**HFNT #21: Growth Mindset**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, March 14th and we've got a good one for you today, folks.

Alicia: You know it, Scotty. Today we have an interview with Media Arts professor Doctor Jennifer Gómez Menjívar, director of the master's program in Media Industries and Critical Cultural Studies. Her Women in Film course explores cinematic history, film theory and other topics. And with UNT’s new community garden set to open on March 22nd, we have an interview to learn more about it and how to get involved.

Scott: Well, I can't wait to dig in to all of that, Alicia, but first we have to catch up.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Scott. It's the last day of spring break. Can you believe it?

Scott: No, I can't believe it's already over.

Alicia: Well, while most of the UNT community was enjoying the week off, the Mean Green women's basketball team was putting in work at the American Women's Basketball Championship in Fort Worth. Unfortunately, they lost in a semi-finals to South Florida. But we still have a lot of Mean Green pride for the incredible season they put together.

Scott: That's right. We are very proud of our Mean Green women. Hopefully there's a postseason tournament invitation in their future. But until we find out more about that, Alicia, the Oscars happened recently and I know you are a big fan of awards season. What did you think of the show?

Alicia: I loved it. We had a fun party and shout out to Demi and my girl, Mikey Madison. There were a lot of female-centered stories nominated this year, and you love to see it. And speaking of women in cinema, our very own Lisa Sciortino spoke with media arts professor Doctor Jennifer Gómez Menjívar, whose Whose Women in Film course explore cinematic history, film theory and other topics.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Lisa: You have a history in, you know, within studying the industry as well. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Menjívar: Yeah. So, my area is actually Latin American cinema and other media related to that, that region, but with the focus really on Latin America. So, I incorporate into my classes and into my work the work of, women directors from that region, but also increasingly Latinx directors. But really, it's global media and global cinema that really kind of moves me and drives my work on.

Lisa: Excellent. Well, you know, and I see you teach a Women in Film course. Correct?

Menjívar: That's right. It's part of my rotation. Yeah. So, it's a Global focus course. And what it does is it takes up the feminist film theory that really started in the 1970s. So, oldies but goodies, and we pair them with contemporary work by women filmmakers. So, we started off, so just to give you an idea, we started off, our first week with the documentary on “Wonder Woman” and how it's been received and how, the figure has kind of transformed since the ‘30s to the present. What that means for feminist, but also just in general, women, fans, the fan base that that is primarily women-focused and really women-driven. Talking about some intergenerational importance of iconic figures like her. We transitioned into animation, and looked at the work of Domee Shi, who's a Chinese-Canadian filmmaker, on “Turning Red,” which was really groundbreaking for its discussions about young girls and intergenerational relationships with mothers. We just did an Agnes Varda, who is a classic French new-wave filmmaker. So, just to kind of give you an idea, we don't take a historical view. Instead, we're looking at the different issues at the level of fans and audience at the level of representation, but also at the level of production and what it means for women to work in this industry and what that looks like across genres.

Lisa: So, what is the state of, of women in film, in the industry now? You know, the everything I've read and the just the folks on campus who I've talked to this week have also, we've, it feels like we're at a turning point, you know, behind and in front of the camera. Things are changing. You mentioned fans. I hadn't even thought about that. And then the characters themselves, you know, again, it's something I hadn't even considered. What is the state of women in the industry and representing, being represented in films these days?

