

Latin American and Iberian Studies Program
and
Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Semester I, 1993-94

TRENDS IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES:

AN INTRODUCTION

LAIS/History 982

Stern/Forster
2-2811/2-0616

Course Description

This course serves to introduce entering graduate students in the LAIS MA Program to their interdisciplinary adventure. Upon consent of the instructors, a limited number of graduate students in other departments and programs may be permitted to enroll in this course.

The substance of the course exposes students to scholarly trends and debates whose significance reaches beyond narrow disciplinary borders, to relevant faculty and institutional resources on campus, and to one another. The practicum section of the course provides, as well, an initial experience with some of the practical issues encountered by interdisciplinary Masters students.

An important collateral purpose of this course is to nurture intellectual bonding and exchange within the cohort of entering M.A. students, despite the special fragility of such bonding in short-term interdisciplinary programs. The formal classroom ideally serves as a catalyst: learning at the highest level takes place outside and beyond it, in student-student as well as student-faculty contexts. This semester and this class is ideally a point of departure rather than closure, and the Week 15 session on the schedule below will define some post-semester objectives and commitments.

Since this is an orientation seminar designed to help student cohorts get off to a fast interdisciplinary start, it has some unusual technical features. First, the grading system will be pass-fail rather than conventional letter grading. This relieves pressure associated with the extreme interdisciplinary stretch of the course: everyone will be on quite unfamiliar terrain from time to time, and focus and topic will sometimes shift rapidly. Second, notwithstanding the pass-fail system, it remains possible to fail this seminar. The seminar can only "work" if its members fulfill assignments at a high level of intellectual concentration and responsiveness. (The assignments are described later in the syllabus.) This course will be as demanding of your intellectual time and energies as a conventionally graded course of equivalent credit.

Third, upon consent of the instructors, you have the option of taking the course for two credits rather than the full three credits. Students permitted to take the course for two credits will be relieved of the practicum assignment in the final unit of the course. Responsive attendance at the practicum presentations of the three-credit students, however, remains mandatory for the two-credit students.

Fourth, the course uses faculty panels to enrich the discussion and to expose students directly to diverse campus assets in our field.

Schedule

Week 1. Introduction. Sept. 8.

This is an organizational session. No readings required.
(N.B.--LAISP will have held a campus and library orientation session during or soon after Advising and Orientation Week. We will not duplicate that session in the course.)

UNIT I. CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND POLITICS:
LOCATING LATIN AMERICA IN SOCIAL SCIENCE.

Week 2. The Question of Political Economy and Development. Sept. 15.

Rdng.: Peter Evans, Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multi-national, State, and Local Capital in Brazil (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979).

Week 3. New Social Movements
and New Categories of Analysis: Gender. Sept. 22.

Rdng.: Sonia E. Alvarez, Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990).

Marysa Navarro, "The Personal is Political: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo," in Susan Eckstein, ed., Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989), 241-58.

Week 4. Theorizing Political Regimes and Breakdowns. Sept. 29.

Rdng.: Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992).

FACULTY PANEL:

This week we will have a panel of faculty in the social sciences who will share informally their views of trends in social science scholarship, and who may, along the way, situate the books we have read within wider intellectual tendencies and debates.

UNIT II. CULTURE, TEXT, AND IDENTITY:
THE LITERATURE OF HUMANITIES IN A POST-MODERN AGE.

Week 5. Theorizing Latin American Narrative. Oct. 6.

Rdng.: Roberto González Echevarría, Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990);

and

begin your reading of Gabriel García Márquez, The Autumn of the Patriarch, Gregory Rabassa, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

Week 6. The Politics of Identity, Art, and Intelectualidad. Oct. 13.

Rdng.:

Grp. A: Doris Sommer, Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991).

Grp. B: Cynthia Steele, Politics, Gender, and the Mexican Novel, 1968-1988: Beyond the Pyramid (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1992).

ALL: Continue reading García Márquez, Autumn.

Week 7. The Writer's Voice, The Writer's Memory. Oct. 20.

Rdng.: Finish García Márquez, Autumn.

Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza and Gabriel García Márquez, The Fragrance of Guava, Ann Wright, trans. (London: Verso, 1983).

We will also read García Márquez's 1982 Nobel Prize acceptance speech. (Copy to be distributed.)

FACULTY PANEL:

This week we will have a panel of faculty in the humanities who will share informally their views of trends in humanities scholarship, and who may, along the way, situate the works we have read within wider intellectual tendencies and debates.

UNIT III. DISCIPLINES OF IMMERSION: DIALOGUES IN HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY.

Week 8. Pathways to Popular Agency and Consciousness:
Regional Social History. Oct. 27.

Rdng.:

Grp. A: Jeffrey Gould, To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990).

