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**Popular Culture in Latin America**  
**Dr. Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo**  
New York University  
ANTH-UA 603  
SPRING 2023

Latin American Popular culture offers a “window” and a “mirror” into the many worlds and histories embodied and circulated by the national and imagined *pueblos* (peoples.) It remains an arena for ideas of nationalism and identity to be created, maintained, and shared within everyday life. This course explores Latin America’s rise and evolution of popular culture.

Anthropologically, in this course, we will inspect the varied and sometimes conflicting ways in which popular culture maintains a public commentary on violence and nationalism throughout the hemisphere. We will also examine how popular culture (re)solves social problems while casting a light on inequalities. In the context of Latin America, race, gender/sexuality, and class

persist as dominant conceptual frameworks which complicate ‘normative’ definitions and expressions of nationalism, identity, and citizenship. For this reason, we will ask how understandings of gender, class, race, and sexuality shape the ways they are (mis)represented in popular culture forms. How does Latin American popular culture migrate and shape the Latinx experience and culture industries abroad? Lastly, we will assess popular culture’s social and political impact on claims and affirmations of identity, belonging, and authenticity..

We will survey national imaginaries through a variety of popular cultural forms such as:

- sports (*futbol*/soccer)
- television (telenovelas and comedy),
- Food culture and rituals
- film (international, national, and local cinemas)
- art (performance/theater, prose & poetry)
- beauty industries
- Music (*rock nacional*, cumbia, salsa, reggaeton)
- popular religion.

### **Moses Statement**

If you are a student with a disability requesting accommodations, please contact New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu). You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Explore how ‘Latin America’ is imagined/invented through expressions of popular culture
2. Develop an awareness of the social and historical contexts in which manifestations of popular culture have advanced throughout the hemisphere.
3. Explore the influence of Colonialism and imperialism on Latin-American culture
4. Examine discourses about popular culture’s political, social, and historical dimensions
5. Develop an awareness of Latin America’s varied and layered ‘identities’ (national, regional, continental, western, and non-western) and the legacy of race, class, and gender play in its construction.
6. Analyze how Latin American popular cultures are shaped by other cultures in an era of globalization, and in turn, they influence other expressions of culture (i.e., U.S. Latinx cultures).

### **Required Textbooks:**

You should have a Spanish/Spanish or a Spanish/English dictionary for this course.

### **Course Policies:**

- Podcast/Lecture will drop on Tuesdays before 6 pm with a Study Guide (posted in the Podcast content folder on Brightspace).
- Office Hours after Week 3 will be held during our class time on Tuesdays as an “open” session. However, you can make an appointment too.
- I post an announcement at the beginning of the Week with updates/reminders.

- The course will run Asynchronously.

### **Course Requirements and Grading Breakdown\***

#### **Reflections (Total 4) - 40%**

Thematic Explorations on the following themes using 3-4 texts from the course to inform your exploration of the theme. (2-3 pages)

- Thoughtful reflections are a way for us to share our understanding of the readings, the themes in the texts, and general concepts related to the historical/cultural development of popular culture in Latin America.
- Reflective responses to the texts should reflect five themes from the course that engage with the texts (typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt. font, one-inch margins) and follow standard Chicago format.
- If you would like to submit a creative interpretation following the same theme and objectives, you can. I am open to short docs, songs, photo essays, Poetry, etc.

#### **Schedule**

- **Gender** - due February 12, 2023
  - respond to Peers due on February 15, 2023
- **Identity**- due February 26, 2023
  - Respond to Peers due on March 2, 2023
- **Nationalism**-Due March 13, 2023
  - Responses to peers due on March 20, 2023
- **Racism**-April 23, 2023
  - Responses to Peers due on April 27, 2023

#### **Fieldwork (choose 2 out of 3) - 20%**

You will immerse yourself in a cultural experience.