Menjívar: Yeah. So, we actually just discussed this the other day. And, you know, we like to think that things have gotten better, but it's nice to think about the role of women in the industry as kind of, much more complex than that, right? So, one of the articles, one of the theories that we read is Jane Gaines, and she says, you know, we, we like to think about, you know, how there was a certain period where women were misrepresented and, and represented in just really poor, oversexualized ways, and then we've gotten away from that. But really, women have been involved in film since the early years of of the industry. So, she mentions a few of the key women in Egypt, in India. And, you know, she, she mentions a trio of sisters from Australia, for instance, in the 1910s, right? Women with production companies in Mexico, for instance. But these women were forgotten because they were the independent filmmakers. Essentially what we would consider independent. Not that they, you know, produce films for their families and friends. They actually had large audiences and had, you know, these production companies. But because of the Hollywood studio system formation pretty early on in the history of the industry, the focus on big-budget films to focus on films that were showcased in specific theaters and produced in certain areas of, of the country, of this country, just kind of took more centerstage, so to speak, in our conversations, right? And so, but one of the useful things about Gaines’ analysis is that we can really start to think about independent cinema and women being consistently involved in independent cinema versus mainstream and commercial cinema, where there have been so many doors that they've been shut out of. So, what we're seeing now is kind of a resurgence of that independent wave, of that festival wave. So, a lot of women these days are presenting their work at independent film festivals, international film festivals. So that's becoming an important outlet of distribution for their work. And, and we're seeing their involvement as well. Now in the mainstream. So, Greta Gerwig, right? “Barbie.” How can we not say that was mainstream commercial? You know, a big deal, something that we've heard of. And so, we see now their place in both kind of streams, so to speak, of the distribution circuit, even though they've always been there, right? They've always been there since the beginning of this trade, the beginning of this industry. But now we see them kind of in both sites and that's, that's what's exciting, right? And then more, to add to that, we see them not just as directors, not just as actresses, but also as in really key roles like screenwriting. Right? We, we think so much about the plot that we forget who writes the plot. Right? And so, this idea of women behind the words that are actually spoken in these productions is really exciting. They're cinematographers, right? They're selecting the items that we are going to see on the screen. And that also is poignant for us as, as audiences to understand the story from, from a different kind of perspective. So, again, you know, consistently throughout in the history of, of cinema, but, but now in really different roles and in those two streams.

Lisa: Outstanding. Yeah, I was, you know, looking over the even the Oscar nominations for this year. We have a woman as best director for “The Substance,’ which was a very female- focused movie. So, you know, obviously things are changing and it sounds like for the better. Do you would you agree with that? What are your thoughts on that?

Menjívar: Well, I think there are still some remaining challenges, you know, but I think that women are definitely breaking those barriers. That film was, was especially interesting because of its choices in casting. Right? And, and choosing an actress that is significantly older and, and directly addressing the industry, you know. Have you seen it?

Lisa: I have not.

Menjívar: OK. I won't reveal too.

Lisa: What really moved me was when Demi Moore stood up at the at the Golden Globes and said, `I've never won an award before.’ And I thought, `That's insane for the body of work that this woman has produced over the course of her career.’ And I know it's an actress in front of the camera, but to think, so what's happening behind the camera that women are also not being recognized for someone with this much experience. Your thoughts?

Menjívar: Right. And, and she shared some of that. Right? She mentioned that she was told by an executive that she was a popcorn actress. Right? When she said that, I felt exactly like you did. You know, I, I immediately thought, `What? She didn't get one for “G.I. Jane?” Where was I? How did I not notice that?’ Because that, to me was just that's her iconic role to me. And, and, and, and it seems that, you know, it was just groundbreaking to hear her say it and to, to talk also about how women told her, `You'll never measure up and that's OK. Just do away with that ruler.’ Right? And the advice that she received, negative and positive, in the industry was just kind of laid out on this platform for all of us to see. And it was just incredible. Yeah, I felt the same way. The opening shot, I won't get into the story too much, but she plays an actress or, that that had a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. And so, we see it constructed, right? Like, actually how the star is made. And then in the next few sequences, the next few frames, we see it aged, right? And so we see the passing of time. So from the get-go before we even see her appear, right? We get this idea of time passing and of folks not caring or remembering anymore of this important person, right? And, and it's just it's such an interesting film how it unwraps and really lays bare the challenges that women face in the film industry, in the entertainment industry, at a wider level when we're talking about the mainstream, right?

Lisa: As you mentioned, you know, there's there's still work to be done. Tell me a little bit about that, and any research that you've done, it's kind of related to, to women and film. I'd love to hear about that.

