

The Everyday Politics of Race in Contemporary Latin America

LACS 497 / POLI422

Tuesdays 11.30-14.25

Location: MDHAR G-01

Prof. Tania Islas Weinstein: tania.islasweinstein@mcgill.ca

Office Hours: We can meet in person or by zoom but please do sign up [here](#).

This course introduces students to current debates on race and racism in Latin America. We will discuss how notions like race and racial categories such as Indigeneity, Blackness, and Whiteness are made and transformed in the activities we partake in and the spaces we inhabit. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the ways in which politics is embedded in everyday life and how seemingly politically insignificant details – including the food we eat, the sports we play, the art we produce, and the way we parent – can lead to different forms of racial inclusion and exclusion. Given that Latin America is the most economically unequal region in the world, one of the central themes of the course will be the relationship between racial and economic inequality. Throughout the course, students will also assess the benefits, limitations, implications, and ethical dilemmas of using different research methods – ranging from auto-ethnography and participant-observation to surveys and econometric models – when addressing questions related to race and its intersection with class. Although some of the assigned material discusses and compares different countries in the region, the class will mainly focus on Brazil, Mexico, and Peru.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Recognize and critically reflect on a variety of racial ideologies and concepts that exist throughout contemporary Latin America.
- Identify how different activities performed by different groups and individuals in the region create and uphold the notion of race and particular racial categories.
- Develop critical reading skills with respect to diverse and interdisciplinary literature.
- Carry out accessible presentations to engender dialogue with fellow students.
- Hone collaborative working skills.
- Practice discussion that is rooted in argumentation and listening with the goal of understanding rather than simply responding.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation (10%)**

This is a discussion-based class, and the intent is for students to learn from each other rather than simply from the instructor. Accordingly, students are expected to be on time and attend every class to the best of their ability, having done the readings. Remember that one aspect of participation is to articulate and defend your interpretations of the reading/material. Another is to learn to listen. If you find that you are having trouble participating actively in class, please sign up for office hours so that we can discuss the ways to make visible your involvement. Please note that you are only allowed three *excused* absences before your grade is lowered, unless it is a medical emergency, and you can provide a medical note. To learn whether your absence is excused, please see me during office hours.

2. Presentations + Class facilitation (25%)

Students will serve as discussion leaders – either in groups or solo, depending on the number of students who register for class – for one session during the semester starting on Week 3. This will include preparing a presentation on the material that you are assigned and presenting it to the class in whichever way you'd like (i.e. using PowerPoint, printed handout, etc.). You should read and annotate the course materials thoroughly to deduce and elaborate for us the main topics, ideas, and passages from each text or film. Your presentation should be approximately 30 minutes long, leaving us with ample time for discussion. Please make sure you include at least 2 questions for class discussion based on the assigned material.

You will sign up for presentation during our first in-person meeting on September 12.

3. Two Discussion Posts (10%) (5% each)

Students will sign up to write two discussion posts, which must include two components:

- A) A brief exploration of the materials' main argument (no more than a paragraph for each reading/film). You might want to address the following questions: What is the author's main argument? How does the author substantiate the argument? In what ways do you find the argument convincing? If you don't, explain why not.
- B) At least three questions for potential class discussion. This is your opportunity to let me know what the topics/questions are that you would like us to discuss in class.

If you can, try engaging with each other's posts. This can get the conversation going for the next day. You must submit your reflection post on the Discussion section on MyCourses at least 24 hours prior to the class. Please sign up for discussion posts [here](#). Please do not sign up for a post on the date that you will give your presentation or if more than 4 students have already signed up for that day.

4. Visual Object, Art Piece, or Performance (20%):

As groups, students will pick a visual art piece, which can include the documentation of a performance. Good places to browse include the *Visual Afterlives of Slavery* archive (<https://afterlives.hum.uchicago.edu/visualizing-performing/>) and the *Queloides* exhibit (http://www.queloides-exhibit.com/queloides_proyecto_engl.html). For this exercise, students will pretend to be curators of a public museum who need to make the case for purchasing the piece to add to the institution's collection. They will prepare a 20-minute group presentation about the political importance of the piece and why it is necessary to include it in anti-racist efforts. Students will pretend they are giving the presentation to a group of politicians and members of the board of trustees and should be ready for a Q&A session in which the entire class will participate. Presentations will take place during class on October 31st.

