

HIST 240 – Food, Fútbol, and Fotonovelas: Popular Culture in Latin America

MWF, 1:30-2:20, King 341 (OC S2014)

Professor Melanie Huska

Office Hours: Mondays and Fridays 2:30-3:30 and by appointment, Rice 309

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Raul Martinez, *La Isla*, 1970

Course Description

This course investigates the political nature of popular culture in twentieth-century Latin America. The course is divided into three country units: Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, so that the particular historical and political context of each nation can enrich our analysis of a broad range of popular culture forms, including music, comic books, film, dance, detective fiction, and food. Though each national context varies, there are several themes we will examine throughout the course: the influence of relations of power on expressions of popular culture and their incorporation into national and regional cultures; the establishment of media empires in Latin America; tensions between globalization and national sovereignty and cultural imperialism and cultural nationalism; and popular culture as a site for creative resistance.

Course Objectives/Learning Goals

By the course's end, students should be able to:

1. Identify the complex political nature of popular culture in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of historical argumentation and understand how different types of primary sources influence analysis.
3. Understand how historical analysis changes over time, often influenced by the political and cultural climate in which historians write.
4. Communicate effectively both in written and verbal form, particularly presenting clear, reasoned arguments supported with evidence.

Required Texts

Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Ricardo Piglia, *Artificial Respiration*, trans. Daniel Balderston (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

** All additional readings will be posted on our Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

1. Informed class participation: Participation will play a key role in the success of this class. This means that attendance and preparation is paramount. Please bring any notes you take while reading, the assigned course readings for the day's discussion, and talking points and/or questions that you have regarding lecture topics. The course is structured with frequent group discussions.

When reading and preparing for class, consider these questions:

- What are the differences and similarities between different national contexts and approaches?
- What is the major argument of each article, chapter, or book?
- What sources did the author use?
- What is the historiographical context of the book? For example: Where do the authors place themselves within the literature? What key concepts, conversations, and arguments do they draw upon?
- What did you like and dislike? Think about this in terms of the questions the authors ask, the theoretical and methodological approach, the sources used, and your critical response.

2. Primary Source Analysis (4-6 pages): This assignment requires you to analyze at least one primary source. You may choose to examine one of the primary sources assigned in class—i.e., Piglia's detective fiction *Artificial Respiration*, Luis Estrada's film *Herod's Law*, or one of the comic books, paintings, travel posters, or pieces of music and lyrics we will examine from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. If you choose to select your own primary source, you must notify me. **Your essay must include a thesis that will guide your interpretation of the primary documents and be supported with specific examples from the text.**

3. LATAM Popular Culture in the News: The second paper requires you to historicize the political nature of popular culture in a newspaper article using secondary research and then present your argument to the class. For example, after reading this article "Argentina 'invades' Falklands in online game," I would make an argument about the ongoing significance of the Falklands in the Argentine imaginary (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-21948000>).

4. Book Review (3-4 pages): This assignment requires you to write a scholarly review of **EITHER** Christopher Dunn's *Brutality Garden* OR Anne Rubenstein's *Bad Language*,

Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation. Your review should identify the book's subject, summarize its major arguments, briefly explain how it is structured, and comment on the sources the author employs to support her/his arguments. It should then provide your own assessment of how well the author communicates and supports this thesis or argument to the reader. You may want to think about how well the specific cases examined support the thesis and illuminate it for the reader. Consider also the weaknesses or silences of the book. Finally, comment on how the book contributes to your understanding of the political nature of popular culture.

- 5. Research Paper or Podcast (8-10 pages):** You will write a research paper on a topic of your choice on some aspect of the political nature of popular culture in twentieth-century Mexico, Brazil, or Argentina. For example, you may choose to elaborate on one of the week's themes by choosing readings of your own and analyzing how the theme has been addressed and evaluated in different temporal or cultural settings. Or, you might want to examine a particular interest that we have not discussed. **ALL TOPICS REQUIRE APPROVAL.** The assignment requires that you identify and select an appropriately narrow topic and consult materials outside the course (library and online) in order to familiarize yourself with the research methods. The assignment is completed in stages in order to foster positive research habits.

Alternatively, you may also choose to present your research project in the form of a 5-8 minute podcast. Your piece must still make an argument and support it with evidence. For more information and examples of other podcast projects, see <http://stonecenter.tulane.edu/pages/detail/279/Podcasts>.

Grades for the course will be apportioned as follows:

Participation	20%
Papers	
Primary Source paper	20%
Book Review	15%
Popular Culture in the News	15%
Research paper/podcast	30%
• Topic	P/F
• Research question/Thesis	P/F
• Draft	P/F
• Final copy	25%
• Oral Presentation	5%

Course Policies

- All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course.
- **No assignments will be accepted electronically.**
- All work is governed by the Honor Code and must state, "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment" at the top of the first page of all written work. For more information, see http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.

Attendance/Lateness: I take attendance every day, and I expect that you will attend the class

regularly because you can't learn if you're not there. Please email me if you plan to be absent for a session or have been absent. If you have a planned excused absence, assignments and responses are still due on time, so plan your time accordingly. After three excused absences, I reserve the right to factor excessive absence from class into the final grade.

