

## Latin American Perspectives (HSTR 433/SPNS 430)

MWF 1:10–2:00 pm, Gaines Hall 243

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Office: Gaines Hall 115B

Office hours: Fridays 10:00–12:00 and by appointment

*“Successful fiction embodies the subjectivity of an epoch and for that reason, although compared to history novels lie, they communicate to us fleeting and evanescent truths which always escape scientific descriptions of reality. Only literature has the techniques and power to distill this delicate elixir of life; the truth hidden in the heart of human lives.”*

—Mario Vargas Llosa



This course examines the above premise in the context of late twentieth-century Latin America, taking up a series of texts written by some of the region’s most prominent writers. How did Latin America come into the “gaze” of Europe, and later, the United States? How did these authors appraise the region’s experience with European and North American empires? In our time of extensive commercial, political, and cultural U.S. engagement with Latin America—and in the midst of a turn to left-leaning nationalist politics around the region—it is imperative that we understand this cultural trend.

Except for Shakespeare, all readings are available in the original Spanish or in English translation. Be sure you acquire all of the texts well ahead of schedule. Students enrolled in SPNS 430 should read in Spanish; those in HSTR 433 should read in English. A very few short readings will be distributed by email or in class. Except for a few lectures, the success of each day’s class depends on *you*. You must

manage your time effectively to keep up with the workload and prepare to be an effective participant in group and class discussions. Reasoned debate, questions, and responses are welcome at any time.

### Required texts:

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
- Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*
- Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America/Las venas abiertas de América Latina*
- Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*
- Carlos Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*
- Rosario Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*
- Ariel Dorfman, *How to Read Donald Duck/Para leer al pato Donald*

*\*Texts available from instructor only (unless you find them online used)*

**Student evaluation:** HSTR 433 students will discuss and write in English; SPNS 430 students in Spanish.

- Attendance and Participation (30 %): Attendance and participation in the intellectual community of the class is the key to doing well. One unexcused absence is permitted, but more than four absences for whatever reason *will result in a failing grade for the class*. At the end of the course I will assign a participation grade (15%) based on my evaluation of the student’s performance as a citizen of the classroom.
- critical responses/exam questions (40 %): There are six such assignments announced in the course schedule. You will prepare a brief (approximately one typed page) critical analysis of some salient aspect of the work in question. I also ask that you prepare two potential short essay questions about that work, which I will consider for inclusion on the exams.
- Exams (30 %): A midterm and final exam, equally weighted, will assess your understanding of the course materials and your ability to respond critically to them. A tradeoff: you will play a role in shaping both exams.

**Grading philosophy:** Everyone wants, and many expect, to “get” good grades. I offer the following profiles with an eye to making clear the function of grading and the meaning behind those letters. As in the professional world, effort alone is insufficient to ensure success—the quality of one’s work is the coin of the realm, and that is what grades measure.

**The outstanding (A) student** treats coursework as a career, not a job; attends every class and arrives punctually; volunteers answers and questions and participates in discussions; offers comments that reveal close attention to the readings; demonstrates a strong capacity for independent and original thought; is set apart by a seeking intellectual curiosity; frequently contributes

quality ideas; and submits assignments on time and writes them well, having followed any guidelines indicated by the professor and having taken great care to avoid errors of grammar and style. This student masters the course content, achieving a grade of 90 percent or better on papers and other assignments.

**The good (B) student** attends nearly every class and arrives punctually; offers comments that reveal solid readings of the texts; is an active and valuable member of the class community; demonstrates a capacity for independent and original thought; regularly contributes quality ideas; and turns in all work on time and according to established guidelines, with a minimum of errors. This student achieves grades in the 80 percent range.

**The average (C) student** may put forth much effort, but his/her work lacks the clarity, sophistication, organization, and other qualities that set stronger students apart. On the other hand, this may be a student who has the ability to do well, but, for lack of effort and participation, poor attendance, or failure to submit assignments on time, regularly produces lackluster work in the 70 percent range.

**The underaverage (D) student** is recognized by sporadic attendance, poor or superficial participation, lack of intellectual curiosity, and failure to complete or submit assignments.

**The failing (F) student**, either by circumstance or lack of preparation, fails to complete most course assignments. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise passing off others' work as one's own, automatically enters one in the category of failure.

