SYLLABUS

SPAN 545: 20th and 21st Century Latin American Literature and Culture

Latin America in Theory / Theory in Latin America

Section: 62288D
Spring 2015
M 2-4:50
Location: THH 133

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Off. hrs.: W 1:30-3:30, by appt.

Course description:

This seminar attempts to think the place of theory, or critique, in Latin Americanism. After reflecting briefly on the traditional role of the intellectual in Latin America (a figure that often claimed to stand for, speak in the name of, or signify a “whole,” “integrated,” or “original” culture), we will spend the rest of the semester studying aesthetic and intellectual production that bears witness to the breaks, interruptions, fissures and impossibilities of such integrity. This includes, but is not limited to, generations, writers, and debates that exhibit deconstructive, subalternist, and anti-identitarian impulses. By focusing on literary scenes, political moments, and intellectual debates, this course will ask questions that are at the heart of the field of Latin Americanism. In this sense, the course is an appropriate introduction to topics and debates in and of Latin American literary and cultural studies. It will not, however, offer a panoramic or integrative vision of Latin American literature and culture, as might a survey class. Readings and class discussion will be in Spanish and English, depending upon the background of the students enrolled. As is typical of a graduate-level seminar, rigorous participation will be expected of everyone.
I. Introduction

General recommended reading:

- Joshua Lund, *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing*

Week 1. 1/12

- Introduction, Precursors
- Anna More, *Baroque Sovereignty* (selection)***
- Presentation assignments

Week 2. 1/19

- NO CLASS on 1/19 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)
- Lecture: Anna More on Wednesday, 1/21, 5pm, THH 120

II. Violence of the Letter

General recommended reading:

- Sylvia Molloy, *Las letras de Borges (Signs of Borges)*
- Kate Jenckes, *Reading Borges after Benjamin: Allegory, Afterlife, and the Writing of History*

Week 3. 1/26

- J.L. Borges, “El etnógrafo”**
- Idelber Avelar, “The Ethics of Criticism and the International Division of Intellectual Labor”**
- Patrick Dove, “Visages of the Other: On a Phantasmatic Recurrence in Borges’ ‘El Sur’”***

Week 4. 2/2

- Mariano Siskind, “El cosmopolitismo como problema político”**
- Siskind, “Introduction,” *Cosmopolitan Desires* ([http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8gx3h5hg](http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8gx3h5hg))
- Lecture: Mariano Siskind (Harvard U.)

III. Subalternity and Illiteracy

General recommended reading:

- Ileana Rodriguez and María Milagros López, *The Subaltern Studies Reader*
- Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference*
Week 5. 2/9

- Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, “Founding Statement”**
- Rigoberta Menchú, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (*I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*) (Introducción, Prólogo, I-VII, XV-XVIII, XXI-XXVI, XXX-XXXIII)
- John Beverley, “The Real Thing (Our Rigoberta)”**
- Doris Sommer, “No Secrets for Rigoberta”**
- Alberto Moreiras, “The Aura of Testimonio”**

Week 6. 2/16

- NO CLASS (President’s Day)

Week 7. 2/23

- Abraham Acosta, *Thresholds of Illiteracy* *
- Lecture: Abraham Acosta (U. of Arizona)

IV. Dictatorship, Postdictatorship

General recommended reading:

- Nelly Richard and Alberto Moreiras, eds., *Pensar en/la postdictadura*
- Idelber Avelar, *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning (Alegorías de la derrota: la ficción postdictatorial y el trabajo del duelo)*
- Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*

Week 8. 3/2

- Nelly Richard, *La insubordinación de los signos (The Insubordination of Signs)**
- CADA: Colectivo Acciones de Arte (video, to be screened in class)

Week 9. 3/9

- Ricardo Piglia, *Respiración artificial (Artificial Respiration)* *
- Patrick Dove, “Heterotopic Memory and the Narration of Disaster in Piglia”**
- Brett Levinson, “Trans(re)lations: Dictatorship, Disaster and the ‘Literary Politics’ of Piglia’s Respiración artificial”**

Week 10. 3/16

- NO CLASS (Spring Break)
Week 11. 3/23

- Albertina Carri, *Los rubios* (film, to be screened in class)
- Gabriela Nouzeilles, “Postmemory Cinema and the Future of the Past in Albertina Carri’s *Los Rubios***

Week 12. 3/30

- Sergio Chejfec, *Los planetas* (*The Planets)*
- Erin Graff Zivin, “El lenguaje secuestrado: Estética, ética y política en *Los planetas* de Sergio Chejfec”***
- FINAL PAPER ABSTRACTS DUE

V. Posthegemony and the Infrapolitical

General recommended reading:

- Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (*Hegemonía y estrategia socialista: Hacia una radicalización de la democracia*)
- John Beverley, *Latinamericanism after 9/11*
- Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*

Week 13. 4/6

- Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony: Political Theory and Latin America***
- Benjamin Arditi, “Post-hegemony: politics outside the usual post-Marxist paradigm”***

Week 14: 4/13

- Roberto Esposito, “De lo impolítico”***
- Karina Miller, *Escruturas impolíticas* (selection)***
- Lecture: Karina Miller (UC Irvine)

Week 15. 4/20

- Presentations

Week 16. 4/27

- Presentations
- FINAL PAPER DUE
Course Materials:

*The following books (marked with one asterisk) are available for purchase at the bookstore (http://www.uscbookstore.com) or Amazon (or anywhere else online). You may read texts in either Spanish or English.

- Abraham Acosta, *Thresholds of Illiteracy*
- Rigoberta Menchú, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (trans. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* )
- Ricardo Piglia, *Respiración artificial* (trans. *Artificial Respiration*)

**Readings marked with two asterisks are on USC’s Automated Reserves System (ARES) https://usc.ares.atlas-sys.com/.

***Texts marked with three asterisks will be distributed in class.

Course Requirements:

PARTICIPATION. Each student should read the texts specified above before each class session. Films will be shown in class on the date specified. You are expected to voluntarily contribute to class discussions, which will be reflected in your participation grade. This means that you should prepare notes with comments and questions to bring up in class.

FACEBOOK. You will be required to make weekly contributions to our class Facebook group, “Latin America in Theory / Theory in Latin America” (https://www.facebook.com/groups/1567056310174793/). These contributions are twofold. First, you will be expected to post a response to the required reading for the week, due by midnight the Sunday night before class. Second, you will be expected to comment on your classmates’ posts, due by midnight on the Sunday following class. No late posts will be accepted for credit.

PRESENTATIONS. You will be responsible for two in-class presentations. The first presentation will be based on one of the required readings, and will involve a summary and critique of the piece (approximately 20 minutes), after which you will facilitate a discussion with the rest of the class (approximately 30 minutes). The second will be a conference-style presentation of your final paper (approximately 20 minutes).

FINAL PAPER. The final paper is due at the beginning of class on April 27. You may choose between writing an article-length paper (approximately 20 pages) or a conference paper (8-10 pages). Papers handed in late will receive a lower grade. In addition, you will be required to turn in a one-page abstract for your final paper on March 30, which will describe in prose form your main thesis and supporting arguments. Late or missing abstracts will result in a lower grade for the final paper.

FINAL GRADE. The final grade will be calculated in the following manner: participation (20%), Facebook posts (15%), presentations (20%), final paper (45%).
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.