Grp. B: Brooke Larson, Colonialism and Agrarian Transformation in Bolivia: Cochabamba, 1550-1900 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Week 9. Field Work Reconsidered:
A Contentious and Historicized Ethnographic Authority. Nov. 3.

Rdng.: Ruth Behar, Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," in Clifford, The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1988), 21-54.

Week 10. The Consequences of Agency, the Dialogues of Disciplines. Nov. 10.

Rdng.: Steve J. Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean," in Frederick Cooper et al., Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labor, and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 23-83;

William Roseberry, "Beyond the Agrarian Question in Latin America," in ibid., 318-68.

FACULTY PANEL:

This week we will have a panel of faculty who will share informally their views of trends in historical and anthropological scholarship, and who may, along the way, situate the works we have read within wider intellectual tendencies and debates.

UNIT IV. PRACTICE AND APPLICATION:
INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK AND STUDY ON LATIN AMERICA.

Week 11. Student and Faculty Roundtable:

Crossing Disciplinary and Field Boundaries in an Age
of Scholarly Fragmentation: Dilemma and Necessity? Nov. 17.

Rdng.: Steve J. Stern, "Africa, Latin America, and the Splintering of
Historical Knowledge: From Fragmentation to Reverberation,"
in Cooper et al., Confronting Historical Paradigms, 3-20.

Florencia E. Mallon, "Dialogues among the Fragments: Retrospect
and Prospect," in ibid., 371-401.

FACULTY PANEL:

This week we will have a panel of faculty who will share informally their
experiences and sensibilities regarding interdisciplinary research on
Latin America.

Week 12. Final preparation week: student practicums. Nov. 24.

There is no assigned class meeting or reading this week. Practicum
teams will be in the final phase of preparation, and extra office
hours will be available in Weeks 11-12 if students need extra consul-
tation time.

N.B.--Thanksgiving = Nov. 25.

Week 13. Practicum Presentations I & II. Dec. 1.

TEAM I: "A Cultural and Political Briefing on Country X
for Beginning Field Workers with Technical Expertise."

The specific country and field of technical expertise
(medicine, law, business, ecology-related, etc.) for
this exercise will be announced well in advance in
consultation with students.

TEAM II: "A Public Policy Briefing on Issue X
for Public Policy Players."

The specific public policy issue and specific type
of policy players (NGO advocates, state officials, think
tank group, etc.) will be announced well in advance in
consultation with students.

Week 14. Practicum Presentations III & IV. Dec. 8.

TEAM III: "A Careers and Internship Briefing
for LAISP M.A. Students."

The mandate of this team's practicum will be
pertinent to everyone!

TEAM IV: A fourth practicum will be organized if necessary. It may
focus on using Latin American Research Review to appraise
critically trends in Latin American Studies.

Week 15. Conclusion and Continuation. Dec. 15.

This week's objective is to evaluate the course, and to develop moral
assignments and mandates for this year's M.A. cohort beyond 12/93.

We are also likely to have a party or reception for course
participants (including faculty panelists) and LAISP staff
around this time of year.

Course Assignments and Grading

The pass-fail grading system and the two-credit option are described in
the course description above. Please note the warning that the pass-fail
system relieves grade pressure only up to a point. To receive a passing grade,
you must complete all the following assignments at a high level of intellectual
responsiveness:

- (1) participation: consistently attend the seminar sessions, and
contribute with reasonable regularity and thoughtfulness
to our oral give-and-take;
- (2) writing: turn in accurate and insightful written responses to
each week's assigned readings during Weeks 2-11;
- (3) practicum: develop a successful practicum presentation with your work
team.

The weekly written responses to the readings should record your personal
and intellectual response, in no more than 1-2 pages, according to the follow-
ing format: a one-paragraph "summary" section distilling the book's main
argument, question, findings; and a "critical evaluation" section, normally one
or two paragraphs long, presenting your critical appraisal--i. e., the main
strengths/weaknesses, insights/implications, or methods/questions, to be drawn
from the reading and worth debating or discussing in common. The weekly
responses are due at the beginning of the relevant class session, and need to
be printed or typed in dark, easy-to-read print. Turn in two copies--one to
Stern, one to Forster. (Handwritten responses are allowed only if printed or
written extremely neatly, and in dark ink or pencil.) You may "skip" only
one such response.

The practicum assignment is a student team project--a practical exercise

of relevance to our field and to the uses of the interdisciplinary M.A. Each student team will make a 30-minute professional presentation on its project theme, and will circulate, as part of its presentation, a document of 2-3 pages providing key data and resources relevant to the topic. During each team's practicum, the rest of the class will play the role of the particular "audience" to whom the presentation is targeted.

Please note that students permitted to take this course on a two-credit basis are relieved from having to do a practicum presentation in Unit IV, but are still obligated to attend Unit IV meetings and to play the audience role in the practicum sessions.