5. Final Assignment (35%):

The final assignment can take the form of an essay (minimum of 3000 words/maximum of 4000) or of a creative project (video, multimedia, photographs, collage, podcast, etc.). There are two options that students can choose from when conducting this assignment:

- a) Students can take a real-world event from a country in Latin America that is not covered in the readings for the course and use at least five of the readings we did in class to assess and analyze the situation. Students will need to consult an additional 3 academic sources (or more if you'd like).
- b) Students who have lived in a Latin American country and would prefer to conduct a project related in some way to that experience are welcome to do so. Please see me during office for more information about this project. For this assignment students will also need to use at least five of the class readings and three additional academic sources.

This assignment will be due on Friday, December 8 by 5 pm. Late penalties will apply, such that for every day that a paper is late, a letter will be deducted from the grade (e.g. a B+ plus paper would become a B paper). A paper that is one-hour late counts as being a day late.

INDIGENOUS LAND STATEMENT

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

If you have any questions regarding any aspect of this course, feel that you are falling behind, or just want to discuss your final project and bounce ideas off someone, please email me or sign up for office hours to discuss this. If I do not respond to your email within 48 hours, it means that I did not receive your email so please do send me another one. I usually do not answer emails over the weekend or after 4.30 pm during the week.

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.

ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The [University Student Assessment Policy](#) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures" (see [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

LANGUAGE OF SUBMISSION

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

SEMINAR ENVIRONMENT AND CONTENT WARNING

Please silence your cell phone and put it away during class. You may bring a laptop to class and use it to refer to the readings and take notes, but please refrain from checking your email, social media or watching videos. Because the class is 3 hours long, we will take a bathroom/water/internet break in the middle, and you will be able to check your phones and email then.

Because this class deals with issues of racism, classism, violence, trauma, and other sensitive issues, if you are having difficulties at any point, please make sure you take the necessary steps to ensure your wellbeing. I will strive my best to foster an environment of respect and empathetic listening in class, but if you need to withdraw from participating during times of distress you will not be penalized. I also encourage you to speak with me during office hours if you are having any kind of trouble related to the course. I will try my very best to address it.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1. September 5

- Due to circumstances out of my control, I will not be able to hold class today. Please use this time to begin the long readings for next class.

Week 2. September 12 *Ideas and Categories I*

We will go over the syllabus but please come to class having read the following material:

- Walter Mignolo (2005) *The Idea of Latin America* (Wiley-Blackwell): pp. 1-22.
- Mauricio Tenorio (2017) *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago): Chapter 8, pp. 163-187.
- Mara Loveman (2014) "Classifying Colonial Subject," *National Colors: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America* (Oxford University Press), Ch. 2 (pp.43-78).

Pick one of the following two readings:

- Peter Wade (1997) "The meaning of race and identity," *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto): pp. 4-23.
- Thomas H. Eriksen (2010) "What is ethnicity?" *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Pluto Press), pp. 1-22

Week 3. Septemebr 19 *Mestizaje*

- José Vasconcelos (1925) "Mestizaje" in *The Cosmic Race*, pp. 7-22.
- Virginia Tilley, (2004) "Mestizaje and the Ethnicization of Race in Latin America," in Paul Spickard (ed.), *Race and Nation* (Routledge): pp.53-68.
- Juliet Hooker. (2005) "Indigenous Inclusion/Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship in Latin America," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (Vol. 37) pp.285-310.
- Jonathan Warren and Christina A. Sue (2011) "Comparative Racisms: What anti-racists can learn from Latin America," *Ethnicities*. 11 (1): 32-58.
- Jumko Ogata, (forthcoming) "Race is an Illusion," (translated by Ellen Jones) in Tania Islas Weinstein and Milena Ang (eds.), *Race in Contemporary Mexico* (Amherst College Press): 3 pages.

Week 4. September 26. *Inhabiting Identities*

- Rogers Brubaker et al (2004) "Ethnicity as Cognition," *Ethnicity without Groups* (Harvard University Press): pp. 64-87.
- Paula López Caballero (2021) "Inhabiting Identities. On the elusive quality of Indigenous identity in Mexico," *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* Vol. 26 (No.1): 124-146.
- A conversation with Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil (Twenty Summers 2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VXbGmHG6X8>
- Yásnaya Elena Aguila Gil, "The Map and the Territory," *The Baffler* (October 26, 2020) (translated from Spanish by Ellen Jones): <https://thebaffler.com/latest/the-map-and-the-territory-aguilar-gil>

Week 5. October 3. *Fall Break*

- No class

Week 6. October 10. *Colorism and Class*

- Edward Telles (2014) *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race and Color in Latin America* (The University of North Carolina Press): pp. 1-34 and 218-235.
- Luis Montroy-Gómez Franco. 2022. "Shades of social mobility. Colorism, ethnic origin, and intergenerational social mobility." *Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance*, pp. 247-266.
- Alejandra Leal (forthcoming) "'Whiteness' and the afterlives of *mestizaje* in neoliberal Mexico," in Tania Islas Weinstein and Milena Ang (eds.), *Race in Contemporary Mexico* (Amherst College Press:): 20 pages.
 - Recommended: Tanya Golash-Boza. 2010. "Does Whitening Happen? Distinguishing between Race and Color Labels in an African-Descended Community in Peru." *Social Problems* 57.1: 138-156.

