

## PHIL 295.01 Special Topic: Latin American and Latino Philosophy

Fall 2012, T-TH 12:45-2:05, Steiner 305

**Instructor:** Roberto Toledo, Steiner 101, [rotoledo@gmail.com](mailto:rotoledo@gmail.com), office phone: 641-269-4913 (prefer email)

**Office Hours:** T 2:15-3:30 TH 10:30-11:50 and by appointment

### Course Description and Goals

This course will begin with the question of whether there is a “Latin American” philosophy and whether there is an “indigenous” Latin American philosophy. Then, we will examine the ways in which the colonial experience has informed Latin American existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and pragmatism, and analytic philosophy, and how all these movements have informed an original Latin American tradition called “Liberation Philosophy.” Finally, we will conclude by complicating and discussing Latin American and Latino identity by addressing racial and ethnic difference and the ways in which Chicano and Latino philosophy question clearly defined borders.

#### \*NO PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF PHILOSOPHICAL TERMS OR MOVEMENTS REQUIRED\*

The course poses three basic questions: What does it mean to be “Latin American”?; What is “philosophy”?; and—the question that connects the two—what is the relationship of an “ethnophilosophy” to philosophy in general? We will enter into these debates between thinkers who span the analytic and continental tradition who address Latin American and Latino questions. Students will also discuss texts that have philosophical content without being officially classified as philosophy. For these reasons, this course serves as an excellent introduction to philosophy in general. Students will learn how philosophers, and not just from Latin America, have either been classified in universalist terms (the analytic tradition) or in more ethnic terms (the continental tradition, French philosophy, German philosophy, etc.).

The advantage of the Latin American tradition is it constantly reposes the question “What is philosophy?” and “What is “ethnophilosophy?” in a particularly humble and self-reflexive way compared to the Anglo and Eurocentric analytic and continental philosophical traditions that Latin American philosophy draws from. Thus, students will be introduced to philosophy by doing philosophy as we ask and re-ask these three basic questions over and over throughout the course. Reading and discussing Latin American philosophers, more so than philosophers from the center of the Western world, allows for an authentic introduction to philosophy—as well as to the specificities of Latin American philosophy—as opposed to simply reading the standard canon without necessarily asking why the works count as philosophy.

By the end of this course, students will acquire resources to address philosophical questions related to identity and culture as well as an understanding of the history of these types of interrogations in Ibero-Indo-Afro-American thought. In terms of method, students will learn to give dynamic oral presentations, to peer-edit, to revise, and to write philosophically through a carefully constructed essay (by building a project proposal, an outline of your argument and paper, and a peer-edited first draft).

There are two required books, available at the bookstore:

Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Flores, Juan, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto-Rican Culture and Latino Identity*

The rest of the readings are either under “library resources” or “documents” on PioneerWeb.

### Course Requirements

Please submit each assignment in hardcopy and electronically (reading responses can be electronic only)

#### **In-Class Presentation (35%):**

Your presentation should be well prepared and engaging. You will do the reading and prepare an outline at least one session ahead of time so that you can discuss your presentation with me before you present (see presentation guidelines sheet). That way I can help you be better prepared, and my own lecture will be better focused on the subjects you will address or have left unaddressed. You will also do a mock-presentation with a peer-evaluator, before or after meeting with me, which will be followed by a self-evaluation on how you will improve your presentation based on their feedback. This will be submitted on the day of your presentation with your finalized presentation handout (see self-evaluation guidelines sheet)

You will present for 30 min (discussion included), and then I will respond and bring in extra material for 30 min.

#### **Final Paper (35%)**

You may write on the topic and readings of your choice, incorporating material not on the syllabus. Your final paper grade is composed of 4 parts:

- 2-page project proposal (15%)
- 1-2 page summary (abstract) of your principle argument and a paper outline (15%)
- Peer-edited first draft with self-evaluation (10%)
- Final paper (40%)

The guidelines for each of these assignments are posted under assignments on PioneerWeb.

### **Class Reading Responses (20%)**

Students will submit a 2-page (min) response to each class's reading plus 1 discussion question (see the reading response guidelines sheet for details). Each assignment is worth a total of 10 points and must be posted to blackboard by midnight the day before class (so that I can read your thoughts before the class discussion). Please use the following format for the title of your email and document: date of course that reading is from/your name (e.g. 9-3Toledo.doc). Your grade will be updated on Blackboard on a weekly basis.

### **Peer Evaluations (10%)**

You will do 2 written peer evaluations throughout the semester that I will grade on the basis of their thoroughness and relevancy to your peer's work (see presentation and essay peer-evaluation guidelines)

For the presentation, you will also submit a follow-up evaluation of the presentation the day of the presentation (you will evaluate the speaker as they speak, paying attention to how the presenter has incorporated your initial feedback). Your evaluation will help my own evaluation in order to most fairly grade the presentation.

You will be given 7 days to peer-edit the first draft of your peer's paper.

For the presentation evaluation, you will evaluate the person with the last name immediately preceding you alphabetically. For the paper evaluation, you will evaluate the person two names before you alphabetically. If there is a schedule conflict for the presentation you are assigned to evaluate, please notify as soon as possible me so that we can switch with another student.

