

Latin American Humanities II
Spring 1999

First Paper:

Write a 7-10 page essay in which you respond to one of the following topics. Papers should be typed/word-processed and double-spaced, with page margins no less than one inch.

Your papers should be well-organized and your analysis should be supported by citations from the texts in question. Whether you paraphrase or directly quote from the text, you should indicate the origin in either footnotes/endnotes or parentheses.

Due March 1, 1999. While I will accept late papers, one grade point will be deducted from the original grade for each day the paper is late (e.g. a "B+" paper turned in on March 2 will receive a grade of "B").

1. One literary critic has recently noted what he describes as "the peculiarly Western delirium that a perfection of technique at the service of good will might lead to the triumph of happiness." How have writers in Latin America responded to this notion, often expressed there as a belief in the link between "order and progress"? Specifically, compare how Machado de Assis and Rodó criticize possible models of progress (science and utilitarianism). What, if any, are their alternative visions of Latin America's future?

2. Whereas Rodó and Machado de Assis write about or to Latin American elites, Azuela and Ramos write about popular experience. Compare how this experience is rendered in The Underdogs and Barren Lives. How do the lives depicted in these novels compare with the ideals of the Mexican Revolution and the Brazilian "New State." ?

3. How have writers in Latin America defined the relationship between art and politics? Answer this question, comparing Rodó's Ariel, the work of the Mexican muralists and Andrade's "Manifesto." What forms of engagement with other cultures (in Europe or in the US) do they propose? Compare as well the kind of aesthetic and/or political transformation that each envision.

4. Compare and contrast how Mariátegui, Vasconcelos, and Andrade have defined both the literal and figurative places of indigenous people in Latin American reality. Consider as well the possible consequences of these definitions for Latin American politics and culture.

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Second Paper:

Write a 7-10 page essay in which you respond to one of the following questions. Papers should be typed/word-processed and double-spaced, with page margins no less than one inch.

Your papers should be well-organized and your analysis should be supported by citations from the texts in question. Whether you paraphrase or directly quote from the text, you should indicate the origin in either footnotes/endnotes or parentheses.

Due April 12, 1999. While I will accept late papers, one grade point will be deducted from the original grade for each day the paper is late (e.g. a "B+" paper turned in on April 13 will receive a grade of "B").

1. Compare and contrast the ways in which race and ethnicity have been defined in Latin America. How have these definitions contributed to theoretical and practical understandings of distinct national identities within the region? In answering these questions, consider at least two "national" contexts and at least three of the following works: Stepan, "National Identities"; "Americas Video: Mirrors of the Heart"; Vasconcelos, The Cosmic Race; Stam, "Comparative Diasporas" and Freyre, Masters and the Slaves.
2. Compare and contrast the ways in which Gilberto Freyre and Octavio Paz use history, psychology and sociology to define national identity in Brazil and Mexico respectively. Specifically, consider how sexuality, gender and particular histories of patriarchy figure in the narratives of nationhood that they offer. Finally, what are the consequences of these narratives for culture and politics in Brazil and Mexico?
3. Compare and contrast the ways in which Glauber Rocha and Ariel Dorfman articulate a post-war/Cold War crisis for Latin American intellectuals. Specifically, consider how they define and critique threats to Latin America's sovereignty and the viability of national politics in "Land in Anguish" and How to Read Donald Duck, respectively.
4. "Europeans," wrote Octavio Paz, "were surprised by the universality of Borges, but none of them realized that this cosmopolitanism was, and could only be, the point of view of a Latin American...Both inside and outside the European tradition, the Latin American can see the West as a totality, not with the fatally provincial vision of the French, the German, the English or the Italian." Consider Paz's observation by comparing and contrasting the epistemologies (philosophies of the nature of knowledge) of Borges' Ficciones and Neruda's "The Heights of Macchu Picchu." Specifically, consider the relationship between universal (global/human) and particular (local/national) knowledge in each of these works. Do you agree with Paz's observation? Does it describe Neruda's work as well? Why or why not?

5. How have Latin American intellectuals defined the theory and practice of revolution? Have they successfully reconciled revolutionary theory and practice? If so, how? If not, why? In responding to these questions, consider three of the following: Castro, "Words to the intellectuals"; Retamar, Caliban; Glauber Rocha, "Land in Anguish"; Gutiérrez, Theology; Paulo Freire, Pedagogy.

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Final Paper:

Write a 7-10 page essay in which you respond to one of the following questions. Papers should be typed/word-processed and double-spaced, with page margins no less than one inch.

Your papers should be well-organized and your analysis should be supported by citations from the texts in question. Whether you paraphrase or directly quote from the text, you should indicate the origin in either footnotes/endnotes or parentheses.

Due May 6, 1999 by 4:00 pm. You may leave the papers in my mailbox (Society of Fellows Office, 3rd floor, Heyman Center) or under the door of my office (2-1, Heyman Center). **No late papers will be accepted.**

1. "Without Borges," wrote Carlos Fuentes, "the modern Latin American novel would not exist." Assess this statement considering the work of Borges in relation to 1) Azuela or Ramos and 2) Fuentes or Marquez. Consider both narrative form and content. How does your textual analysis compare with Donoso's literary history of "the Boom" (The Boom in Spanish American Literature)?

2. Compare and contrast the figure of the intellectual in the Mexican and Cuban Revolutions. How was the role of the intellectual defined in each case? How did intellectuals respond to revolutionary agendas of transforming culture, nationhood and social class? In answering these questions consider at least two examples from each national context: Azuela, the Mexican Muralists, Vasconcelos, Castro, Retamar, Morejón.

3. "My sole ambition," wrote the Argentine Victoria Ocampo in a literary "Letter to Virginia Woolf," "is to one day write more or less well, more or less badly, but *like a woman*." Is it possible, as Ocampo suggests, to identify the gendered dimensions of intellectual production? To answer this question refer to the work of at least two of the following writers: Gabriela Mistral, Nancy Morejón, Patricia Galvão and Clarice Lispector (in her work and mediated by Amaral in "Hour of the Star"). You may find it useful to refer to Molloy's essay "Female Textual Identities." Finally, how does their work challenge or sustain the gendered stories of nationhood and selfhood offered by either Octavio Paz or Gilberto Freyre?

4. How have Latin American writers and intellectuals defined the relationship between the personal and the political/ the private and the public? Under what circumstances have the boundaries between these realms shifted? Why? Answer these questions considering at least three of the following: Patricia Galvão, Azuela, Fuentes, "The Official Story," Guillermprieto, Poniatowska. You may find it useful to refer to the essays by Molloy and Sarlo in Women's Writing.

5. What is the relationship between the "post-modern" and the "post-colonial?" Does postmodernity correspond to what is also described as the magically real? To answer these questions compare the novellas by Marquez with the essays by Alma Guillermprieto and consider the arguments advanced by Yúdice and one of the following: Klor de Alva, Richard Rodriguez, Rosario Ferré.