Race and Nation in Latin America  
LAST 252

Class meetings:  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:20 – 2:40 pm  
FISK 404

Instructor:  
Diana Lynn Schwartz  dschwartz01@wesleyan.edu

Office Hours:  
Thursdays, 10 am – 12 pm, and by appointment  
CAMS 215

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does race operate in Latin America, and in what ways does it intersect with the concept of nation and national belonging? The regions we call Latin America and the Caribbean have, since the first human encounter between "Old" and "New" Worlds of the 15th century, been often understood as places of mixture—both cultural and biological. From at least the early 19th century, when independent nations in the region began to emerge from colonial rule, intellectuals, statesmen, and citizens alike have had to contend with "race" and its inextricable connection to the concept of "nation." This course aims to introduce students to the history of race and national formation in Latin America and the Caribbean, from the wake of the independence movements of the early 19th century to the present. It draws on historical, anthropological, and literary approaches to identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the varied meanings of race and nation throughout the region.

The course is intended as a survey to give undergraduate students a critical understanding of the idea of race in Latin America, by discussing a multitude of geographical regions and countries with diverse colonial legacies (Mexico, Central America, Brazil, Spanish Caribbean, Peru, etc.). We will focus mostly on ideas about peoples of indigenous, African, and Western European descent in the region, but will also cover some examples that concern late-nineteenth and twentieth-century immigration (from Europe, but also from Asia and the Middle East) and its place in race- and nation-making. In addition, we will analyze the roles of gender and sexual politics in national policies and discourses of race.

Students participating in the course will become familiar with changing notions of race over time and their relationship to contemporary social theories. Some themes we will discuss include: the conceptual differences between 'nation' and 'state'; the implications of citizenship, equality, and race both in ideas and in practice; the rise of the social sciences and eugenic policy; ideas of race mixture and national belonging; the rise of multiculturalism; and pan-American or transnational ideas of race and nation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the semester, students should be able to demonstrate the following skills:

- Identify and evaluate historical arguments as presented in secondary literature.
- Analyze primary sources and use them to make historical arguments.
- Describe how and why notions of race and nation became intertwined in the western hemisphere.
- Compare distinct ideas and policies from multiple national contexts, and identify the historical contingencies that help to explain the particular course of race and nation ideations.
- Demonstrate skill in both verbal and written analysis and argumentation.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
The student’s grade for the course will be composed of:
- Attendance and Class Participation (18%)
- Self-Assessment (2%)
- Office Hour Meetings (5%)
- Postings on Moodle Forum (10%)
- In-class Presentations & Discussion Facilitation (10%)
- Assignment 1 (15%)
- Assignment 2 (15%)
- Final Assignment (25%)

Attendance and Class Participation: All students are expected to attend class and participate regularly. Students are permitted three (3) absences during the semester. Any more than three absences will result in a lowered course grade. Absences due to extenuating circumstances will be excused only after a personal consultation with the instructor and verification from a doctor or counselor.

Self-Assessment: Students must complete a self-assessment that will be issued electronically. At the same time, students are encouraged to fill out an anonymous online mid-course review.

Office Hour Meetings: Students are required to meet with the instructor at least twice during the semester. The first mandatory meeting should be after the first assignment has been returned and before Monday November 7 to discuss the student’s first assignment and the primary source the student plans to analyze for the next assignment; the second mandatory meeting should be week by the end of week 14 to discuss the student’s progress and plans for the final assignment. Please note that the meetings are not punitive! Rather, they are meant to be sure there is continued open communication between student and instructor throughout the semester. Of course, students are always encouraged to attend office hours!

Postings on Moodle Forum: Students are required to post to the course Moodle forum twenty (20) short (approximately 200-300 words), thoughtful responses to the readings over the course of the semester. The postings are due by 10 AM on the day for which the reading is assigned. Any postings after that time and day will not count toward the required twenty. Forum postings may pose a question related to the readings for the week and attempt to answer it, relate the arguments of the assigned readings to one another, etc.

Presentations & Discussion Facilitation: Each student is responsible for giving brief five-minute introductory presentations on two separate course readings and facilitating discussion of said readings. The presentation should briefly familiarize the class with the context of the readings and the arguments (keeping in mind that everyone in the class read the assigned pieces), and, when appropriate, should make connections among the readings assigned for that day. Presenters must pose at least one initial question to the rest of the class in order to stimulate discussion. Because there will often be multiple presenters for each class discussion, students should consider how the text on which they present relates to other course readings. The purpose of the presentation is for students to hone their verbal skills, so remember that clarity and coherence are key! Note: presentations are TIMED by a student who will present at the subsequent class meeting.

Assignments 1 & 2 (750-1000 words): The purpose of these assignments is for students to hone and convey their aptitude in primary source analysis. The papers can take a variety of forms. Each paper will
analyze a primary source and contextualize the source with assigned secondary readings. The intention is for students to analyze the source content (text, visual attributes in the case of images, etc.). While secondary sources may not speak specifically to the geographical place or event treated in the primary source, students should use secondary literature to think broadly about relevant themes from the course. Be sure to properly cite the source.