Menjívar: I'll be working with, the topic of Selena and the media industries that have been created around Selena's memory. There was just a documentarty that premiered again, speaking of festivals, women filmmaker, at Sundance, just a couple of days ago, a new documentary with a lot of, footage that has been provided by Selena's family.

Lisa: Can we talk briefly about Selena? Because she is such an icon. Obviously everyone, but, but, but for this, I mean, special place, for her, among among Texans, all Texans, I believe. What was her role in cinema and kind of shaping that movie? I mean, obviously Jennifer Lopez, you know, ran with it, you know, in the, in the, the big movie. But what did she do? And tell me, I guess just tell me about your research and what you're finding out about her as a cinematic star.

Menjívar: Yeah. So, it's, it's, it's broader than that. It's, it's media. It's understanding media industries. It's a book that is going to be geared to, not freshman, but, but individuals that are just beginning to study, media industries. And it deals with the decision-making, elements of her career. So major things like copyrights, like music production, her role in the Tejano music industry, her role in, in cinema. She had a very, very small role in, a movie that was released, I think it was “Don Juan DeMarco,” if I'm not mistaken, right now.

Lisa: Oh, OK. I did not realize that.

Menjívar: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And it was a cameo role. You know, she's, she's shown playing along with other musicians. And it was released a few weeks after her passing, actually. So, she never really got to launch that career that she was looking forward to. She also did a cameo on, on a telenovela that was produced in Mexico that was called the “Dos Mujeres E El Camino,” and she was on it for a couple of episodes. So, she was just beginning to kind of explore her acting career, really. But what's happened is that she has become a springboard for other creatives, and that's where the book kind of changes gears. So, it starts off with those, kinds of decisions that were made at the music industry level at, you know, at copyrighting things that that have become iconic of hers, like her signature, for instance, that's been adopted on all of the Selena makeup MAC products, for instance, and, and associated terms or phrases with her, like Con la Flor, you know, which is a shade of lipstick, you know. And also an iconic song in her memory to the work that creatives have donen then to kind of building on that, on that pyramid that she kind of founded that base for. So I’m looking at podcasts about her, I'm looking at this documentary that was just released by a female film director, and how these new productions and, serve to not only bolster her memory. Right? And also, continue thinking about her as an important Tejana icon, right? Texan icon. But also an individual that was, for all intents and purposes, an entrepreneur before her time, right? She wanted to start her own fashion line. When I think about Texan directors that we don't think about as directors, I often think about Beyonce. In my class, we talk about Beyonce Knowles, right? And we know about her and her music as really important. Her identity as, you know, someone from Houston, someone really strongly connected to her Texan heritage is also really important. But we seldom remember she's also a director, right? And that she has used, music and film, right, that, that as a platform for that showcasing of Texan identity. And in much of the same way that Selena did, you know, her concerts in the Astrodome and, and, iconic use of, of, she, she, played in rodeos, you know. Just the two individuals, two women that were involved and cared very much about the media industry portrayal of them enough to kind of turn things around. But, yeah, that's, that's where the book goes. And that's the Texas connection it explores and how those women have become legacies for, for other women exploring the Texan-women-entrepreneurial route.

Lisa: Excellent. How long have you been working on the book?

Menjívar: About over a year. So I, I yes, I signed a contract last year, and I've been doing some background research. I would love to get funding to go to Corpus Christi. That's the big plan. There's a museum, the Selena museum, that is still, run by her family. And her family is there every day. So, yes, that's the big challenge. Hopefully I'll be able to get an interview with someone in the family, either her sister, who now is, you know, another woman, right? In the family. Q productions is, is really under her leadership right now, and the museum is under her leadership. But her father was there, too. But, but, yeah, that's that's the big dream to, this summer, go to go to Corpus and get some firsthand interviews about, about those entrepreneurial decisions that were made by the family.

Lisa: Do you have an ETA when you hope it's published?

Menjívar: Oh, I'm hoping for by the end of the year. I'm really excited. I have a chance.