### **Attendance:**

You are expected to attend this discussion-centered class. After the student presentation, everyone will take 10 minutes to write about how the presentation and discussion changed their understanding of the readings, and this sheet will be used for me to record your attendance. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade for the peer-evaluation component by one letter. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. If you arrive to class late 3 times, that will count as an absence.

If you will miss any classes for religious holidays or for athletic events, you must notify me of your schedule within the first 2 weeks of the course.

### **Late Policy:**

Written assignments that are submitted late will be penalized one letter grade for each 24 hours late. Exceptions to this policy will be made only for medical reasons. If you miss a course for a religious holiday or an athletic event that you notified me about, you will have until midnight before the next class session to turn in your assignment.

### **Grading Rubric:**

A : 100-95%, A- : 95-90%, B+ : 89-87%, B : 86-83%, B- : 82-80%, C+ : 79-77%, C : 76-73%, C- : 72-70%, D+ : 69-67%, D : 66-63%, D- : 62-60%

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is an insult to yourself, your instructor, and your colleagues in the class. Any form of Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in a referral to the Academic Judiciary. Please remember that I am here to help you if you feel you are struggling or need some extra support.

## **Students with Disabilities**

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Dean for Student Success and Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3702).

## **\*\* MEETING SCHEDULE \*\***

8/30 Introductory course: Course expectations and methodology. "Identity" handout as well as other course materials.

### **Introduction: Is there a "Latin American" Philosophy?**

9/4 Susana Nuccetelli, "Latin American Identity: Ethnicity, Name, and Thought"  
Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Ethnic Labels and Philosophy: The Case of Latin American Philosophy"  
Walter D. Mignolo, "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference"

### **I. Is there an *Indigenous* Latin American Philosophy?**

9/6 Miguel León-Portilla, "The Birth of Philosophy among the Nahuas"  
Nuccetelli, "Native Folk Cosmologies Versus Western Philosophy and Science"  
9/11 Marisol de la Cadena, "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond 'Politics'"

### **II. Colonial/Postcolonial Identity Crisis and Existential Phenomenology**

9/13 Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*: "The Man of Flesh and Bone"  
"Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragi-Comedy"  
9/18 José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Quixote*: "To the Reader", "Mediterranean Culture"  
9/20 Leopoldo Zea, *Latin America and the World*: "The Latin American Experience", "Towards Solidarity"

Suggested reading: Toledo, Roberto. "Existentialism and Latin America." *The Continuum Companion to Existentialism*

### **III. Hermeneutics and Liberation Philosophy from the Margins:**

9/25 Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*: "From the Skeptic to the Cynic", and "Hermeneutics and Liberation"  
9/27 LIBRARY RESEARCH RESOURCES WORKSHOP  
10/2 Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*: "Response by Karl-Otto Apel"  
10/4 Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*: "Response by Paul Ricoeur", "Response by Enrique Dussel"  
PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

### **IV. Eurocentric Science Critique and Latin American Pragmatism**

10/9 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Discourse on the Sciences"  
10/11 Orlando Fals-Borda, "Context and Diffusion of Knowledge: A Critique of Eurocentrism"  
*Action and Knowledge: breaking the monopoly with participatory action research* (selections)  
10/16 Fals-Borda, *Action and Knowledge* (selections)

### **V. Deconstructing Identities 1: Latin American and Latino Philosophy of Race and Ethnicity**

10/18 Nythamar da Oliveira, "A Latin America Philosophy of Race: Recasting Liberation, Phenomenology & Critical Theory"  
10/23 FALL BREAK  
10/25 FALL BREAK  
10/30 Abdias do Nascimento, "Brazil, mixture or massacre? Essays in the genocide of a Black people" (selections)  
PAPER ABSTRACT AND OUTLINE OF SECTIONS DUE  
11/1 J.L.A. García, "Individuation of Racial and Ethnic Groups?"  
11/6 Linda Alcoff, "Comparative Race"

## **VI. Deconstructing Identities 2: Questioning Borders with Chicano/Puerto-Rican/Latino Philosophy**

- 11/8 Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*:  
“Pan-Latino/Trans-Latino: “Puerto-Ricans in “New Nueva York”  
“The Latino Imaginary: Meanings of Community and Identity”  
“Latino Studies: New Contexts, New Concepts”
- 11/13 No Class – AAA Conference
- 11/15 No Class – AAA Conference
- 11/20 Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*  
“Broken English Memories: Languages in the Trans-Colony”  
“Puerto Rocks: Rap, Roots, and Amnesia”  
FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE BY EMAIL TO ME AND PEER
- 11/22 THANKSGIVING
- 11/27 Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, “Border Thinking and Colonial Difference”  
PEER-EVALUATION OF FIRST DRAFT DUE
- 11/29 Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, “Bilanguaging Love: Thinking between Languages”  
“An Other Tongue, An Other Thinking, An Other Logic”
- 12/4 Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (selections)  
SELF-EVALUATION OF PEER-REVIEWED DRAFT DUE
- 12/6 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (selections)
- 12/11 Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (selections)
- 12/13 Conclusion: Review of the course’s basic questions and their relation to the course sections
- 12/21 FINAL PAPERS DUE