- **Assignment 1: Martí meets Vasconcelos (due electronically by 5pm on Monday, October 10)**
  This is a creative assignment in which students put José Martí and José Vasconcelos in conversation. The author’s perspective can take a variety of forms, as can the format: for example, the two could find themselves in a wormhole, one could have time traveled to a cafe in his compatriot’s place in space-time, etc. Regardless of the form it takes, students should consult with the instructor. Students should consider the following questions to guide their observations and analysis:
  - Based on the writings you’ve read by these thinkers, how might they interpret the relationship between race and nation in their homologue’s country and time period?
  - Based on the secondary sources you’ve read, how do late nineteenth-century Cuba and early twentieth-century Mexico compare?

- **Assignment 2: Analysis of at least one source of students’ choosing (due electronically by 5pm on Monday, November 14)**
  This assignment can be written as a more traditional analysis paper (see criteria below), they can assume a first-person point of view and describe a historical moment or theme from the course in a way that demonstrates a critical understanding of the primary source(s) at hand, etc. The source can be visual (painting, drawing, archaeological artifact, cartographic) or written. Regardless of the form it takes, students should consult with the instructor. Students should consider the following questions to guide their observations and analysis:
  - When was this source written? What is its historical context?
  - Why did you choose the source(s)?
  - Who is the author, and who is the intended audience?
  - Locate this source within its appropriate historical context. What does it tell us about race and nation in this moment in history, and how does it relate to the secondary sources we have read?

**Final Assignment:** The final assignment can also take a variety of forms. Prompts will be given at the end of week 13. The final assignment is due electronically, on Thursday of Finals Week (December 15) at 5PM. NO EXCEPTIONS.

**Policy on Electronic Devices:** Laptop computers and tablets are permitted at the instructor’s discretion. Cell phones are not permitted.

**BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE**


*All readings are available on reserve in digital form or at the Library*

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

--- Weeks 1-4: Early nation-formation ---

**Week 1 – What makes a nation? Where does race fit in that equation? And how do historians know what we know about race and nation?**

**Tuesday, September 6**
Introductions & Establishing ground rules

**Thursday, September 8**

***MEET IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES, OLIN LIBRARY***

(This meeting will be split into two parts: one an orientation on using historical materials and archives, the other on the concept of nationalism and nation-building).


Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, “Nationalism as a Practical System: Benedict Anderson’s Theory of Nationalism from the Vantage Point of Spanish America” in Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 3-34.

**Week 2 – What were colonial and early republican ideas about race and nation?**

**Tuesday, September 13**


**Thursday, September 15**

Week 3 – How did ideas of race influence Cuban movements for independence?

**Tuesday, September 20**

**Thursday, September 22**


Week 4 – Liberalism and the Crafting of the National Body

**Tuesday, September 27** – How did nineteenth-century liberalism and positivism shape racial discourse and inclusion?


**Thursday, September 29** – What do illness and motherhood have to do with shaping the “national body”?


--- Weeks 5-8: Indigenismo, eugenics, and social science ---

Week 5 – Indigenismo

**Tuesday, October 4** – Indianness, Indigenismo, and the Nation

**Thursday, October 6**

José Vasconcelos “The Race Problem in Latin America” in *Aspects of Mexican Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926) 75-102; and excerpts from *The Cosmic Race*

Ricardo Pozas, excerpts from *Juan the Chamula*

***First assignment due by 5pm on Monday October 10***

**Week 6 – More on Indigenismo and Eugenics**

**Tuesday, October 11** – What was “indigenismo” in the Andes, and how does it compare to the other cases we’ve seen?

***Visit to Davison Art Center***


**Thursday, October 13** – What is eugenics, and what does it have to do with race and nation making?

**Week 7 – Eugenics & Social Science**

**Tuesday, October 18 – Eugenics in Latin America, continued**
Thursday, October 20 – How are social scientific ideas about “race” employed in practice, and what are the effects?

Week 8 – Racial Democracies

Tuesday, October 25
*** NO CLASS. FALL BREAK ***

Thursday, October 27 – What is a “racial democracy”?  


--- Weeks 9-11: Immigration, diasporas, gender & sex, space ---

Week 9 – Borderlands and Diasporas

Tuesday, November 1 – How do the Haitian-Dominican borderlands shape notions of race and nation?


Thursday, November 3 – What is the relationship between the Chinese diaspora(s) and the nation in Mexico and Cuba?

Week 10 – Diasporas and Gender

**Tuesday, November 8 – Immigrants and their descendants in Brazil**


**Thursday, November 10 – In what ways are sex, gender, and sexuality shaped by ideas and policies of race and nation formation?**


*** Second assignment due by 5pm on Monday November 14 ***

Week 11 – Gender, Sex, and Sexuality; Space and Race in Brazil

**Tuesday, November 15 – In what ways are sex, gender, and sexuality shaped by ideas and policies of race and nation formation?**


**Thursday, November 17 – How do concepts of space shape race?**

--- Weeks 12-14: Space, Multiculturalism, transnationalism ---

Week 12 – How do concepts of space shape race?

**Tuesday, November 22**

**Thursday, November 24**
*** NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY ***
Week 13

**Tuesday, November 29** – Why was there a turn toward multiculturalism, and what effects has this shift had on race and ethnic policy?


**Thursday, December 1** – How do contemporary movements to recognize difference based on race play out on the ground?


Colombian Constitution of 1991, Transitory Article 55; and Law 70 of 1993


Week 14 – How do we talk about race in Latin America vis-à-vis the United States?

**Tuesday, December 6**


**Thursday, December 8**


Select shorts from the accompanying PBS series.

*** Final Assignment Due Thursday, December 15 by 5pm ***