Lisa: This is fantastic news for you.

Menjívar: Yeah, absolutely. And it just feels so. And, you know, it's interesting because Selena hasn't been with us for decades, and yet it feels like she's still here.

Lisa: Just your thoughts on how women in, in film are, are how, how you're sharing that message and the history and, and what to look for going forward with UNT students?

Menjívar: Yeah. So with UNT students, I think, you know, so much of it is, is programing. Right? Bringing in these speakers to discuss women's role in the industry is key. I'll be working, like I mentioned before, I'll be working with the the Women in Cinema student group to, to bring some speakers to campus in the spring. I like for it to converge with Women's History Month. It's the perfect time, you know, to, to discuss. Which is why I always teach this class in the spring, and I intend to keep it in my rotation, always in spring, so that we can do that. It's just incredible. So, I that's where I see myself going, you know, bringing research back into the community, working with my students so that it's not, you know, it's not just something that just ends up in a book on a shelf, you know, but something that really leads to, to these kinds of important conversations. As far as the industry, I think it's an incredible time for women filmmakers. I think that the festivals circuit, digital distribution, streaming platforms are making it increasingly possible for women directors to launch their projects. And to, and to have audiences find them, right? There's ways that, streaming platforms organize. And, you know, just in the very organization of films, right? You don't just get like a whole library of things, you get, you know, distinct kind of areas or recommendations based on what you've seen before. And in an interesting way, as problematic as the digital future is right for the industry, it also is allowing individuals to become, more aware of the projects that these women are releasing through these different platforms. So, it's an exciting time, in my opinion. I think I think the fact that “Barbie” was such a blockbuster, makes it possible for, you know, mainstream, Hollywood industries to also see this, this sounds silly, but it's still an issue, right? This idea that they can trust some with big budgets, which has been historically why women are not part of big action productions, you know, things involving explosions. `Can we really trust them?’ Even though “Hurt Locker,” this is something we talked about in my class. “Hurt Locker” was the first, film to win the, the category Best Picture to get an Oscar. And it was 2008.

Lisa: Wow.

Menjívar: And there were no women frontrunners in that. You know, it was it was a platoon and it was a group of men fighting war, you know, lots of explosions. But that was the first time we saw women win in that category and be recognized and be trusted with such a big budget. I, I'm hoping that that's where the industry turns from here on out. I think it's an exciting time. I think it's an exciting time to study it, right? The from, you know, outside looking in right. But also, insiders, you know, thinking about, about what this industry has meant and represented for so many years. So, I just can't emphasize, you know, what, what and an intense and vivid, vibrant moment this is for women in film.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Man, Selena and Beyonc. Talk about two iconic Texas women.

Scott: I know, right? No shortage of strong female role models down here. Big thanks to Lisa for bringing us that interview. Check the show notes for a link to her full story.

Alicia: Scotty. Springtime is nigh, and that also means that everything is blooming, which makes it the perfect time of year to get involved with UNT’s Community Garden.

Scott: That is right. And with our new, larger community garden officially opening on March 22nd, I spoke to Cody Kimpton, the student services coordinator who oversees the Community Garden, to learn more about it and how people can get involved.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: So first off, let's start with the basics. For anybody who wasn't aware that UNT has a community garden, can you tell me what the community garden is and kind of what mission or purpose it serves for the UNT community?

Kimpton: Yeah. So, the community garden is kind of an early project of the We Mean Green funds. And, just to get into that, the We Mean Green Fund is an organization on campus that funds different green projects. So, it can be stuff like our community garden, but it could also be stuff like, water bottle refill stations, like, encouraging people to bring their own water bottle rather than buy a plastic one. So, it has the possibility of funding, you know, anything that relates to sustainability in some way. And anyone who's a student, faculty or staff at UNT can propose a project and possibly get funding for it. So, I believe back in 2017 is when the garden first debuted. It was a space on campus to know, you know, like, do gardening. It's kind of crazy that there wasn't one before. So, the purpose of the garden was to have that space on campus dedicated to that, but also allowing student choice and collaboration and cooperation between students. So, what kind of happens is you can either get on a plot with people you already know or get together with people that you don't know and just be, `I want a place, I want to be placed somewhere,’ and then we'll place you somewhere, and then you and your plotmates kind of decide what you do with the plot. So, if you want it to be all flowers, it can be all flowers. If you want it to all be produce, can all be produce. But it's just a space for people to grow food if they want for themselves, or to donate to the food pantry or even flowers, anything like that. So it's space to allow for creativity.

