**Course Description**

“Gazing on such wonderful sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on the land there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and in front of us stood the great city of Mexico” (Bernal Diaz, 1518). When Europeans set foot on the “New World” they found a continent deeply shaped by a metropolitan experience. Yet urbanization in Latin America is still seen as a recent phenomenon, the consequence of post-war industrialization and misapplied dreams of Eurocentric modernity. Together, these forces have fixed an image of the Latin American city as a site of endless contradiction – poverty and wealth, order and chaos, intimacy and isolation, hope and frustration. Can we speak of an urban “culture” in Latin America, and if so, what are its features? In this first part of a two course sequence examining urban life in Latin America, we will trace changes and continuities in state policy toward cities and their citizens, from the pre-Columbian metropolises of Cuzco and Tenochtitlan, to the colonial capitals of Lima and Rio de Janeiro, to the industrial centers of São Paulo and Buenos Aires. Readings range from the urban critiques of Angel Rama and Nestor Garcia Canclini, to ethnographic analyses of urbanization by James Holston and Daniel James, to personal accounts of city life by Flora Tristan and Patricia Galvao, to the literary musings of urban imaginaries by Alfonsina Storni and Ricardo Piglia.

**Requirements/Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Grade %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Responses throughout</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>First Response varies per student</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Second Response varies per student</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper 16 or 20 December</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance throughout</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Attendance/Participation**

Regular attendance, punctuality, and engagement with the readings are keys to being an active participant. As such I will expect you to be present and on time at each of our class sessions. For your benefit and mine, I will distribute attendance sheets at the beginning of each class.
Should you need to miss a session, let me know ahead of class as I will not consider retroactive explanations and each unexcused absence will incur a five point reduction from your final grade (with a maximum of three). **After three unexcused absences, you will receive an “F” for participation/attendance.** More importantly, though, I will expect you to come to class prepared, which of course means that you have read/seen/heard the work assigned in advance of each class, and are ready to participate in discussions about the materials. **Please don’t take this course if you think you will be unable to handle an average reading load of about 120 pages per week.**

**Weekly Responses (at least 7; due at noon on Mondays, 15%)**

To help you keep up with our readings, and to help me gauge where your areas of interest or concern lay, you should post at least **SEVEN brief comments (about 150 words, roughly the length of this paragraph) to the course website by noon on Mondays.** These responses may address specific readings – either in general terms or focus on a particular section – or issues raised in the context of class discussion, issues that perhaps were left unexamined or that you wished we had tackled further. These responses can be as specific or broad as you wish, but in all instances they should reflect your own process of coming to terms with the overarching theme of the course: can we speak of an urban “culture” in Latin America, and if so, what are its contours? The purpose, beyond helping to keep you up to date on our readings, is to offer you an opportunity to begin the process of thinking about course materials before class meets. It is also to help you get a sense of your peers’ thoughts on the material, and to provide a forum where you and your peers can engage with each other outside of class.

**Responses (2 of 3; due October 11; November 8; December 6)**

Over the course of the semester students will have **three opportunities to submit two written responses on our readings.** Your responses should analyze course materials covered in the weeks prior to the due dates, as noted above. The purpose of these responses is to consider critically the materials we read and the discussions that followed. Your response should reflect careful consideration of the various points advanced in each section. What struck you as especially unexpected, and why? What contradictions emerged from the various readings? What was most surprising to you about the discussions that ensued? What did you take away from the overall readings? You might consider a close reading of a particular passage as a way to reflect upon larger issues that arose in the context of discussion. Or perhaps a conversation in class seemed especially rich, sparking you to respond in more detail if you were unable to develop your thoughts fully in class. To help you guide your responses, I will provide you with prompt options. However you should feel free to write on a topic of your own choice, as reflected above. This response should be roughly 5-6 pages in length (double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman or comparable font). After receiving my comments, you will have one week to resubmit your response to reflect my feedback and opt for a higher grade. **Please submit all responses to me by email, as I will not accept paper copies.**
**Final Paper (Due 17 December)**

In your final paper (8-10 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, one inch margins, Times New Roman or a comparable font, using appropriate and consistent citation techniques), you should select a case studies drawn from our readings over the course of the semester (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, etc). The purpose of this paper is to answer, against the backdrop of a specific case, and on the basis of our readings, discussions, and your own research, the overarching question of the course: can we speak of an “urban” culture in Latin America, and if so, what are its contours? What is the trajectory of urbanity in Brazil or Mexico, for instance? What has changed, or remained the same?

Over the course of the semester, we will read and discuss materials around these case studies, materials drawn from different eras and cities in the history of each country. You should let me know by **no later than October 28** on which you will want to focus for your paper (please see me if you are already working on a project that ties into this course, or if you already had another case in mind). Once you’ve selected your case study, you and I will meet to consider additional materials that will complement the ones we will be reading/discussing in class. You should also compile a small dossier of primary sources on your case by conducting searches in the following periodicals: New York Times, The Miami Herald, NACLA Report on the Americas, and The Economist (available online or through the Bobst Library website). Let me suggest that an effective and stress-free way of conducting this type of research is to set aside a couple of hours per week, the first hour to actually conduct the research online, and the second to read over your sources, taking rough notes (that is, do not take notes on every single point advanced in a source; instead, read the source fully, then jot down your rough impressions for easy reference later).

