Comparative Studies 677.02: Latin American Folklore

Comparative Studies in the Politics of Culture
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Description:
In this course we will examine the theory and practice of folklore studies in Latin America by scholars from Latin America and the United States. We will attempt a broad overview of the contemporary cultural influences on the region, examining issues of ethnic identity, neoliberalism, new social movements, nationalism and transnationalism. At the same time we will explore some of the best recent case studies on the politics of culture—festival in Venezuela, salsa as a global phenomenon, the marketing of indigenous crafts in Mexico. Students will be expected to complete two research papers, the first on a common topic for the class and the second in an area of their own choosing. I will make every effort to assist interested students in creating projects for class credit that may also have a life in the larger academic sphere.

Objectives:
- Discover the contours of Latin American cultural theory
- Gain a broad overview of folk and popular forms in Latin America
- Practice the Politics of Culture approach to folklore analysis
- Conduct coordinated research with colleagues that might result in a panel presentation at an academic conference
- Conduct independent research in an area of specific interest to you

Required Readings:
1. Course Packet. Available at Library Reserve and Comp Studies Office
2. Web Articles. Available through CARMEN
3. Books: Available at SBX

**Grading:**
Attendance and Participation
Research Tolls Assignment
Leading Discussion Assign
Oral Presentation, Class Project

10%
10%
10%
10%

Essay, Class Project
[UG 5-8 pp; Grad 8 - 10 pp]
Oral Presentation, IR
[UG 8 - 10 pp; Grad 15 - 20 pp]

20%
10%
30%

**University Policies:**

*Special Needs*

I will make every effort to accommodate special needs, as long as these needs are clearly communicated to me at the beginning of the quarter.

*Plagiarism*

Plagiarism, or using the ideas or words of others without appropriate citation, is an academic crime. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be taken to the Committee on Academic Misconduct, who will decide on the penalty, which may range from failure of the course to suspension from the University.

**Class Schedule [Subject to Revision]**

**Week One: Introduction to the Politics of Culture in Latin America**
Jan. 3: What is Folklore? What is Latin America? Political and Cultural Interfaces.

Maps, Groups, Categories, Approaches.

Reading Assignment:


3. [handout]


Jan. 5: The Variety of the Popular in Latin America Mexican Muralists, Cantinflas, Gauchos, Samba, and Genocide in Guatemala.

Reading Assignment:


3. de Andrade, Oswaldo. Cannibal Manifesto. (Web site) [CARMEN]


Research Assignment:
Investigate one of the internet sites or databases dedicated to Latin American and/or folklore studies. Write a one page response describing: 1. What the site or database contains. 2. How this material might be used. Due Jan. 12th.

Sites: LANIC (google), AFS (google), HRAF (in Oscar/gateway/anthropology), LASA (google), OSU-CFS, Hemispheric Institute (www.hemi.nyu.edu), Worldcat (Oscar).

Week Two: Nationalist Mythologies and Postcolonial Metaphors

Jan. 10: Caliban, La Malinche, La Llorona, and Cannibalism

Reading Assignment:


**Jan. 12:** Dominant, Residual and Emergent Structures for Cultural Production Cofradías and Corridos, old and new.

**Research Tools Assignment Due**

Reading Assignment:


Research Assignment:
Identify one or more areas of interest for your individual research project.

**Week Three: Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures**

**Jan. 17** From Anti-imperial Revolution to New Social Movements

Reading Assignment:


**Jan. 19** Ethnic Identity and Progressive Politics. What is Ethnicity? What is Tradition? What is Popular and what is Folk?

In-class discussion of individual student research interests
Reading Assignments:


Week Four: Identity

Jan. 24: Hybridity and Mestizaje: Theoretical Promises and Cautions
Reading Assignment:

1. Waxer, ed. Situating Salsa, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, pp. 3-74

Jan. 26: Film: Salsa: Latin Pop Music in the Cities
Reading Assignment:

1. Waxer, ed. Situating Salsa: Choose two chapters from Part II.

Research Assignment:
Research a Latin music scene through internet, movies, popular and academic press.

Week Five: Transnational Folklore: Popular Music and Dance

Jan. 31 Film: Roots of Rhythm: Episode #2
Reading Assignment:

1. Waxer, ed. Situating Salsa, Chapters 10, 12, and 13

Feb. 2 Student Presentations on a Latin Dance Scene
Research Assignment:
1. Write up your analysis of a Latin Dance Scene.
2. Bring a craft from home to discuss in class.

**Week Six: State Projects: Indigenous Craft**

**Feb. 7**: Lecture/Discussion: Craft production, circuits, meaning and value.

**First Paper Due—Researching a Latin Dance Scene**

Reading Assignment:


**Feb 9**: National Projects and the Circulation of Goods

Reading Assignment:


**Week Seven: State Projects: Festival**

**Feb. 14**: Re-imagining Indigenous Craftsmanship

Reading Assignment:


**Feb. 16** Festival as Contested Terrain: Centers and Peripheries

Reading Assignment:


**Week Eight: Popular Religion and Oral Narrative**

**Feb. 21**: Festival as Contested Terrain: Indigeneity, Corporate Sponsorship, Gender

In-class discussion of individual research progress—oral report sign-ups.
Reading Assignment:


Feb. 23: Film: Santería or Vodun
Reading Assignment:


Week Nine: Myth and History

Feb. 28: Myth, History and the Ethics of Fieldwork.
Reading Assignment:


Mar. 2: Contemporary Oral Texts

Week Ten: Student Presentations

Mar. 7: Student Presentations of Individual Research
Mar. 9: Student Presentations of Individual Research

Finals Week

Mar. 13: Final Papers Due