



## **BSAS SOCY 3322**

### **South American Identities, Society, and Cultures**

#### **Course Description**

This course introduces students to a sociology and ethnography of Latin America. During the course students will explore and become familiar with the nature of Latin American modernities and identities, the dynamics of Latin American societies and cultures, and the main social processes that have taken place in this part of the world since the constitution of nation-states and modernity.

The class has three sections. It begins by exploring both the historical development and character of modernity in the region. Discussions about peripheral modernity, hybridization, and issues of identity (for example, White, Indigenous, Creole, Afro, *mestizo*, etc.) are some of the main topics to be covered in the first part of the course. In order to understand and to deeply examine the constitution of Latin American modern nation-states, in the second section of the class three case-studies will be considered in order to understand the different ways in which nation-states were constructed in this part of the world. Politics of identity, utopias, and imaginaries will be our main entry points to study: Brazil (racial democracy and modernity in the Tropics), Argentina (looking at the European mirror), and Peru (indigenous cultures and Inca utopia in the constitution of Peruvian nation-state). The third and last section focuses on the study of some of the most important social problems, conflicts, and social movements in contemporary Latin America. In this case, *diaspora* and migration, human rights, indigenous cultures and contemporary movements, marginality, poverty, and inequality, and political violence, armed movements and drug cartels will be examined and discussed. Finally, during this class students will learn about Latin American pop culture. In this case, readings and discussions address three significant cultural expressions of South American pop culture: soap operas, football, and music.

Our work in this course requires that each of you come to class having critically reflected upon the week's readings and prepared to share your understandings and engage with those of your classmates and professors. This course therefore requires wakeful reading and reflection prior to class, and mindful participation once there.

#### **Class Format**

Each meeting will begin with a lecture and a powerpoint presentation. In these presentations the instructor of the class will introduce students to the day's subject. After this, the dynamic of the class will change from a lecture to a workshop in which students will present and discuss, under the instructor coordination, the readings assigned for that day.

#### **Assessment and Examination**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of three criteria:

1. Short weekly assignments
2. Class participation and presentations: including contribution to class and group discussions, as well as thoroughness of preparation of presentations. During the semester students will be required to select a number of the assigned articles and give oral presentations. These presentations will be coordinated with the instructor of the course and will follow a specific guideline.
3. A final research paper that will develop in depth a question related to one theme discussed and debated in class. Each student will work with the professor on formulating an appropriate question. Detailed guidelines will be provided.

## Contents

### SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICA MODERNITY AND IDENTITY

Class 1: Introduction to the seminar.

Class 2: Latin American modernities. This class examines the nature of modernity in Latin America, focusing on the particular aspects that the modern project has acquired in this part of the world, and its similarities and differences with European modernity. The predicaments of a peripheral modernity, together with ideas of hybridization and *creolization*, are explored and discussed in this class, as well as postcolonial thinking and culture.

Class 3: Identity. Without any doubt, identity has been the most discussed and revisited concepts in Latin America academia. Ethnic, social, and racial definitions and adscription (White, Westerner, European, Indigenous, Creole, *mestizo*, Afro, peasant, working class, etc.) have played out a key role in State, communal, or individual politics of identity. Diverse strategies have been put into motion around issues of identity (from celebrating and vindicating particular identities, to denying and erasing them), either by nation-states and white elites or by subaltern groups. The creation of new hybrid identities and 'imagined communities', that this class explores, has been a key characteristic in Latin America.

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### SECTION 2: CASE STUDIES

Class 4: Brazil. As the Modern in the Tropics, Brazil social development has produced an interesting mixture of ethnicities, cultural traditions, and worldviews. The celebratory perception of this particular entanglement of ecological, racial, cultural, historical, and social conditions fomented the racial democracy myth. As a case study, Brazil will provide a good example of the contradictory and entangled nature of Latin American modernities.

Class 5: Argentina. Contrary to what happened in other Latin American countries, the white elite who designed and built the Argentine nation-state by the late nineteenth century renounced to native traditions and heritage for considering them backward cultural expressions that would retard the road toward modernity. The construction of the Argentine Nation involved the physical extermination of native people or their complete transformation into modern citizens. The Argentine territory was integrated through discourses and practices that vindicated European classic and modern history as the Nation's past, and denied any form of native tradition. By the early twentieth century, migrants from Europe brought new blood, but also new problems, to the project of modernity. This class will cover these issues and study the way Argentine identity was constructed.

