FIRST-UG88 (Re)Imagining Latin America
New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Instructor: Prof. Alejandro Velasco
Fall 2014: Term
Office: 1 Washington Pl, Rm. 506
1 Wash Pl, 527: Location
Hours: Tue 2:00-5:00PM, Wed. 9:00AM-2:00PM
Tue/Thu 2:00-3:15PM: Time
Contact: av48@nyu.edu, 212-992-9834

Course Description

In Bolivia where non-indigenous elites long ruled exclusively an indigenous President now leads a socialist revolution; in Argentina where governments once massacred youth by the thousands citizens now fill the streets to demand accountability; in Guatemala where Catholicism long reigned supreme evangelicals now find rapt audiences. Throughout the region the once unthinkable is fast becoming normative, and everywhere pundits wonder: are these the stirrings of a new Latin America or the rumblings of old ghosts in different form? This course has two aims: on one hand to decipher how Latin America has conventionally been imagined, by introducing students to major themes in the region’s study like mestizaje and machismo, authoritarianism and revolution, dependency and industrialization; on the other hand to question how valid these imaginaries remain against the backdrop of contemporary examples of social, political, and economic transformation in Mexico, El Salvador, Venezuela, Brazil, and others. Readings draw widely from academic articles in history, anthropology, and political science, excerpts from memoirs and contemporary journalism, and samplings of music and visual arts, generating thematic student papers asking: is it time to re-imagine Latin America as a new century dawns, and if so, how? Authors include: Simón Bolívar, Gabriela Mistral, Gabriel García Márquez, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Manlio Argueta, and the EZLN.

Learning Goals

- To challenge self-held assumptions about unfamiliar cultures, to learn to remain open to others’ challenges of those assumptions, and to learn to challenge the assumptions of others convincingly, respectfully, and through the use of evidence.
- To learn the difference between types of sources (primary and secondary, fiction and nonfiction), how to closely read them, how to critically interpret them, and how to marshal them to mount clear and convincing arguments, in writing or in discussion.
- To differentiate between different disciplinary approaches to a subject, and to learn how reading different disciplinary perspectives on any given topic enriches its study.

Grading/Requirements

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<td>News Portfolio</td>
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Attendance/Participation (20%)

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 two point reduction from your final grade (with a maximum of five). After five unexcused absences, you will receive an “F” for participation/attendance. More importantly, 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.

First Response (Due 4 September, 5%)

Your first response asks you to answer the following question: How do I imagine Latin America? The purpose is to provide you with an opportunity, early in the course, to consider the experiences that have shaped your understanding of “Latin America,” and the attendant biases that may underlay this imaginary. Accordingly, you should be as forthcoming as possible. Don’t be afraid to be provocative, as long as your reflections are sincere. You should email me (av48@nyu.edu) your responses by 4 September, at which point I will render them anonymous and post them on the course site for all of us to read. You should also feel free to drop off your responses anonymously in my office (1 Washington Place, Rm. 506) if that is more comfortable. The format of your responses is discretionary: short paper (no more than 3 pages), extended poetry, stream of consciousness, or any other forms of expression (music, video, etc) are acceptable; indeed, whatever will most help you to tackle the question frankly and thoroughly.

News Portfolio (varies per student, 5%)

A key site for the construction of how we come to “imagine” Latin America is media – newspapers, TV, radio, etc – that we read, see, and hear every day in the US. Throughout the semester we will analyze media accounts of the region, as a way to consider how imaginaries are constructed but also, to parse what insights they nevertheless have to offer. Hopefully, this is a task you will continue to engage in after the course is over, drawing on what you will come to learn about the region to interrogate more critically what you read and hear in the news.

To help set you on that task, over the course of the semester students will post at least three news items on Latin America that resonated with you against the backdrop of our course. It could be from any source (i.e. mainstream, alternative, specialized) and any medium (print, TV, radio). Please post a link to the story on the course website, and briefly (just a few sentences) describe what in particular you found of interest about the item. In addition, students should comment on at least three other news items posted by fellow students. This is only the
minimum amount. You should feel free to post and to comment on more than the three and three required.