Successful papers, as with any research paper, will have a clearly defined (and limited) scope, dialogue with an existing literature (i.e. what others have written or said about the topic), advance an argument, and be supported by primary sources. As such, early in your paper you should telegraph (i.e. indicate to the reader) what your overarching argument is, how you will develop it (i.e. what subsections will help you make the argument), and what sources you will be relying on (if pertinent, you should also comment on any shortcomings of your sources; for instance, if your sources are primarily one-sided, you should indicate why, and how it affects the overall argument). You should include a brief section that dialogues with the major secondary literature you found. How have others dealt with the case? Has the question of how to define “revolution” arisen? If so, in what terms? Devote the bulk of your paper to exploring the actual case. Here is where you will deploy a close reading of the sources you have collected.

You can meet with me at any time for any reason, and I encourage you to do so. But to help keep you on track please keep the following timeline in mind:

**28 October:** Notify me of your case study selections by email (av48@nyu.edu).

**29-30 October:** Meet with me during office hours to go over your initial impressions of the existing literature on your case study, and how to narrow it down to a more specific area of
interest and research. During this meeting we will also discuss potential places where you may locate primary sources on your documents, beyond those noted above.

**19-20 November:** Meet with me during office hours to go over your progress in compiling a dossier of primary sources. During this meeting we will also begin to think about the argument you will be making and the potential structure of your paper.

**13 December:** Optional rough draft of paper due. Email only.

**16 December:** Final draft due if rough draft NOT submitted. Email only.

**20 December:** Final draft due if rough draft submitted. Email only.

**Readings**

The following books are required and available for purchase at the NYU bookstore.


The following books are optional as we will be reading selected chapters from each. You may want to consider purchasing used copies online. They will also be on reserve at Bobst.


Additional required readings will be made available by the instructor as needed.

**Academic Integrity**
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

**Late Submissions/Incompletes**

Students can ask for extensions and will receive them at the instructor’s discretion, though any late submission will incur a half grade drop unless the delay results from documented medical reasons or family emergencies. **Only requests made in advance of the deadline will be considered.** Assignments submitted late without previously alerting the instructor will not be graded. The last day to submit any pending work granted an extension is **20 December**. If you anticipate being unable to meet this deadline, you should contact the instructor immediately and request to receive an Incomplete, which will be granted at the instructor’s discretion and only with a previously approved plan to complete outstanding work.

**Extra Credit**

Over the course of the semester, the instructor may make extra credit opportunities available to students. These may include attending relevant talks, performances, films, expositions, etc. Students are also encouraged to recommend any events that strike them as relevant to the course. Each extra credit opportunity will add one point to a student’s final grade, with no more than three points possible.
CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change)

9 September: Course Intro

16 September: Tenochtitlan, B.C. (Before Columbus) (101 pp)


   a. “Record of the arrival of the Mexica Azteca when they came here to Mexico Tenochtitlán” (7 pp)
   b. “Conquest of Tlatelolco” (4 pp)


23 September: Cuzco, B.C. (112 pp)

   a. Chapters 2-7 (71 pp)


30 September: Urban Conquests (153 pp)

   “The Entrance into Mexico”
   a. “The Stay in Mexico”
   b. “The Siege and Capture of Mexico”

   b. “The Massacre in the Main Temple…”
   c. “The Night of Sorrows”
   d. “The Siege of Tenochtitlán”
   e. “Spanish Raids into the Besieged City”
   f. “The Surrender of Tenochtitlán”

7 October: Building the New World City (101 pp)


   a. Chapters 1-2 (28 pp)


   a. Chapters 6-11 (73 pp) ([Available Online through Bobst Ebrary](#))

14 October: NO CLASS (FALL RECESS)

21 October: Building the New World Order (91 pp)


28 October: Urban Utopias (160 pp)


4 November: Modernity and Melancholy in the City (163 pp)


11 November: Rendering the Modern New World City (64 pp)

   
   a. Nelly Richard, “City, Art, and Politics”

   
   a. “Immigration as a Means of Progress” (11 pp)
   b. “The Paris of South America” (11 pp)
   c. “The Birth of Tango” (6 pp)
   d. “Poems to be read in a Trolley Car” (3 pp)

   
   a. “Lines to the Sadness of Buenos Aires”
   b. “Fog”
   c. “Street”

4. Carlos Gardel (1 pp)
   
   a. “Volver”

18 November: The Limits of Urban Modernity (80 pp)


**25 November: Urban Terrors (142pp)**


**GROUP SCREENING: Onibus 174 (Monday 25 November, 7PM, Avery Fisher)**

**2 December: Survival in the City (44 pp)**


3. FILM: *Onibus 174* (122 min)

**9 December: Urban Dystopias (145 pp)**


**11 December: Urban Hydras (65 pp)**


   b. George Yúdice, “Culture Based Urban Development in Rio de Janeiro”