Brazilian Literature and Culture in English Translation

Course description: This course will introduce you to a sampling of Brazilian literature and culture, home to a number of ethnic groups from the Amazon jungles to the beaches of Rio and Bahia. We will focus on representations of race and identity in Brazil, especially looking at important foundational and cultural myths through literature, films and music. From canonical authors, racial, gender and social dynamics, we will cover Brazilian culture through a variety of media while taking a critical look at the ways literary, cinematic and cultural movements have contributed to the discussions surrounding the formation of the Brazilian national imaginary. Readings will span a variety of literary genres, and will be complemented with films screenings, performances, and images. The syllabus is subject to change, since I believe in students’ input and interests, that could help us modify the program according to students’ interests.

Required Readings:
Most readings for this class will be available on Blackboard in the form of pdf files or will be distributed in class.

Books to Buy:
(please purchase books, paper copy, on your own in the beginning of the semester, I will do a book check to make sure you purchased the book ahead of time)

*The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho  
*The Hour of the Star* by Clarice Lispector  
*Veronika Decides to Die* by Paulo Coelho

Required Films:
All required films will be started in class. In the event that we do not finish the film in class or if you would like to review a film before an exam, they will be available on reserve in the media library on the fourth floor of Dana Library.

Course Administration/Blackboard:
This course has a dedicated Blackboard site, which students are required to check at least twice a week (the day before each class meeting). This site will contain a copy of the syllabus, pertinent announcements, discussion questions posted by students, and all required digital course pack readings. The readings will be labeled by author, title and according to the order in which they should be read. Students are required to PRINT OUT all pdf files and bring the hard copy to class.

Learning goals: Literature is something that can be enjoyed by anyone, without any special training. Literary analysis, however, is an activity for which skills, knowledge, and preparation are needed. Students of literature should be able to read critically; becoming proficient in analyzing literature includes the following abilities:

* Reading and comprehending theoretical material about literature, cultural production, identity development, politics and cultural criticism
* Applying the theoretical material in the course to any cultural artifact about which one is reading
Gaining the tools for analyzing the social, cultural and political issues that shape communities

Grappling with historical and social dilemmas that require sensitive, careful critical commentary

Learning to express one's analysis through cogent arguments and clear writing

Course Requirements:

- This is a discussion based-type course, so it requires the full participation of all the students. It is important that students keep up with all the readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.
- Book of passages: students are expected to choose at least two passages (or scenes) from the readings everyday besides writing a commentary, which will be read in class. Please purchase a notebook so that this can be evaluated at the end of the semester.
- Attendance and punctuality are extremely important. Please discuss with the instructor if you need to arrive late or miss any classes. Attendance is obligatory. More than 2 absences (either excused or unexcused) and lateness of more than 5 minutes will detract from your attendance grade. Cell-phone use in class (texting), or surfing the Internet will also detract from your attendance grade.

Grading/Assignments:

Social Contract (15%): Students are expected to be active members of the classroom community. This grade evaluates thoughtful and regular participation in class discussion, preparation of in-class reading assignments, punctuality, and attendance. More than ONE absence from class and lateness of more than 5 minutes detracts from this grade. CELL PHONE USE AND LAPTOP USE IS PROHIBITED AND WILL DETRACT FROM THIS GRADE.

Be mindful that if you miss more than 3 classes, your participation grade will not be an “A”, it will be dropped one full letter grade. If you miss more than 5 classes, your participation grade will be a “C” or less. You might not be able to get an “A” in the course if you miss too many classes. In case you need to be excused, please let me know in advance.

Quizzes (15%)

There will be unannounced short quizzes throughout the semester, depending on students’ reading habits. These quizzes will evaluate students’ independent understanding of assigned readings. These quizzes are designed to help motivate students to stay current with the readings and consistently prepare for class.

Exams (35% each; midterm and a final)

The exams will evaluate students’ understanding of all readings, lectures, films and discussions. Generally, these exams will have more detail oriented portions as well as longer format essays which ask students to compare and contrast across texts, subject matter and place. The second exam is not cumulative and only covers second half of semester.

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Brazil as foreign, inside or outside Latin American imaginary
    Wed. 01/22: Introduction (beg of “The Foreign Eye”) Music: um só, Paratodos and Chiclete com Banana

Week 2:
    Mon. 01/27: “The Foreign Eye” screening continued and discussion
    Read “Intro to Brazil Imagined”
    Wed. 01/29: The Transformative power of art. “Wasteland” in class; read hand-outs on the movie

Week 3: City of God
    Mon. 02/03: (watch the movie before class) and continue discussion of “Wasteland”, parallels and differences
    Wed. 02/05: movie discussion and read a few articles on the movie (on Blackboard)
Week 4: Machado de Assis and Lispector (Gender and Racial issues)

Mon. 02/10: “Father versus Mother”
Wed. 02/12: “Amor”, by Clarice Lispector

Week 5: Carmem Miranda and the Tropics question

Mon. 02/17: “Carnaval Remnants”, by Lispector
Wed. 02/19: Documentary on Tropicalia (watch it before class); samba, bossa nova, tropicalia, capoeira; Chris Dunn’s chapter on Tropicalia

Week 6: racial and gender explorations

Mon. 02/24: short stories
Wed. 02/26: short stories

Week 7: spirituality in literature

Mon. 03/02: The Alchemist
Wed. 03/04: The Alchemist

Week 8:
Mon. 03/09: cont.
Wed. 03/11: cont. (creative project)

Week 9: Spring Recess (03/14-03/22)

Week 10: dictatorship and migration

Mon. 03/23: In-class viewing of the film Elena
Wed. 03/25: Discussion of the film

Week 11:

Mon. 03/30: review
Wed. 04/01: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 12: Psychological explorations

Mon. 04/06: Veronika Decides to Die
Wed. 04/08: cont.

Week 13:

Mon. 04/13: cont.
Wed. 04/15: cont.

Week 14: immigrant questions

Mon. 04/20: (Discussion of the film The Year My Parents Went on Vacation) or The Hour of the Star
Wed. 04/22: The Hour of the Star, Clarice Lispector

Week 15:

Mon. 04/27: The Hour of the Star, continued
Wed. 04/29: Review, finalizing the book

Week 16:
Mon. 05/04: Last Day of class and Final

Academic Integrity
All students are expected and required to create original written essays in order to answer the questions on the course examinations. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. According to the Academic Integrity Policy of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, “[p]lagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic work. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks, or by appropriate indentation, and must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline. Acknowledgment is also required when material from any source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words… Information that is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be cited; however, the sources of all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, other materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography” (http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu).

Disability Services: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete and submit the Registration Form, schedule and complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privately to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process, by completing and submitting the Registration Form, available at the website below, Applying for Services.
• Applying for Services: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services
• Documentation Guidelines: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines
• Letter of Accommodations (LOA): https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations
• Office of Disability Services (ODS)
Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center
(973) 353-5315
odsnewark@rutgers.edu

Religious Holiday Policy: Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule