

**Latin American Thought and Culture
St. Cloud State University**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims at exploring philosophy through the lens of Latin American thought. It will look closely at some of the most fundamental questions in the history of Latin American thought and culture, including how Latinos have reflected upon issues of race, values, and their own ethnic and cultural identity. The course main goal will be to engage the participants in thematic discussions where the views of Latin American thinkers on such questions will be examined and evaluated according to their own philosophical merits. Participants will learn that reflecting upon the seminal ideas and arguments of Latin American thinkers is a worthwhile project with its own value in theoretical terms as a contribution to human understanding. For although some of the questions that have puzzled these thinkers do appear familiar within the Western philosophical tradition, Latin Americans have sought to answer them in new ways by introducing novel perspectives that are of interest to any person curious about great ideas.

COURSE MATERIAL

The textbooks for this course (available at the book store) will be:

Latin American Thought: Philosophical Problems and Arguments. Susana Nuccetelli. Boulder (CO): Westview Press, 2002.
(Hereafter, "LAT.")

Latin American Philosophy: An Introduction with Readings.
Susana Nuccetelli and Gary Seay. Prentice Hall, 2003.
(Hereafter, "RLAT.")

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A student's grade in this course will be determined on the basis of performance on ten quizzes, out of fourteen quizzes. The grade will be computed as the sum of exactly ten quizzes, dropping the lowest quiz results for the other four remaining quizzes.
- Students should not miss any quizzes, because that reduces their chances to succeed in this course. However, if a student misses up to four quizzes, s/he will still be able to earn 100% of the grade provided s/he performs well in the other 10 quizzes.
- Although missing quizzes might at first appear **not** to have a negative impact on a

student's average grade, the student will receive 0 point for missing quizzes at the end of the semester, and this might affect the student's average.

- Each quiz is timed to be done in about 60 minutes (one hour). Check submission dates below, where the quiz schedule is posted in connection with the list of topics to be covered in this course.
- Quizzes are open-book and open-notes. But collaboration counts as cheating.
- It is recommended that students do and submit each quiz within schedule. But students who want to do the quizzes ahead of time can proceed to do that.
- Two attempts are allowed for each quiz.

If you have specific questions about the course or the quizzes, do not hesitate to contact me. Again, keep in mind that the final grade will be calculated by adding the ten best results in quizzes – together with the amount of the extra credits earned, when applicable. Since there are fourteen quizzes, the four lowest results will be dropped (that is, they will not be calculated). It also means that once a student has taken ten quizzes, if s/he has already achieved the target letter grade, s/he need not take the other four quizzes.

EXTRA-CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS

- Students will have one opportunity to earn extra credits by preparing a presentation on a topic and date previously accepted by the instructor. The presentation should be submitted as scheduled in D2L's Dropbox. Presentations not submitted in this way WILL NOT be graded.
- Each presentation will be submitted a week in advance.
- Students can also earn extra credits by regular attendance and class participation.
- All these extra-credit opportunities are optional (i.e., non-mandatory).

STUDYING PHILOSOPHY

In this course, the assigned readings are of central importance. A crucial component of the course is the development of disciplined habits of reading and careful concentration, in which one stops to reflect on what one has just read. Keep in mind that philosophical works (including critical reasoning textbooks) must be read slowly and patiently –

‘speed-reading’ is not possible in this discipline.

GETTING IN TOUCH

Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the instructor if they have any questions or difficulty with the material. She can be reached during her office hours, posted in D2L under “News,” or by email at sinuccetelli@stcloudstate.edu.

Course Program, Reading Assignments, and Quiz Schedule

The readings for this course cover all chapters of the two books: There is a deadline for a quiz every week except during the following weeks:

There is NO quiz deadline during the Spring break (March 5th to 9th)

There is NO quiz deadline on Monday Apr. 9th because the instructor will be attending a conference from Apr. 4th to Apr. 8th.

Also, note that **two** quizzes are scheduled during the last week of classes. All quizzes are open from the beginning of the course, but each quiz has a **Monday deadline** (except for the last quiz, whose deadline is April 27th). No quiz will be re-opened. When a student misses a quiz, the instructor might consider reopening it only if presented with evidence of an extraordinary circumstance.

Topic 1

Why Should We Care About Native Cultures? The Epistemic Practices of Latin American Indians: A Puzzle for Philosophers. Prediction Among the Mayans vs. Rational Prediction in the West.

Reading

LAT, Chapter 1.

Submission deadline for this quiz: 1/16

Topic 2

Mayan Rationality Reconsidered: Could the Natives of Latin America Think? Strong Rationalism. Cognitive Pluralism. Is Rationality Relative? ‘True in the Context of Mayan Culture.’ The Error Theory.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 2.

RLAT, *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*

Submission deadline for this quiz: 1/23

Topic 3

Native Folk-Cosmologies vs. Western Philosophy and Science. Did The Native Latin Americans Have Philosophy? What Is Philosophy? Argumentation as a Demarcation Criterion.

Readings

LAT, Chapters 3 and 4.

RLAT, Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*

RLAT, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*

Submission deadline for this quiz: 1/30

Topic 4

The Legacy of 1492: Pluralism, Relativism, and the Clash of Cultures. Columbus' Journals and Other Reports of the Conquest. Francisco Romero: Not All Cultures Are Created Equal. Is There a Natural Selection of Cultures? Pluralism vs. Ethnocentrism. Pluralism and Cultural Relativism.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 4.

Francisco Romero, "Man and Culture," in *RLAT* chapter 7

Submission deadline for this quiz: 2/6

Topic 5

Was the Iberian Conquest Morally Justified? Were the Indians 'Natural Slaves'? The Theory of Natural Slaves in Context. Las Casas' Scholastic Defense of the Rights of the Indians. Lascasianism: A Philosophy or a Political Agenda?

Readings

LAT, Chapter 5.

RLAT, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, "Prologue to the Members of the Congregation"

RLAT, Bartolomé de Las Casas, "The Only Way"

Submission deadline for this quiz: 2/13

Topic 6

Vitoria: Humanism about International Law and Natural Rights. The "Natural-Slave" Theory Defeated by Non-Scholastic Alternatives: Bacon and Montaigne.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 5

RLAT, Francisco de Vitoria, *De Indis et De Ivre Belli Relectiones*

Michel de Montaigne, "On the Cannibals" (available online by Google search)

RLAT, Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*

Submission deadline for this quiz: 2/20

Topic 7

The Scholastic Paradigm. José de Acosta vs. Aristotelian Science. Acosta's Concerns in Prospective.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 6.

RLAT, José de Acosta, *The Natural & Moral History of The Indies*

RLAT, Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America*

Submission deadline for this quiz: 2/27

Topic 8

Sor Juana's *Reply*: Could Women Think in Colonial Mexico? Was Sor Juana A Radical Feminist? Colonial Scholasticism in Context.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 6.

RLAT, Juana Inés de la Cruz, “Reply to Sor Philothea”

RLAT, Enrique D. Dussel, “The Erotic in Latin America”

Submission deadline for this quiz: 3/12

Topic 9

Simón Bolívar: Independence Leads to Puzzles. Sarmiento’s Dilemma. Is There a Connection Between Race and Character? *Facundo*’s Ethnic Stereotypes.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 6.

RLAT, Simón Bolívar, “Jamaica Letter,” and “Angostura Address”

RLAT, Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo or, Civilization and Barbarism*

RLAT, Juan Bautista Alberdi, *The Basis and Starting Points of National Organization*

RLAT, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, “Is Latin America Ready for Democracy?”

Submission deadline for this quiz: 3/19

Topic 10

Autochthonous Positivists. Positivism in Brazil. Latin American Positivists and ‘First Philosophy.’ Positivism in Mexico and Its Connections with Porfirism.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 7.

RLAT, Arturo Ardao, “Positivism in Latin America”

RLAT, João Cruz Costa, *A History of Ideas in Brazil*

RLAT, Leopoldo Zea, 1949. “Positivism and Porfirism in Latin American”

Submission deadline for this quiz: 3/26

Topic 11

Rodó on Hispanic Identity: A True Latin Americanist? *Ariel* Vindicated: The Latin American Critique of the US. Martí on Social Justice and the Americas.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 7.

RLAT, José E. Rodó, *Ariel*

RLAT, José Martí, “Our America”

Submission deadline for this quiz: 4/2

Topic 12

Indians, Land, and Race. Mariátegui and the Actual Needs of the Oppressed. Liberation Theologians on Science and Technology.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 7.

RLAT, José C. Mariátegui, “The Problem of the Indian,” & “The Religious Factor”

RLAT, José Comblín, “Science and Technology”

RLAT, Leonardo Boff, “Science, Technology, Power, and Liberation Theology”

Submission deadline for this quiz: 4/16

Topic 13

The Collective Identity of Latin Americans: A Puzzle. Describing vs. Evaluating Ethnic Groups. A Latin American Race? Vasconcelos on a ‘Cosmic Race.’ Latinos in the USA.

Readings

LAT, Chapter 8.

RLAT, José Vasconcelos. *The Cosmic Race*

Carlos Fuentes, *The Buried Mirror* (audiovisual material)

Submission deadline for this quiz: 4/23

Topic 14

Is There a Characteristically Latin American Philosophy?

Readings

LAT, Chapter 8.

RLAT, Afranio Coutinho, "Philosophy in Brazil"

RLAT, Risieri Frondizi, "Is There an Ibero-American Philosophy?"

RLAT, Leopoldo Zea, "Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem"

RLAT, Jorge Gracia, "Can Hispanic Philosophy Flourish in the USA?"

Submission deadline for this quiz: 4/27

GRADE SCALE

%

1	F	0	Pippin 	0
2	D	50	Seashell Pink 	50
3	C	60	Apricot White 	60
4	B	72.5	Hint of Green 	72.5
5	A	85	Periwinkle Gray 	85