All students are bound by MSU's Student Conduct Code. I will not tolerate those who plagiarize or cheat—in other words, those pass off others' work as their own. Violators will be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action (and you really, really don't want to go through this process). Threatening or harassing behavior towards classmates either in or out of class will result in disciplinary or legal action through the Dean of Students. As matters of courtesy, please do not do not arrive late to class, treat anyone disrespectfully, eat, sleep, or use cell phones/text messaging devices.

Instructor availability: I am at your service to offer any help I can on the material. I encourage you to see me during my office hours or, if those times won't work for you, by appointment. The most reliable means of reaching me is by e-mail at the following address: jameswm@montana.edu. Please do not leave messages with the department office staff. If you have a condition or circumstance that requires accommodation, please see me outside class.

## **WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 (12–14 January)**

Wednesday: Course introduction and logistical matters  
Readings: start Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Friday Renaissance colonialism (lecture)

### **Week 2 (17–21 January)**

Monday NO CLASS

Wednesday: Discuss *The Tempest*

Readings: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, all

Friday: Discuss *The Tempest*

### **Week 3 (24–28 January)**

Monday: Discuss Retamar

Readings: Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Caliban"  
Start Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*

Wednesday

Friday: Discuss Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*

Readings: Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*, Part I

#### Week 4 (31 January–4 February)

Monday: Discuss Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*

Wednesday: Discuss Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*

Readings: Galeano, *Open Veins/Venas abiertas*, Part II (only through “Chronicle of a Premature Death”/ “Historia de una muerte temprana”)  
Start Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Friday: Hand in Galeano summary/response/exam questions; discussion of responses and questions in class

#### Week 5 (7–11 February)

Monday: Independence struggles in Latin America (lecture)

Wednesday: Discuss Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Readings: Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*, chaps. 1–2

Friday: Discuss Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Readings: Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*, chaps. 3–4

#### Week 6 (14–18 February)

Monday: Discuss Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Readings: Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*, chaps. 5–6

Wednesday: Discuss Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Readings: Finish Fuentes, *The Campaign/La campaña*

Friday: Discuss Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*

hand in Fuentes response/exam questions

Readings: Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*, prologue and chap. I (“The Wax Heads”/ “Las cabezas de cera”)

#### Week 7 (21–25 February)

Monday NO CLASS

Wednesday:

Readings: Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*, Part I

Friday:

Readings: Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*, Part II

#### Week 8 (28 February–4 March)

Monday:

Readings: Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*, Part III

Wednesday: Hand in Carpentier response/exam questions

Readings: Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World/El reino de este mundo*, Part IV

Friday: Midterm exam

Readings: Start Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*

#### Week 9 (7–11 March)

Monday: 1898 (lecture)

Wednesday: Discuss Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*

Readings: Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*, chaps. 1–4

Friday: Discuss Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*

Readings: Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*, chaps. 5–6

#### Week 10: SPRING BREAK

### Week 11 (21–25 March)

Monday: Hand in Ferré response/exam questions

Readings: finish Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust/Maldito amor*

Wednesday: Screen *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*

Friday: Finish *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* and discuss

### Week 12 (28 March–1 April)

Monday: Discuss *How Tasty...*

Readings: Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema”/ “Por un cine imperfecto”  
Start Dorfman and Mattelart, *How To Read Donald Duck/Para leer al Pato Donald*

Wednesday: Screen *Gringo in Mañanaland*

Friday: Finish *Gringo in Mañanaland* and discuss

### Week 13 (4–8 April)

Monday: Discuss Dorfman and Mattelart, *How To Read Donald Duck/Para leer al Pato Donald*

Readings: Dorfman and Mattelart, *Donald Duck/Pato Donald*, Intro. and chap. 2

Wednesday: Discuss Dorfman and Mattelart, *How To Read Donald Duck/Para leer al Pato Donald*

Readings: Dorfman and Mattelart, *Donald Duck/Pato Donald*, Intro. and chap. 4 and Conclusion

Friday: Hand in Dorfman and Mattelart response/exam questions

### Week 14 (11–15 April)

Monday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*, “chaps.” 1–3

Wednesday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*, “chaps.” 4–5

Friday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*, “chaps.” 6–8

### Week 15 (18–22 April)

Monday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*, “chaps.” 9–11

Wednesday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*, “chaps.” 12–14

Friday NO CLASS

### Week 16 (25–29 April)

Monday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude/Cien años de soledad*

Readings: finish García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*

Wednesday: Discuss García Márquez, *One Hundred Years/Cien años*; Hand in García Márquez response/exam questions

Friday: course conclusion; student evaluations

**Final Exam: 2 May 2011 0800-0950, regular classroom**