Scott: That’s awesome. What is what is your role, as it relates to the community garden?

Kimpton: I am the We Mean Green fund coordinator, so I oversee the projects that get put up and their longevity. So, what that means for the community garden is I oversee the student worker who does everything community garden-related. So, we have one paid student worker who is kind of, like, the head or in charge of the community garden. He gets everything done, planned out, orients people when they're coming into the community garden. So, he's kind of like our lead. And then within that, each plot has their own structure or their own things that they do.

Scott: And then tell me about, there's going to be a new community garden. There's going to be like a grand opening event. Is that right?

Kimpton: Yeah. So, our old location was at Legends Hall, and over the past, forever, it seems like we've been moving over to Crumley Hall, which is right outside our office. So inside of Crumley Hall, there's obviously a dorm, but there's also the food pantry, and it's also our office, our being We Mean Green Fund, Community Garden and stuff like that. So, rather than having to walk 15 minutes across campus, we'll have to walk 15 seconds.

Scott: Nice.

Kimpton: But hopefully with that, it'll be easier to donate to the Food Pantry if people want to donate or easier for people to request seeds because that's something that the, community garden facilitator does, grabs seeds for people and brings them out. Hopefully, that'll be a quicker process. And it also allows us to have a bigger space. So, at the old garden we had 20 plots, and now we have 30. So, we have ten more plots. Yeah. So yeah, it's a bigger space. It's closer. Hopefully it's that's all going to be like, you know, perfect.

Scott: Awesome. And so, when's the new community garden like officially opening?

Kimpton: Yeah. So, the new community garden, the opening is on Saturday, March 22nd. We're going to invite everyone out. Everybody's able to come. It's not just for, like, community garden members or anything. Anyone from UNT or outside of UNT. And we're going to plant a whole bunch of seeds and stuff, and also we're going to have some, plants as well, so like transplants.

Scott: All right. And if people want to get involved with the community garden, whether it's supporting it, whether it's like actually getting out there and getting their hands dirty, what's the best way for them to do that?

Kimpton: Yeah. So, the community garden has an Instagram. It's called, @GrowMeanGreen. So, if you want to get involved, we're always posting stuff about, like, our different events and stuff that are going on. We also have our email that you can email through UNT. It’s just communitygarden@unt.edu. We also have our website that's available through I guess, the UNT website. I'm not sure if there's a shortened version of it, but you can also go there. But I think, the email and the Instagram are probably the quickest and easiest to get involved.

Scott: So, when people first sign up to, you know, volunteer for the gardener, become a member of the community garden. What's that process like?

Kimpton: We have an orientation that's for people who want to volunteer with us and people who want to become a community garden member. We also allow people to like, volunteer with groups, and we don't require, like, an orientation for that or anything. But if they want to volunteer individually or become a member of the garden. So, orientations, through Navigate 360, people can, sign up for orientations to volunteer with a community garden or to join a member, join the community garden. As a member, you request an orientation, and then you'll come out to the garden at the time that you signed up for. And we'll kind of show you how everything works, where everything is, get you the code to the shed, anything like that. And then, you can start volunteering with us or join us as a member.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Man, talk about community service synergy. I love the fact that some of the fresh produce from the Community Garden goes straight to our you and Food Pantry, presented by Kroger, which was featured on our last episode, for any listeners who want to hear more about it, by the way.

Scott: Yeah, it's a great opportunity for our students to find a little zen in the garden and then help other students with a donation to the Food Pantry. Check the show notes for more information on how to get involved with the UNT Community Garden, or to get the details about the grand opening coming up on March 22nd.