Discussion Section (varies per student, 10%)

Each student will have an opportunity to lead discussion on one of the dates marked by an asterisk in the syllabus, corresponding to our sections on Race, Development, Revolution, and Spirituality (please let me know by 16 September if you have a preference, otherwise I will assign you a section). For each section there will be four or five student discussants, and each student will lead several students in discussion. These sections will be about forty five minutes in duration. Students will be responsible for closely reading all of the materials assigned for that day and for developing discussion questions based on your interpretation of that material. Please expect and plan to meet with me and with your fellow discussion leaders on the day before your small group, which of course means that you should have read the material by then. So that we can keep a record of your questions and for others to refer to them, you should post your questions on the course website. Questions may concern whole texts, or focus on a particular section. In the event that they are detailed (for instance, if there was a particular passage that caught your attention and that you think might help draw out larger issues relevant to that section’s readings), make sure that your questions can be connected to larger themes in the section. For a forty five minute discussion, you should expect to prepare no fewer than five questions. In all cases, your questions should have a goal in mind. What is the big idea that the various materials point to? What should we get out of the readings? How do they relate to the broader themes of the section?

In the course of actually leading discussion, you should not limit your interventions to just the prepared questions; dare venture answers to those questions, or other questions raised in the context of the discussion. Use your familiarity with the materials to provide plausible answers to the questions both you and your colleagues raise in the context of the discussion. Keep track in your mind of what your peers have said, so that you can draw connections. My evaluation of the thoughtfulness and work that went into creating your discussion questions will determine your grade for this assignment. Also, my evaluation will rest on how well you are able to engage with your peers’ reactions to your questions. Finally, while it will be the discussants’ responsibility to come up with engaging questions, it is in every student’s best interest to assist each other by coming prepared for class and participating actively in the discussion. After all, every student will have a turn at leading a section.

Second Response (6 October or 2 November, 20%)

Your second response should analyze one of the course themes covered between 23 September and 28 October (Re-Imagining Race or Re-Imagining Development). The purpose is to consider critically the materials we read and the discussions that followed. As such, an introspective piece (such as for the first response) will not suffice. Instead 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 6-7 pages in length (double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman or comparable font). Please pay attention to format, as I will deduct points accordingly. Likewise be sure to cite all materials referenced appropriately (any style will do: APA, Chicago, MLA, just be consistent). If you are responding to the section on Race, you should submit your response no later than 6 October. If you are responding to the section on Development, you should submit your response no later than 2 November. 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 as an email attachment in MSWord or compatible format.

Third Response (5 November, 20%)

Your third response asks you to conduct a literary analysis of The Underdogs by Mariano Azuela. While ostensibly fictional, the text attempts to make sense of a critical juncture in Latin American and indeed world history: the first revolution of the 20th century. The purpose of this assignment is to consider the intersections of history and literature as reflected in a seminal Latin American text. We will discuss what it means to conduct a literary analysis of a text when we go over Chronicle of a Death Foretold early in the semester. You should feel free to write on a topic of your own choice, as reflected above. This response should be roughly 6-7 pages in length (double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman or comparable font). Please pay attention to format, as I will deduct points accordingly. You should submit your response by 5 November. Please submit all responses to me as an email attachment in MSWord or compatible format.

Fourth Response (21 November or 8 December, 20%)

Your fourth response should follow the same format as your second response, but cover instead any of the course themes in the sections on (Re)Imagining Revolution or (Re)Imagining Spirituality. If you are responding to the section on Revolution, you should submit your response no later than 21 November. If you are responding to the section on Spirituality, you should submit your response no later than 8 December. 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 as an email attachment in MSWord or compatible format.

Required Readings

The following books are required and available at Bluestockings Bookstore, 172 Allen St.


The following book is recommended. A copy will be available at Bobst Reserve, but you may want to purchase it independently for ease and reference.


NOTE: The instructor will provide you with copies of required book chapters, as permitted by relevant copyright law.

**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)

PART ONE: IMAGINING LATIN AMERICA

1. Tue 2 September: Course Introduction

2. Thu 4 September (33 pp)

FIRST RESPONSE DUE

READ: Course Syllabus

Jon Lee Anderson, “The Revolutionary: The president of Venezuela has a vision, and Washington has a headache” The New Yorker 10 September 2001 (16 pp)


(Text of Lula’s speech available in Course Resources: “Lula and the Prejudice of the Poor,” trans. Thomaz Marcondes.)