#### **Schedule**

- **Music/Dance**—Due March 26, 2023
- **Food**: Due April 9, 2023
- **Sport**: Due May 3, 2023

#### **Class Participation:- 20%**

- You respond on the discussion board to 2 of your classmates
- Due 2-3 days after Reflections are Due

#### **Virtual Archive and Collaborate Website (Final)-15%**

#### **Virtual Scavenger Hunt- 5%**

*\*All assignments will have Explainers reviewing the guidelines and expectations.\**

### **Course Outline**

**WEEK 1-January 24, 2023**

## **Introductions, Review of Syllabus**

### Watch

- *Harvest of Empire* (2012)

### Song

- “Latino America” by Calle 13

## **WEEK 2-January 31, 20223**

### **History & *El Pueblo***

### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 1- “Why Study Latin American Popular Culture?”- a Primer into our Culture, People, and Politics?”

### Read

- “Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver” and “King Sugar and other Agricultural Monarchs” in *Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano
- “Colonial Roots” by Thomas C. Wright (recommended)
- “Child of the Americas” by Aurora Levins Morales
- “The Origins of National Consciousness” by Benedict Anderson
- “El Sur” by Jorge Luis Borges

### Watch

- *Latin History for Morons* (2018)
- “The Couple in the Cage” by Guillermo Gomez-Peña and Coco Fusco

### Song

- “Somos Mas Americanos” by Los Tigres del Norte
- “Estoy Aqui pero mi Mente esta Alla” by La Banda Gorda

## **WEEK 3-February 7, 2023**

### **The Politics of (mis)Representations & Gender**

### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 2- “(Mis)Representations and Hollywood: beyond Virgins, Bandidos, and Whores”

### Read

- “No, I’m not a Proud Latina” by D. Harris
- “Irresistible Romance” by Doris Sommers
- “The Myth of the Latin Woman: I met a Girl named Maria” by Judith Ortiz Cofer
- “You Men” by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
- “Beauty Weighs in Argentina” by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo
- “To live in the Borderland means you” by Gloria Anzaldúa
- “I am Joaquin” by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez
- “You Want me White” by Alfonsina Storni

### Watch

- “The Anatomy Lesson” by Regina Jose Galindo

### Songs

- “Yo Perreo Sola” by Bad Bunny
- “Caminar Sola” by Julieta Venegas

### Due

**February 12, 2023**  
**Reflection on Gender**

**WEEK 4-February 14, 2023**  
**Mirrors and Windows**

Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 3- “Windows and Mirrors into our People, Culture, and Politics”

Read

- “Studying Bad Bunny, and Finding all of Puerto Rico” by Frances Sola-Santiago
- “And where are the people? Genealogies of the pueblo during the late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries” by Francisco A. Ortega (recommended)
- “Narcocorridos and the Cultural Persona of the Narco Trafficker” by Mark Cameron Edberg
- “From Latin to Latino Lover: Hispanicity and Female Desire in Popular Culture” by Nadie Lie
- “Gabriel Garcia Marquez: Guide to Surreal and real Latin America” by Wyre Davies (recommended)
- “All Cumbia, the Cumbia: the Latin Americanization of a Tropical Genre” by Fernandez L. Hoeste
- “First Take: Our Telenovela, Ourselves” by Omar Rincon

View

- “A Janitor in an Immigrant Detention Center Turned Confiscated Items into Works of Art” by Siran Babayan
- “What Makes White People Dance” on the *Dave Chappelle Show*

Songs

- “El General” by Willie Colon
- “Mi Gente” by J. Balvin

**WEEK 5 -February 21, 2023,**  
**Dictating Resistance - Brasil**

Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 4- “Brasil and Imagination: Dismantling Systems”

Read

- “Are Brazilians Latinos? What does their identity struggle tell us about Race in America?” by Frances Negron-Muntaner.
- “Consuming Carmen Miranda: Dislocations and Dissonances in the reception of an Icon” by Fernando Figueo Balleiro
- “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” by Paolo Freire (excerpts)
- “Images and Reflections: Ritual, Drama, Carnival, Film, and Spectacle in Cultural Performance” by Victor Turner (recommended)
- “Articulating Race and Nation in Brazilian Popular Song” by James McNally
- “The Exotic Other: Representations of Tropicalism in U.S Popular Culture” by Malgorzata Martnуска
- “The Theater of the Oppressed” by Sophie Courdray
- “Mixed Blood” by Jeffrey Fish