Please be considerate to your fellow classmates and to me by arriving on time. Note that I will also take note of tardiness, and this will also affect your grade. If you will be more than 15 minutes late, you will be graded as absent; please do not come to class as it is too disruptive.

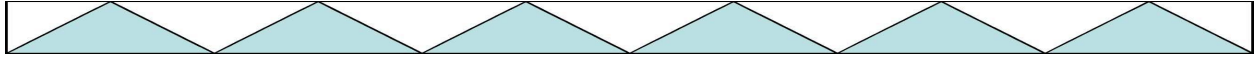
Late Work: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on their due date. No assignments will be accepted electronically. Late work will be graded as submitted and penalized 1/3 letter grade for each day late. For example, a B paper handed in 1 day late would earn a B-.

Support for Student Writing: I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center and to meet with their writing associates to hone your skills. For more information, see <http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/writing-center.dot>

Disabilities: I am committed to working with students with disabilities to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. In order to establish a plan for assistance, contact Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Disability Services, Room G27 Peters Hall, ext. 55588.

Classroom Conduct: It is our responsibility to foster a safe classroom environment which is conducive to learning. Although lively discussion and disagreement with your colleagues can and should be part of the learning process, students who create a hostile environment for others through discourteous, threatening, harassing, or aggressive behavior will be asked to leave and counted absent. Nor will students be permitted to sleep in class, read non-class materials, dispute grades, talk or text message on cell phones, listen to iPods, or surf the internet. During class, please do not engage with your phone in any manner. If this policy is violated, I will ask you to leave for the class period. You may use a laptop computer to take notes, provided that it is not used for Facebook, etc. However, if you abuse this privilege by surfing the internet, checking your email, or engaging in any non-class related activities, all computer privileges will be withdrawn for the rest of the semester.

Contacting me: I am delighted to be teaching this course, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better. Please visit me during office hours with questions or concerns about the course. If your schedule conflicts with my posted office hours, please email me or speak to me following class to set up an alternate meeting time. Please note that I will not be checking my email after 6 pm and on the weekends, so plan accordingly. I am happy to discuss your assignments or review papers with you. However, I will not review any assignment within 24 hours of the due date, so plan ahead. If you have a question about your grade you must set an appointment with me at least one day after receiving your graded paper. At the appointment I expect you to have read all the comments on your paper and to have specific questions that you wish to discuss.



Week 1: Defining Popular Culture

Monday, Feb. 3 – Introduction

Wednesday, Feb. 5 – William H. Beezley and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, “Introduction,” *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2000), xi-xxiii AND Jean Franco, “What’s in a Name? Popular Culture Theories and Their Limitations,” *Critical Passions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 169-179).

Friday, Feb. 7 – Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc, “Defining Popular Culture,” *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*.

Week 2: Defining Argentine Identity through Tango

Monday, Feb. 10 – Thomas E. Skidmore, “Argentina,” *Modern Latin America* 9th ed (New York: Oxford University Press), 236-267.

Librarian visit?

Wednesday, Feb. 12 – John Charles Chasteen, “Black Kings, Blackface Carnival, and Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Tango,” *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 43-60.

Friday, Feb. 14 – Eduardo P. Archetti, “Masculinity, Primitivism, and Power: Gaucho, Tango, and the Shaping of Argentine National Identity,” *Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America Since Independence* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

Week 3: Consuming Populism

Monday, Feb. 17 – Tomás Eloy Martínez, “Saint Evita,” *The Argentina Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 296-303 AND watch clip from *Evita*, 1996 musical film.

Wednesday, Feb. 19 – Rebekah Pite, “Creating a Public in Buenos Aires and Beyond,” *Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina: Dona Petrona, Women, and Food* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2013).

Topics Due

Friday, Feb. 21 – Glen S. Close, “The Detective is Dead. Long Live the *Novela Negra!*” *Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Detective Fiction: Essays on the Género Negro* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006), 143-161.

Week 4: Hardboiled Detective Fiction as Social Commentary

Monday, Feb. 24 – Ricardo Piglia, *Artificial Respiration*, trans. Daniel Balderston (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 1-63.

Wednesday, Feb. 26 – *Artificial Respiration*, 67-149.

Film: *The Secret in Their Eyes*

Friday, Feb. 28 – *Artificial Respiration*, 149-end.

Student Presentations:

Week 5: Cultural Imperialism, Borrowing or Counterculture?

Monday, Mar. 3 – Excerpt from *How to read Donald Duck* AND Julianne Burton, "Don (Juanito) Duck and the Imperial-Patriarchal Unconscious: Disney Studios, the Good Neighbor Policy and Packaging of Latin America," in Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger, eds., *Nationalism and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 21-41.

Film Clip: *Tres Caballeros*

Draft to be emailed by 6pm

Wednesday, Mar. 5 – Héctor D. Fernandez L'Hoeste, "From Mafalda to Boogie: The City in Argentine Humor," *Imagination Beyond Nation: Latin American Popular Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998).