Class 6: Peru. In the era of global and mass tourism, the Inka Empire, or Tawantinsuyu, has become the principal trademark and commodity from Peru to the world. This class examines the role that indigenous culture in general, and the Inca Empire in particular, has played out in the formation of the Peruvian nation-state and in people's imaginary. Comments on the way the Inka Empire was incorporated in national symbols, discourses, and practices during the early years of the formation of this South American nation-state will be developed throughout the class. We will also study the

“indigenistas” movements of the 1960s and the work of the Marxist intellectual José Mariategui, who critically discussed Peruvian identity, and natives’ subordination and oppression.

### SECTION 3: CURRENT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, PROBLEMS, AND CONFLICTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Class 7: Marginality, poverty, and inequality. Social and economic inequalities have been, probably, the most significant internal debt of Latin American societies. Exclusion and dispossession have imprinted the geographical and social landscape of every country in the region. One of the main outcomes of this situation has been the development of marginal violent groups, such as the Maras; all aspects that we will discuss during this session of the seminar.

Class 8: Diaspora and migration. People moving from the countryside to the cities, from less developed countries to emergent countries in the region, and from Latin America to the First World is one of the most relevant demographic and social dynamic in the region. Diaspora and migration have produced cultural erosion, broken families, spread out economies, and hybridization. This class explores this social phenomena paying close attention to the way migrants redefine their relationship with their original community and families at home, transform their cultural practices, and get influenced by, and influenced, the places and societies into which they move.

Class 9: Human rights. Frequent military coups and dictatorships, armed guerrillas, and illegal paramilitary forces have left a considerable impact on human rights and human rights policies in Latin America. To approach this topics, this class focuses on Argentine recent history and the disappeared, Madres the Plaza de Mayo, child kidnapping and appropriation, EAAF’s (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team) work, as well as on recent policies of punishment and memory (including the analysis of memory parks and monuments).

Class 10: Political violence, armed movements, and drug cartels. Latin America recent history has been particularly disrupted by political violence, kidnapping, paramilitary forces, armed movements seeking to siege power, and drug lords controlling the civil society and political life of whole regions. Discussions about Shining Path in Peru, FARC in Colombia, and drug cartels in northern Mexico will be the principal concern of meeting 10.

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Class 11: Indigenous communities and movements. Latin America is not just about modernity and urban culture. On the contrary, indigenous traditions, practices, and symbols are very much alive and have greatly influenced Latin America’s social life. In this class we examine the social and cultural logic and dynamics of some of these indigenous traditions, emphasizing the great differences they have with Western modernity. In addition, the class will investigate contemporary indigenous movements and claims.

Class 12: Pop culture. To conclude this class, we will take a lighter path and examine Latin America pop culture. In this session, students will learn about the key and intense role that soap operas, football, and popular music play in the social life of Latin American countries.

### **Bibliography**

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1999 *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina.* Berg, Oxford & New York.

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2003 *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America.* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Domingues, José M.

2008 *Latin America and Contemporary Modernity. A Sociological Interpretation.* Routledge, London & New York.

Fowler, Will and Peter Lambert (eds.)

2006 *Political Violence and the Construction of National Identity in Latin America.* Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

García Canclini, Nestor  
1995 *Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Kraay, Hendrik (ed.)  
2007 *Negotiating Identities in Modern Latin America*. Occasional Papers in Latin American Studies, Latin American Research Center, University of Calgary Press, Alberta.

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2008 *A Companion to Latin American Anthropology*. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

Schelling, Vivian (ed.)  
2000 *Through the Kaleidoscope. The Experience of Modernity in Latin America*. Verso, Londo-New York.

Seider, Rachel (ed.)  
2002 *Multiculturalism in Latin America. Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

Yashar, Deborah J.  
2005 *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America. The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

### **Attendance**

CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Students are also expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Attendance is mandatory and is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and ultimately in a F for the course.

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### **Missing classes for medical reasons**

If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, you must send an e-mail to let the Director of Academic Affairs (DAA) or Resident Director know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting by emailing. Note that calling the CAPA Center is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

### **Class Participation**

Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

### **Academic Integrity**

The faculty expects from you, the student, a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class**

All devices such as laptops, I-pods, I-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are NOT allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Director of Academic Affairs or the Resident Director at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators**

In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission**

Late submission of papers due, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behavior during Examinations**

During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.