voices in contemporary cinema.

Borderlands Studios marked its launch in September 2024. The Sidney Poitier New American Film School at Arizona State University provides a vital space for filmmakers who bring socially grounded, cinematically elevated stories to life and is committed to developing and producing stories that challenge conventional narratives about the borderlands.

U.S. Rep. Joaquin Castro (Texas), a longtime advocate for Latino representation in media, delivered video remarks at a welcoming reception, highlighting the importance of this initiative in amplifying diverse voices in the film industry.

"Like many of you, I've been tracking the lack of Latino voices in film production, and I see how that exclusion affects the way their stories are told," Castro said. "Right now, as you know, we're in the thick of a political season that's defined by a narrative crisis around the border. There's just too much hate and not enough imagination or compassion.

"We need better stories, and also truer stories. Our community has always had talented storytellers, but too often, they struggle to get their voices heard. That's why I'm excited to see the launch of Borderlands Studios, which aims to fill that void with world-class films in a nonprofit studio."

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Text image(s)



Clockwise from top left: Borderlands Visionary Fellows Rodrigo Reyes, Cecilia Aldarondo, Aurora Guerrero and Peter Bratt. Courtesy photos