Peer Editing

Friday, Mar. 7 – Pablo Semán, Pablo Vila, and Cecilia Benedetti, "Neoliberalism and Rock in the Public Sectors of Contemporary Argentina," *Rockin' Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2004), 261-289.

Primary Source Paper Due

MEXICO

Week 6: Revolutionary Dreams and Nightmares

Monday, Mar. 10 – Thomas E. Skidmore, "Mexico: The Taming of a Revolution," *Modern Latin America* 9th ed (New York: Oxford University Press), 47-78 AND Anne Rubenstein, "Mass Media and Popular Culture in 20th Century Mexico," *The Oxford History of Mexico*, pp. 637-670.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Mar. 12 – John Mraz, Chp.2 "Revolution and Culture," *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 59-106.

Film Clip: *El compadre Mendoza*

Museum visit?

Friday, Mar. 14 - Celeste González de Bustamante, "Olympic Dreams and Tlatelolco Nightmares," "*Muy buenas noches*": *Mexico, Television, and the Cold War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 145-176.

Research Question Due

Student Presentations:

Week 7: The Postrevolutionary State as Cultural Mediator

Monday, Mar. 17 – Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1-40.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Mar. 19 – *Bad Language, Naked Ladies*, 41-108.

Film: *Herod's Law*

Friday, Mar. 21 – *Bad Language, Naked Ladies*, 109-166.

Student Presentations:

★★ **Week 8: SPRING BREAK** ★★

Week 9: Local, National, and Global Cultural Diffusion

Monday, Mar. 31 – Rick Lopez, “The ‘Unbroken Tradition’ of Olinalá from the Aztecs to the Revolution,” *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 201-228.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Apr. 2 – Heather Levi, “The Mask of the Luchador: Wrestling, Politics, and Identity in Mexico,” *Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 96-131.

Student Presentations:

Friday, Apr. 4 – Jeffrey M. Pilcher, “The Globalization of Mexican Cuisine,” *History Compass* 6 (2008), 529–551.

Weblink: “Cinco de Mayo, from the Battlefield to the Beer Bottle,” *History News Network*, <http://www.hnn.us/article/126189#sthash.5F7XgtiJ.dpuf>.

Student Presentations:

Week 10: Performing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality

Monday, Apr. 7 – Alison Greene, “Cable(nation) in Rural Yucatan: Performing Modernity and Mexicanidad in the Early 1990s,” *Fragments of a Golden Age*, 415-451.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Apr. 9 – CLASS CANCELLED in lieu of lecture by Anne Rubenstein, “Flappers, Queers, Family Men, Citizens: Movie Audiences and the Long Tail of the Mexican Revolution” on Thursday April 10, at 4 pm. Details TBA.

Friday, Apr. 11 – Anne Rubenstein, “Theaters of Masculinity: Movie-Going and Male Roles in Mexico Before 1960,” *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 132-154.

★★★ GUEST LECTURE: Anne Rubenstein ★★★

BRAZIL

Week 11: Forging National Culture with Pop Culture

Monday, Apr. 14 – E. Skidmore, “Brazil: The Awakening Giant,” *Modern Latin America* 9th ed (New York: Oxford University Press), 296-340 AND Rodrigo Duarte, “The Culture Industry in Brazil,” in *Culture Industry Today* (New York: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 93-111.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Apr. 16 – Bryan McCann, “Radio and Estado Novo,” *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 19-40.

Student Presentations:

Friday, Apr. 18 – Robert Stam, “Cross-cultural Dialogisms: Race and Multiculturalism in Brazilian Cinema,” *Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas* (London: BFI Publishing, 1993), 175-191.

Film: excerpt from *Bananas is My Business*

Week 12: Music Counters Dictatorship

Monday, Apr. 21 – Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1-36.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Apr. 23 – *Brutality Garden*, 37-72.

Film: *Bye Bye Brazil*

Draft to be emailed by 6 pm

***Class may be cancelled for director screening of *Dictator in the Dock*. TBA

Friday, Apr. 25 – *Brutality Garden*, 73-121.

Peer Editing

Week 13: Making Foreign Genres Brazilian

Monday, Apr. 28 – *Brutality Garden*, 160-187.

Student Presentations:

Wednesday, Apr. 30 – Thomas Tufte, “The Brazilian Telenovela,” *Living with the Rubbish Queen: Telenovelas, Culture and Modernity in Brazil* (Luton: University of Luton Press, 2000), 87-120.

Friday, May 2 – Jennifer Manthei, “How to Read Chico Bento: Brazilian Comics and National Identity,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 29 (2011).

Final Paper Due

Week 14: Wrap up and student presentations

Monday, May 5 – Meredith W. Watts and Simone Linhares Ferro, “The Coexistence of Folk of Popular Culture as Vehicles of Social and Historical Activism: Transformation of the Bumba-meu-boi in Northeast Brazil,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 45.4 (2012), 883-901.

Research Paper Presentations

Wednesday, May 7 – Daryle Williams, “Expositions and ‘Export Quality’ Culture,” *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) pp. 192-251.

Research Paper Presentations

Friday, May 9 – Conclusion

Research Paper Presentations