

Spring 2021
Transnational Latinx Popular Culture
MAS 347C (40685) LAS 328C (39980) WGS 340 (46085)

MONDAYS FROM 1:00 TO 2:30 PM (SYNCHRONOUS)
INTERNET (CANVAS / ZOOM)

PROFESSOR: LAURA G. GUTIÉRREZ

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OFFICE PHONE: 471-3543

OFFICE HOURS: ON ZOOM

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS FROM 3:30-4:30 PM & BY APPOINTMENT

Land Acknowledgment

(I) We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, (I) We would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course uses a set of interdisciplinary methods (mainly ethnic studies, Latinx studies, cultural studies, and performance studies) to help us understand the kind of 'work' culture is doing in a larger framework, historical, economical, and societal. The class uses these theoretical and methodological lenses to examine transnational Latinx popular culture from the 20th and 21st centuries in order to consider the ways in which it has been an important aspect of nation-building strategies on different scales, from nation-states to Latinx communities in the US. We pay particular attention to expressive culture from the beginning of the 20th century, focusing on social dance forms like samba, tango, and danzón. Additionally, sports spectacles are analyzed to understand the performance of masculinity, the interconnected between politics and 'entertainment' (soccer) and the theatricality of the spectacle (lucha libre—Mexican masked wrestling). The course material moves through the 20th century and into the 21st century and across geo-political divides to continue to put forward the idea that Latinx popular culture is transnational (at the same time as translocal); cultural works that will be examined in order to grasp a full understanding of this notion run the gamut from the formation of salsa to the reggeatón phenomenon and telenovela (Latin American soap operas) industry to music television. In a more general way, the ultimate goal of the class is to get the student to think about the ways in which popular cultural forms are part of a 20th and 21st century sensibility that is both part of "the practice of everyday life" and nation-building projects. But the student will be asked to think about how different publics consume popular culture (at times transforming it and/or changing its meaning) and, likewise, it is important to consider what happens when Latin American popular culture (thanks to the

(transnational) cultural industries) travels, often across geo-political and linguistic borders (all within the hemisphere of the Americas). The operating question throughout the semester is then, what is transnational about Latina/o popular culture and why does this matter?

REQUIRED READINGS: ALL WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH CANVAS

THE MAJORITY OF THE READINGS ARE SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

- **Imagination Beyond Nation: Latin American Popular Culture*, edited by Eva P. Bueno and Terry Caesar
- **Latino/a Popular Culture*, edited by Michelle Habell-Pallán and Mary Romero
- **Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America*, edited by William Rowe and Vivian Schelling
- **Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico since 1940*, edited by Gilbert Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov
- **From Bananas to Buttocks: The Latina Body in Popular Film and Culture*, edited by Myra Mendible
- **Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music* edited by Mark Slobin
- **Keywords for Latina/o Studies* edited by Deborah R. Vargas, Nancy Raquel Mirabal, and Lawrence LaFountain-Stokes
- **Música Norteña: Mexican Migrants Creating a Nation between Nations* by Cathy Ragland
- **Oye Como Va! Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* by Deborah Pacini Hernández

In addition to the readings available through Canvas, you will have to watch a number of films/documentaries (some of which will be made available through links on Canvas or we will watch in class).

FILMS/VIDEOS: ON RESERVES OR ONLINE

Latin Music USA (produced by PBS)

Telenovelas: Love, TV, Power (produced by Films for the Humanities)

FILMS/VIDEOS: SCREENED IN CLASS

Angelitos Negros by Joselito Rodríguez

Bananas is my Business (on Carmen Miranda) by Helena Solberg

Lucha Libre by the National Geographic (on line)

The Three Caballeros (produced by Disney) (selections)

Additional material from films, documentaries, and music videos

ADDITIONAL AUDIO/VISUAL MATERIAL

Music and music videos will be played and/or shown during lecture class and, at the discretion of the professor. At times, students may propose music/music video to play/watch during class or during a presentation.

Some preliminary notes

*Even if we will be meeting virtually, the space the we will always be seeking to create will be respectful of all of our differences, whether they are religious beliefs, racial backgrounds, immigration status, gender presentations, ways of

speaking (i.e. accents), in sum, all of our differences.

*Let's do our best to stay healthy, both physically and mentally. Do let me know if I need to do anything to ensure that we are all doing well.