Alicia: And that brings us to our Q and A. What's our question today, Scotty?

Scott: Well, as we officially wrap up our 2025 spring break, we want to know what are some ways to spend your Spring Break on a budget?

Alicia: Well, my favorite kind of Spring Break is one sitting outside with a nice cold beverage, usually a crispy Coke Zero, and listen to a podcast, music or read a book, whichever tickles my fancy at the moment. I also enjoy going on picnics at the downtown Denton Square and going to the community market also on the square. What about you, Scootle?

Scott: Well, first off, I have to point out that our listeners could wrap up their Spring Break by heading over to Fort Worth to watch the Mean Green men's basketball team play their first game of the American Men's Basketball Championships. Hopefully they can make a deep run. But I also love a good lake day. We've got Ray Roberts to the north and Lake Lewisville to the south, so plenty of nearby options between those two. The weather is also usually not too hot by Spring Break, so you can get in a nice little nature hike before the heat becomes unbearable. Our student reporter, Anthony Simone, talked to a few students to get their best Spring Break tips.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Anthony: How do you use Spring Break on a budget?

Student 1: I'll say Spring Break on a budget. Honestly, I'll speak for myself. Spring break on a budget, for me, just looks like chilling inside really. That's all. That's all for me.

Student 2: I would say whatever you do, share the cost with friends. If you go on a trip, I'll get the same hotel room. Share that. Yeah. Share meals, things like that.

Student 3: I like to go home and just, catch up on some assignments. Not really go out, you know. I get, I get off from what my parents give me. So just not spending is my main point.

Student 4: I really don't do a lot for spring break. I really just work. You know? Yeah, I really just work.

Anthony: So instead of losing money, you're making money?

Student 4: Yeah.

Anthony: I like that. I like that.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Well, now that you've heard all of our Spring Break tips, we want to hear from you. Tell us about your best UNT Spring Breaks by emailing us at podcast@unt.edu or calling us at (940) 565-4341.

Scott: And don't forget to tell a friend about the show, share it on social media, or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen. Until next time, we hope you have a Happy Friday, North Texas.

Alicia: And Go, Mean Green!

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: “Happy Friday! North Texas” is a production of the University of North Texas. Today's show was produced and edited by Scott Brown with original reporting by Scott Brown, Lisa Sciortino and Anthony Simoni. For more information, visit unt.edu/podcast.

Scott: Dig in because we're talking about the community garden. Get it? Dig in.

Alicia: Let's go. Let's go. Get those puns in. Scott, It's the last day of Spring Break. Can you believe it?

Scott: No.

Alicia: I didn't know you were gonna respond.

Scott: That's right. And we are very proud of our Mean Green women. I can't read. That should be a question mark, because that's a question.

Alicia: You got it. You got it. There are a lot of female-centered stories … Let's go.

Scott: Look at us adjusting on the fly.

Alicia: Let's go.

Scott: Crushing it.

Alicia: Springtime is nigh. And that also means … I’m so dramatic.

Scott: Is nigh. I'm gonna laugh at that. Just keep just keep going through it, OK?

Alicia: OK.

Scott: Was my cadence weird on that or did that sound all right?

Alicia: No. Sounds good. I was even going to say something, but I was like, nobody cares. Back to business.

Scott: For more information, visit UNT.

Alicia: That's what I get for drinking a crispy CZ. It’s so crispy. It was like, it was like it's been in the fridge for, like, three days, so it was, like, extra crispy.

Scott: I don't think that's how it works.

Alicia: Yes, it is. Don’t kill my vibe. It’s my girl math. Girl math is if your Coke Zero is in the fridge for more than a day, that means the crisp…

Scott: It's extra crispy.

Alicia: Yes. Because if I put it in today, it would have just been like Luke crispy.

Scott: Luke crispy.

Alicia: You know, like, it's not what it's like. It's like on the verge of being basically warm. Amen, sister.