### Watch

- *City of God* (2002)
- “Basil Brasil! Part 1: From Samba to Bossa” by the BBC (recommended)
- *Carmen Miranda: Bananas is my Business* (1995)

### Song

- “Girl from Ipanema” by Astrud Gilberto, João Gilberto and Stan Getz
- “Tubarão, Te Amo” by Tchakabum

### Due

#### **Reflection on Identity**

**February 19, 2023**

### **WEEK 6- February 28, 2023**

#### **Sounds of Resistance- New Song and Rock Nacional**

### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 5- “Sounds of Revolution and Dissent in *El Sur*”

### Read

- “How a Folk Singer’s Murder forced Chile to Confront its Past” by Retro Report
- “Sonic Graffiti: Etching Resistance after the Economic Crisis” by Mel MaSal (draft)
- “The Miamization of Latin American Pop Music” by Daniel Party
- “Music in Transit: Argentina and the Globalization of a Popular Music” by Matthew B. Karush
- “Putumayo and its Discontents: the Andean Music Industry as a World Music Geography” by K.A Dorr
- “Performing Mestizaje: Making Indigenous Acts Visible in Latina/o Popular Culture” by C.J Aargon

### Watch

- *Massacre at the Stadium* (2009)
- *Tango Feroz* (1993)

### Song

- “Sr. Cobranza” by Bersuit Vergarabat
- “Dinosaurios” by Charly Garcia
- “Manifiesto” by Victor Jara

### **WEEK 7- March 7, 2023- Imagining (in)Justice**

### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 6- “Gritos Latinos and Sonic Escraches”

### Read

- “Ana Mendieta: Death of an Artist Foretold in Blood” by Sean O’Hagan
- “Alien Turf” by Piri Thomas
- “The Sickle, The Serpent, and the Soil: History, Revolution, Nationhood, and Modernity in the murals of Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and the Daid Alfaro Siquieros” by Desmond
- “Absit” by Angelica Gorodischer
- “Eyes of a Blue Dog” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- “Music, Politics, and the Sentimentalism in Bolero” by Leon F. Garcia

- “The Venezuelan Government’s Newest Opponent is a State-Funded Orchestra” by Yana Genchova Stainova

Watch

- *1985* (2022)

Listen

- “The Latin American Mind in Global Context” by Julio Covarrubias (TED Talk)

**Due**

**Reflection on Nationalism**

**March 13, 2023**

**WEEK 8- March 14, 2023**

**SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 9- March 21, 2023**

**Pretty Hurts Industries of Objectification**

Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 7- “The Ugly Buisness of Beauty”

Read

- “Crisis of Size: a Porteña Crisis of Size” by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo
- “Beauty in Latin America Has Always Been Rooted in the Earth” by Lissete Lanuza Saenz
- “Brain, brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S Popular Culture” by Isabel Molina Guzman and Angharad N. Valdivia
- “Beauty: What Makes us Dream, What Haunts Us” by Claudia Leibelt
- “How to Date a Brown Girl (black girl, white girl, or halfie)” by Junot Diaz

Watch Short Documentaries/Films

- *The Road to Miss Colombia* (2020)
- *Venezuela’s Inflated Sense of Beauty* (2013)
- *A Ritual to Beauty* (2022)

Due

- “Soy Yo” by Bomba Estereo
- “Bolero Falaz” by Aterciopelados

**Due**

**Music/Dance Fieldwork**

**March 26, 2023**

**WEEK 10-March 28, 2023**

**The New Latino Gang**

Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 8- “Imagining the New Latino Gang”

Read

- “Reggaeton Can Reveal God to Us-if we listen Carefully” by Stephen G. Abubato
- “Reggaeton and Electronic Musica Have a Long History. 2021 Revived It” by Isabella Herrera
- “Aqui en el Ghetto: Hip-Hop in Colombia, Cuba, Mexico” by Arlene Tickner

- “Reggaerton’s Global Expansion and Wide-Open Future” by John Caramanica for the New York Times
- “In 2022, Bad Bunny made pop stardom a Subversive Act” by Isabelia Herrera
- “Goodbye, Chespirito” by Juliana Ceballos