Week 7. October 17. *Sports*

- Hugo Cerón Anaya. 2019. *Privilege at Place: Class, Race, Gender, and Golf in Mexico* (Oxford University Press, New York): Chapters TBD.
 - Recommended: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/privilege-at-play-2>

** Dr. Cerón Anaya will join us over zoom to answer questions and engage in a discussion of his book.

Week 8. October 24. *Visual Discourses*

- Deborah Poole (1997) *Vision, Race, and Modernity. A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton University Press): "Introduction."
- M. Pedelty (1993). News Photography and Indigenous Peoples: An "Encounter" in Guatemala. *Visual Anthropology*, 6(3), 285–301.
- Ulla D. Berg (2015) *Mobile Selves. Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the US* (New York University Press), Chapter 4. Unfortunate Visibilities. The Transnational Circulation of Image-Objects.
 - Recommended: <https://allegralaboratory.net/podcast-interview-round-up-january-april-new-books-in-anthropology/>
- Maile Speakman. 2023. "Little Wynwood: whiteness, tourism, and gentrification in Havana's San Isidro neighborhood," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*: pp.358-368.

Week 9. October 31. Art

- Robin Sheriff (1999). "The Theft of Carnival: National Spectacle and Racial Politics in Rio de Janeiro." *Cultural Anthropology*, 14(1), pp. 3–28.
- *Waste Land* by Vik Muniz (2010) (available to check out for a day at the library – we will hold a screening of the film – date, time, and place TBD).
 - Recommended: Niyi Afolabi. 2009. "Negotiating Cultural Production in a Racial Democracy," *Afro-Brazilians, Cultural Production in a Racial Democracy* (University of Rochester Press)pp. 8-17.
 - Recommended: Kathleen M. Millar (2020) "Garbage as Racialization," *Anthropology and Humanism* (Vol. 45, Issue 1, pp.4-24).

Week 10. November 7. Student Presentations on the Arts/Visual Project Assignment

(No readings)

Week 11. November 14. Food

- María Elena García. 2021. *Gastropolitics and the Specter of Race. Stories of Capital, Culture, and Coloniality in Peru* (University of California Press). Chapter TBD.
 - Recommended: New Books Network podcast: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/gastropolitics-and-the-specter-of-race>

Week 12. November 21. Domestic work

- *Roma* by Alfonso Cuarón (2018) (available to check out for a day at the library – we will hold a screening of the film – date, time, and place TBD)
- Raquel Pacheco, "Harmonizing the rural Indigenous family: Mestiza gender trustees and the gendered modernization of rural Mexico," *Feminist Anthropology* (June 2023): pp.1-15: <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12122>

** Dr. Pacheco will join us over zoom to discuss the film and her article.

Week 13. November 28. Parenting

- Elizabeth Hodge-Freeman. 2015. *The Color of Love: Racial Features, Stigma, and Socialization in Black Brazilian Families* (Austin: University of Texas Press): Chapters TBD.

- Ana Y. Ramos-Zaya. 2020. *Parenting Empires: Class, Whiteness, and the Moral Economy of Privilege in Latin America* (Duke University Press): Chapters TBD.

Week 14. December 5. Education and Affirmative Action

- Edward Telles and Marcelo Paixão, 2013, "Affirmative Action in Brazil," *LASA Forum* (Spring), volume xlv : issue 2: pp. 10-12.
- Podcast "[I declare myself black](#)" *Radioambulante* (April 2023). podcast in Spanish but the English translation can be found [here](#)).
- Bruno Meyerfield, "Brazil's racial quotas have given rise to a new generation of Black graduates," *Le Monde* (August 15, 2023): https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/08/15/brazil-s-racial-quotas-have-given-rise-to-a-new-generation-of-black-graduates_6094394_4.html
- Gisela Carlos Fragoso (2022) "Upward Mobility, Professionalization, and Anti-Racism," Mónica Moreno and Peter Wade (eds.), *Against Racism. Organizing for Social Change in Latin America* (University of Pittsburgh Press): pp. 123-144.
 - Recommended: Mala Htun (2004). "From 'Racial Democracy' to Affirmative Action: Changing State Policy on Race in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review* Vol. 39 (1): pp.60-89.