Requirements

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Attendance** and **Active** class participation→20%
- One short class presentation→20%
- Three short papers (3 pages; 10% each)→30%
- Final Research Paper→30%

DESCRIPTION OF REQUIREMENTS:

ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVE CLASS PARTICIPATION (20%):

Part of what makes my classes more generative are the discussions, for them, you must attend. Although attendance would only account for five percent of your final grad (5%), discussion will be fifteen percent (15%). **You are allowed a total of THREE excused absences.** After three absences, your final grade will be affected because of the lack of participation. Tardiness will not be tolerated; please arrive to class on time.

The students are entirely responsible for class material that is covered during class lectures and discussions. The professor will not hold additional hours to cover material missed because of an absence. Office hours are exclusively for the review of material or if the student needs additional guidance (understanding concepts, historical contexts, etc).

There is an **active** participation component to your grade so you must come prepared to participate actively in the discussion of the assigned texts/materials. If class discussions become too professor-centered, the professor will upload questions that the student must then bring to class, with answers, in order to earn participation grade. The professor will ask each student to bring in a text to class to share and discuss. Additionally, you must be willing to listen to your fellow classmates and respond intelligently and respectfully.

SHORT PAPERS (30%):

You will have three 2-page papers (each worth 10%) based on course readings. These papers are designed to gauge your ability to synthesize the readings and to take a rigorously argued and logical position vis-à-vis that material. They are intended for the student to be able to expand the ideas that have been generated by the reading and/or viewings of films and in lecture and discussion sections. I will upload 4 questions (at the most, but perhaps 3) onto canvas and you will be asked to base your short essay on one of those questions. The papers are due during class and NO LATER!

SHORT IN-CLASS PRESENTATION (20%)

I am committed to a collective learning process and, to this end, towards the end of the semester, I would like each student to present on their ongoing research project that has used as its base some of the theoretical ideas and concepts in class in order to examine a popular cultural text. The presentation will be dynamic and could and should use visual material to exemplify. The idea is that we will learn together from each presentation.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (30%)

The final research paper asks you to engage a cultural text that falls into the category of Latinx popular culture and do a critical analysis, using some of the concepts that were discussed in class and/or discussed in the readings. The student is expected to also bring in other sources (limit the number of non-academic sources, make sure that some are also academic sources). The final research paper should be at least 5 pages in length, but no more than 8 pages.

Grading Scale:

92-100	A
80-91	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
below 60	E

Notice regarding Academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin. More specifically, you and other students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For additional information, particularly what constitutes Academic Dishonesty and about possible consequences, see:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas provides on request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. At the beginning of the semester, students who need special accommodations should notify the instructor by presenting a letter prepared by the Service for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office. Disabilities range from visual, hearing, and movement impairments to Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, psychological disorders (bipolar disorder, depression, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder,

etc.), and chronic health conditions (diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, etc.). These also include from temporary disabilities such as broken bones, recovery from surgery, etc. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at (512) 471-6259 [voice], (512) 410-6644 [videophone], via e-mail at ssd@austin.utexas.edu, or visit: <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>.

Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements

Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also require reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).

IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

First essay due: **February 26 @ 11:59pm**

Second essay due: **March 26 @ 11:59pm**

Third essay due: **April 23 @ 11:59pm**

Final Presentations: last weeks of the semester

Final Essay: **May 13 @ 11:59**

CLASS SCHEDULE:

I will try my best to follow the syllabus; if changes do occur, I will inform you ahead of time.

Week 1 (January 20) Introduction to the course and main concepts

Wednesday: Brief introduction and review of syllabus

Week 2 (January 25 and 27) Modernity and Nation: Latin American Popular Culture

Monday

Discuss concepts of folk culture, popular culture, mass culture

Reading: "Popular Culture in Latin America" by Vivian Schelling and "Transnationalism" by Ginetta Candelario

Thursday

Reading: "Introduction: The Politics of the Popular in Latin American Popular Culture" by Caesar and Bueno

Week 3 (February 1 and 3) The Role of Music in Nation-Building Projects (the case of Samba) AND Gender as Performance (the case of Samba and Carmen Miranda)

Monday

Reading: "From Slavery to Samba" by William Rowe and Vivian Schelling and "Baianas, Malandros, and Samba: Listening to Brazil through Donald Duck's Ears" by Eric A. Galm

Viewing: *The Three Caballeros* (excerpts)

Wednesday

Reading: "Helena Solberg Unmasks a Brazilian Idol" by Nena Terrel
Viewing: *Bananas is my Business* by Helena Solberg (excerpts)

Week 4 (February 8 and 10) The Role of Music in Nation-Building Projects AND Gender as Performance (the case of Samba and Carmen Miranda)

Tuesday

Reading: "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat" by Shari Roberts

