

Latin American Thought

Thomas Hunter Honors 301.38

Room 412 Hunter West: Tuesdays/Thursdays 4:10-5:25

Professor Linda Martín Alcoff, 1419 Hunter West

Professor Rolando Perez, 1349A Hunter West

Course Description and Course Objectives:

This course will introduce students to the rich tradition of essay writing, philosophical debate, and cultural criticism in Latin America. Collectively, this tradition is sometimes referred to as *pensamiento*, or ‘thought,’ to mark it as a broader domain of public discourse than that which occurs only within academic institutions.

The diversity in these works, both in style and subject matter, counsels against placing them in a single category, much less a unified ‘school.’ And yet, there have been some threads of analysis unique to this tradition that this course will cover, including: the development and debate over a concept of universal human rights; the idea that political philosophy is a contextual project rooted in a specific place rather than an abstract, ideal theory; the effect of colonialism on culture and politics; the exploration of what it means to have mestizo and hybrid cultures and peoples rather than conceptualizing these as homogeneous; and the critical analysis of “modernity” as a European project.

This course will cover essential writings on these topics mostly from Latin America but also from U.S. Latino theorists. A central aspect of the course will be its interdisciplinarity. We will read history, philosophy, literature, and essays, and students will learn to read the texts through multiple frames of analysis.

This course will give students an appreciation of the complexity and history of Latino/Latin American intellectual culture; provide examples of good interdisciplinary work; teach students how to understand and assess primary texts, by a number of diverse criteria; and most importantly, engage students in exploration and active debate over the topics of the readings, from human rights to cultural autonomy to identity to the nature of modernity.

Course Requirements:

There will be three short papers (3-5 pages), one in-class mid-term, and one final paper (12-15 pages). A draft of the final paper will be due in late April, and returned with comments for a final revision.

Final grades will be tabulated as follows: average of your three short papers: 30%
Mid-term: 30%; Final paper: 30%; class participation: 10%.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

Required Books: available at Shakespeare Books.

1. Tzetvan Todorov, The Conquest of America
2. Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century edited by Jorge Gracia and Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert
3. Cesar Vallejo, Spain: Take this chalice from me and other poems
4. There will also be a Course Reader available next week at Shakespeare

Course Readings and Schedule:

CR: Readings from the Course Reader

LAP: Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century

BB: Blackboard

Jan. 31: Introduction to the course

Part One: Learning from the Conquest

Feb. 2: Todorov, The Conquest of America chap. 1

Feb. 7, 9: Todorov, The Conquest of America chap. 2

Selections from Royal Commentaries of the Incan Garcilaso de la Vega
(CR)

Feb. 14, 16: Todorov, The Conquest of America chap. 3

Las Casas: pp. 31-49 in LAP

Sepulveda "Prologue to the Members of the Congregation"(CR)

First Short Paper Due Feb. 16

Feb. 23: selections from Pablo Neruda Canto General

Feb. 28, March 1: Todorov, The Conquest of America chap 4 and epilogue

Second Short Paper Due March 1

Part Two: Problems of Politics and Culture under Colonialism

March 6, 8: Sarmiento "Harmony and Discord" (BB)

Sarmiento "Civilization and Barbarism": pp. 233-244 in LAP

Simon Bolivar "The Jamaica Letter": pp. 61-71 in LAP

March 13, 15: selections from Rodo, "Ariel" (BB)

Jose Marti, "Our America" pp 245-256 in LAP

Roberto Fernandez Retamar "Caliban" (CR)

March 20: *In-class mid term*

Part Three: Race, Indigeneity, and the Problem of Identity

March 22: Vasconcelos and Ramos pp. 267-285 in LAP

March 27, 29: Mariategui pp. 257-265 in LAP and other selections (BB)

April 3, 5: Vallejo selections

Third Short Paper due April 5

SPRING BREAK

Part Four: Latin America and Modernity

April 17, 19: Haya de la Torre “Is Latin America Ready for Democracy?” (CR)

Alberdi “Bases and Starting Point for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic” (CR)

April 24: First Draft of Final Paper due

April 24, 26: Enrique Dussel: pp. 415-428 in LAP and selections from The Invention of the Americas (CR) and Twenty Theses on Politics (BB)

Part Five: Issues of of the Diaspora

May 1, 3: The Couple in the Cage” video Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez Pena

Coco Fusco, selections from English is Broken Here (CR)

Gloria Anzaldua, selections from Borderlands: La Frontera (BB)

May 8, 10: Ofelia Schutte in LAP pp. 335-351

Gracia in LAP pp. 287-310

Alcoff in LAP pp. 311-334

May 15: Conclusion

Final Draft of Final Paper Due May 22

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