#### Listen

- “Puerto Rican Obituary” by Pedro Pietri

#### Watch

- “Latin Pop Star, White Audience” by Alternatino

#### Songs

- “New Latino Gang” by J Balvin, Feby, Bad Bunny
- “Vivin’ La Vida Loca” by Ricky Martin

### **WEEK 11-April 4, 2023**

#### **Food and Appetites**

#### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 9- “Cooking up Food and Desire”

#### Read

- “Drinking the Nation and Making Masculinity: Tequila, Pancho Villa, and the U.S Media” by Marie Saita Gaytan
- “Between Incas and Indias: Inca Kola and the Construction of a Peruvian-Global Modernity” by M. Cristina Alcalde
- “How One Family Parlayed Mexican Food Into a Los Angeles Landmark” by Kevin McKenna
- “A New Wave of Plant-Based Mexican Cooking” by NYTimes
- “Nikkei Food” for Whom? Gastro-Politics and Culinary Presentation in Peru” by Ayumi Takenaka

#### Watch

- *Todo Sobre Asado* (2016)

#### Songs

- “Tusa” by Karol G
- “Aguanile” by Marc Anthony
- “Sopa de Caracol” by Banda Blanca

#### Due

- **Food Fieldwork**  
**April 9, 2023**

### **WEEK 12-April 11, 2023**

#### **Disappearances, Diasporas, and Queerness**

#### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 10- “Queering, Moving, and Disorientations”

#### Read

- “The Homoerotic Diaspora in Latin America” by David Foster
- *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* by Juana Molina (excerpt)
- “Afro-Peruvian Feminisms and Performance Geographies of Diasporcity, 1952-2013” by Kirstie Dorr



- *Let me Speak!: Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines* by Domitila Barrios de Chungara (excerpts)
- “Poppies Also Have Thorns” by Pedro Lemebel
- “The Struggle and (im) possibilities of Decolonizing Latin American Citizenship Practices and Politics” by M.C Cahaus

#### Watch

- *Mucho Mucho Amor: The Legend of Walter Mercado* (2020)
- *Chavela* (2023)

#### Songs

- “Querida” by Juan Gabriel
- “Estoy Saliendo Con un Chabon” by Los Sultanes
- “Un Mundo Raro” by Chavela Vargas

### **WEEK 13-April 18, 2023**

#### **Memory**

#### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 11- “Forgiving, but never Forgetting”

#### Read

- “Pensando Mucho: Embodies Distress among Grandmothers in Nicaraguan Transnational Families” by KE Yarris
- “Staging Traumatic Memory: Yuyachkani” by Diana Taylor
- “Rewriting the history of the Urban Revolutionary: Documentary Film and Human Rights Activism in Post-Dirty War Society” by Fernando Herrera Calderon
- “Art from a Fractured Past” Cynthia Milton
- “The Artist’s Truth/The Post-Auschwitz Predicament After Latin America’s Age of Dirty War” by Steve J. Stern
- “Funes el Memorioso” by Jorge Luis Borges
- “Muertos Civiles” by Amarilys Estrella

#### View:

- “Out of Focus Nuyoricans” by Adal Maldonado

#### Songs

- “La Tierra del Olvido” by Carlos Vives
- “Guantanamo” by Celia Cruz

#### Due

#### **Reflection on -Isms and -Phobias**

**April 23, 2023**

### **WEEK 14-April 25, 2023**

#### **Soccer**

#### Podcast (Lecture)

- Episode 11- “Champions of the World and Stars”

#### Read

- “God is Argentina” by Martin Caparros
- “Futbol Catitos: negotiating masculinity in Argentina” by Charles T. Barrish and John Nauright

- “The Meaning of Sport in Anthropology: a View from Latin America” by Eduardo Archetti
- (Untitled manuscript, 2 chapters) by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo

Song

- “Mariposa Technicolor” by Fito Paez
- “Muchcahos, ahora nos Volvimos Ilusionar” by la Mosca Tsé-Tsé

Watch

- *Football as Religion: The Church of Maradona* (2018)
- *Metegol* (2013)

Due

**Fieldwork Sports**

**May 3, 2023**

**WEEK 15-May 3, 2023**  
**Virtual Scavenger Hunt**  
**TBD**