Thursday

Continue discussing *Bananas is My Business* and Carmen Miranda in general

Week 5 (February 15 and 17) Popular Literature: Literatura de Cordel, *historietas* (Comic Books), and *tiras cómicas* (Comic Strips)

Monday

Reading: "Oral Poetry and the Art of Storytelling" by William Rowe and Vivian Schelling

Wednesday

Reading: "Introduction" and "The Creation of Mexican Comic Books, 1934-1952" by Anne Rubenstein

Week 6 (February 22 and 24) Argentine Soccer and Masculinity: From the Politics of a Style to Dictatorial Tactics

Monday

Reading: "Playing Styles and Masculine Virtues in Argentine Football" by Eduardo Archetti

Wednesday

Reading: "Los Desaparecidos y la Copa Mundial" by Grant Farred

Week 7 (March 1 and 3) Urban Melodramas: Post-Revolutionary Mexico, Film, the Iconicity of Pedro Infante, Blackness, and Racial Anxieties

Monday

Reading: "Bodies, Death and Cinema: Pedro Infante's Death as Political Spectacle" by Anne Rubenstein

Wednesday

Reading: "'The Soul Has No Color, But the Skin Does': *Angelitos Negros* and the Uses of Blackface on the Mexican Silver Screen, ca. 1950" by Marilyn Miller and "Cri-Cri El Grillito Cantor is Beloved by Mexican Children, But It Has an Unexamined Problematic Past" by Eduardo Cepeda (on *Remezcla*)

Viewing: *Angelitos Negros* by Joselito Rodríguez (excerpts)

Week 8 (March 8 and 10) The Spectacle of Good vs Evil (Live and Mediated): Masculinity and Lucha Libre in Mexico

Monday

Reading: "El Santo's Strange Career" by Anne Rubenstein

Viewing: *Lucha Libre* (from the *National Geographic*) (during class)

Wednesday

"Masked Media: The Adventures of Lucha Libre on the Small Screen" by Heather Levi

Viewing: selection of clips from a number of films featuring *El Santo* (during class)

Week 9 (March 15 and 17) Spring Break

Week 10 (March 22 and 24) 'The Tears of the Nation,' Melodrama on the Small Screen: The Case of *telenovelas*

Monday

Reading: "The Telenovela: From Melodrama to Farce" by William Rowe and Vivian Schelling AND "Memory and Form in the Latin American Soap Opera" by Jesús Martín-Barbero

Wednesday

Reading: "Big Snakes on the Streets and Never Ending Stories" by Nelson Hippolyte Ortega

Viewing: *Telenovelas: Love, TV, Power*

Week 11 (March 29 and 31) Spanish- and English-language Media in the US: Transnationalization of the Telenovela (Industry)

Monday

"Televisual Melodrama in an Era of Transnational Migration" by Catherine L. Benamou

Wednesday

Reading: "'Ugly' America Dreams the American Dream" by Isabel Molina-Guzmán

Viewing: *Ugly Betty* (clips will be shown in class)

Week 12 (April 5 and 7) Music's Elusive Geographies: Salsa's and Pop Transnationality

Monday

Reading: "Situating Salsa: Latin Music at the Crossroads" by Lise Waxer

Viewing: *Latin Music USA*—program #1

Wednesday

Reading: "xx)

Viewing: *Rompan Todo* documentary series (excerpts)

Week 13 (April 12 and 14) Music's Elusive Geographies: Norteñas, Corridos, Mexicanidad, Migration, and the "Two Mexicos"

Monday

Reading: "Mexicanidad and Música Norteña in the "Two Mexicos" by Cathy Ragland

Wednesday

Reading: "Los Tigres del Norte and the Transnationalization of Música Norteña in the Working Class Mexican Diaspora" by Cathy Ragland

Week 14 (April 19 and 21) Music's Elusive Geographies: Reggaeton's Antecedents and its Circuitry

Monday

Reading: "Turning the Tables: Musical Mixings, Border Crossings, and New Sonic Circuitries" by Deborah Pacini Hernández

Viewing: music videos (clips, will be shown in class)

Wednesday

"Introduction: Reggaeton's Socio-Sonic Circuitry" by Wayne Marshal, Raquel Z. Rivera, and Deborah Pacini Hernández

"A Beginners Guide to the History and Hybridity of Reggaeton" by Caitlin Donohue

Viewing: music videos (clips, will be shown in class)

Week 15 (April 26 and 28) Presentations

Tuesday: Presentations

Thursday: Presentations

Week 16 (May 3 and 5) Presentations

Tuesday: Presentations

Thursday: Presentations

**FINAL PAPER DUE:
MAY 13, 2021
11:59PM ON CANVAS**