3. Tue 9 September

Gabriel García Márquez, Chronicle of a Death Foretold. (120 pp)

4. Thu 11 September

“La Soledad de América Latina (1982)” – Discurso del Premio Nobel, Gabriel García Márquez


READ: Student Papers (35 pp) (COURSE RESOURCES)

PART TWO: (RE)IMAGINING RACE IN LATIN AMERICA
5. Tue 16 September: Imagining Race in Latin America

LAST DAY TO NOTIFY INSTRUCTOR OF DISCUSSION SECTION OPTION


“5.1 "The Fact Remains that they are Black: Racial attitudes in Eighteenth Century Portugal and Brazil” (8 pp)

"2.4 The Masters and the Slaves: A Frenchman's Account of Society in Rural Pernambuco Early in the Nineteenth Century" (7 pp)

"6.1 "This Dark Blotch on our Social System": An analysis of the Legal Status of Slaves and Freedmen in Brazilian Society" (9 pp)


6. Thu 18 September


7. Tue 23 September


8. Thu 25 Sept


9. Tue 30 September: Brazil Case Study**

Jon Jeter, “Affirmative Action Debate Forces Brazil to Take a Look in the Mirror” Washington Post, 13 June 2003 (2 pp) (BOBST ONLINE)

Documentary: Brazil in Black and White, by Adam Stepan. A Production of Thirteen/ WNET New York by Robert Stone Productions. (54 min)

PART THREE: (R)eIMAGINING DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

10. Thu 2 October


MONDAY 6 OCTOBER: SECOND RESPONSE OPTION DUE (Race)

11. Tue 7 October


12. Thu 9 October


13. Tue 14 October

FALL RECESS

14. Thu 16 October


15. Tue 21 October:


16. Thu 23 October: Venezuela Case Study**


PART FOUR: (RE)IMAGINING REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

17. Tue 28 October


18. Thu 30 October


FRI 1 NOVEMBER: SECOND RESPONSE OPTION DUE (Development)
19. Tue 4 November


WED 5 NOVEMBER: THIRD RESPONSE DUE (Azuela)

20. Thu 6 November

FILM: *A Place Called Chiapas*, dir. Nettie Wilde (89 min)

EZLN, “First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle” (4 pp)

EZLN, “Second Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle” (11 pp)


21. Tue 11 November:


22. Thu 13 November: Left Turn Case Study**


Gianpaolo Baiocchi, “Pardon the Inconvenience, We are Changing the Country,” *Boston Review*, 26 June 2013 (4 pp)


PART FIVE: (Re)IMAGINING SPIRITUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

23. Tue 18 November


24. Thu 20 November


FILM: The Journey: From Faith to Action in Brazil (30 min) (ON RESERVE AT AVERY FISHER)

FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER: FOURTH RESPONSE OPTION DUE (Revolution)

25. Tue 25 November


26. Thu 27 November

THANKSGIVING BREAK

27. Tue 2 December: Christianity in Transition Case Study**

José Araújo, *Salve a Umbanda (Hail Umbanda)*. University of California Extension Media Center, 1988. (46 min) (ON RESERVE AT AVERY FISHER)


“Cristina Fernández de Kirchner turns Pope Francis from Foe to Friend,” *Associated Press*, 27 March 2013. (2 pp)

PART SIX: (RE)IMAGINING GENDER IN LATIN AMERICA

28. Thu 4 December


MONDAY 8 DECEMBER: FOURTH RESPONSE OPTION DUE (Spirituality)

29. Tue 9 December


- “Woman’s Education” (3 pp)
- “An Opinion on Feminism” (4 pp)
- “The Female Vote” (5 pp)
- “Message for the Guatemalan Women’s Conference” (7 pp)

30. Thu 11 December


- Verónica Gago, “Dangerous Liaisons: Lat Am Women and the Left” (3 pp)
- Karin Monsaterios P. “Bolivian Women’s Organizations in the MAS Era” (5 pp)
- Vilma Reis, “Black Brazilian Women and the Lula Administration” (4 pp)

**OPTIONAL: TUESDAY 16 DECEMBER**

IN CLASS: *Strawberry and Chocolate* by Senel Paz, Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio. Burbank: Miramax Films, 1995. (104 min)