The concept of Latinidad, or "Latinness," is an unstable one. Meant to encompass a multitude of cultures, languages and experiences, it inevitably falls short, as words often do. Although contested, the term at least attempts to put a name to a hazy collection of norms and realities, the pretty and the ugly that together constitute a certain idea of self.

—John Paul Brammer, "Review of High-Risk Homosexual by Edgar Gómez," NYT (Jan 14 2022)

Tú eres mi otro yo / You are my other me
Si te hago daño a ti, / If I do harm to you,
Me hago daño a mi mismo / I do harm to myself.
Si te amo y respeto, / If I love and respect you,
Me amo y respeto yo / I love and respect myself

—Mayan precept quoted by poet Luis Valdez, and banned from public schools in AZ in 2015

See also "In Lak'ech:You are My Other Me," -- Magnolia Landa Posas
https://youtu.be/bUzhbJKLfuE?t=32

Course Description:

"Latina/o/x Literature and Culture," a course I began to teach in 2005, traces a Latina/o/x imagination in literary texts from the colonial period to the present. During the past decade and a half, the field of Latina/o/x Studies has emerged. If this literary field first gains visibility with the post-Civil Rights "boom" of writing within community and student activist movements that demanded access to universities and sought to change the white-dominated and Eurocentric curriculum and university culture, the field of Latina/o/x literature has also expanded backward and forward in time. Through the recovering of the U.S. Hispanic literary heritage project and a burgeoning field of writing that has gained increasing recognition in the 21st century, in 2023 it is not possible to understand "American" literature without knowing Latina/o/x literature. By often remaking dominant aesthetic forms and even the dominant language (English), this body of literature shifts the definition of "America" itself. Since Rutgers became an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in 2016, we might ask what role Latina/o/x literature and culture play in the University as a whole, now that at least 25% of the student body identify as "Hispanic" or Spanish/Latin American descent.

This course interrogates the central, and constantly changing category of its inquiry—
“Latino/a/x”--which refers to simultaneously visible and yet marginalized cultural forms of the largest “minority” group of the United States. Recognizing Amerindian and African inheritances, and centering work by femme and LGBTQIA+ writers, we will grapple with persistent legacies of anti-black, anti indigenous racism, machismo and heteronormativity. In keeping with the history of annexations and migrations especially to New York and New Jersey, we begin with Cuban, Puerto Rican and Chicana/o Mexican-American writings before considering the literatures of more recent migrations from the Dominican Republic, South and Central America, including Brazil.

We will examine themes related to (im)migration, assimilation and dislocation; working conditions and labor struggles; the relationship of Latinidad to Latin America; the violent immigration system and representations of undocumented Latinx migration; problems and possibilities of cultural self-representation including translation, language loss and code-switching; cultural hybridity, mestizaje, and in-between-ness. Through reading and listening in a variety of genres--including fiction, teatro, poetry, essay, crónicas, memoir, film, art and music--we consider Latino/a/x aesthetic forms, influences and medium. In addition to reading, writing and class discussion, students may develop off-campus research in New York’s archives and contemporary cultural spaces. Students will also be invited to attend the keynote and sessions of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice’s U.S. Latinx Literary Theory and Criticism Conference, April 5-7, 2023. This course fulfills requirements for the Minor in Latino Studies (administered in the Spanish Department) and counts toward the English Major or Minor.

Course Goals and Objectives:

- To understand how to analyze Latina/o/x literary texts and representations from a range of genres, media, time periods and cultural contexts
- To understand key concepts and histories relevant to the study of Latina/o/x literary and cultural expression
- To gain experience and confidence in academic writing, including the creation of effective thesis statements, the analysis of supporting textual evidence, knowledge of appropriate organization, format, tone and style.
- To practice close reading and critical analysis of Latina/o/x literary texts and cultural objects, in formal and informal, written and oral formats
- To gain experience with interdisciplinary methods that encourage students to make connections between the text and what is happening outside the classroom
- To imagine a more beautiful and just world

Required texts:


Quintero Weaver, Lila, *Darkroom: A memoir in black and white* (University of Alabama Press, 2012)

Required films (we will watch portions in class):


All other readings are available digitally. I expect you to print out the day's readings and bring them to class with you, as having the text at hand for immediate reference, citation and annotation greatly improves your ability to assimilate the text and engage deeply in class discussion.

**Course Requirements:**

**Class participation: (10%)**

Good participation requires reading assigned texts and being prepared to discuss, argue and raise questions. Active, informed participation and active engagement will enrich your experience and that of everyone in the course. Try out new ideas, new words, new arguments. You need not be certain of the "right" answer before you speak up. In fact, you may bring to a reading something new, that neither the author nor the existing critical scholarship has acknowledged. You will not be able to make this important contribution unless you show up and unleash your voice. Do not let the vociferous have the last word.

**Discussion Board Posts (on Packback) (20%)**

Each week students will write a short post (approximately 200 words) in response to the reading, class discussion or as answers to questions posed by the Instructor in class or on Canvas. These posts should raise two new questions, respond to at least two others' questions about the material or address the historical world outside the text. You need a "curiosity" score of at least 60 to receive full credit. You receive partial credit even if you do not make the "60" benchmark. You may post these before Thursday's class and no later than Saturday 11:59 pm, at the end of the week. Of our fourteen weeks of class, you need to post ten responses (each will be worth 2 points). If you post more often, they will count as extra credit. Certain responses are required as indicated in the syllabus.

**Oral Presentation (10%)**: A strong presentation will be 3-5 min and make a connection between your keyword, historical context, current event or cultural happening and the readings we are discussing on the day you present. Your presentation might begin with a musical selection and should end with some questions to springboard a discussion in which you will co-lead the class for 10-15 minutes. After your presentation, you will receive feedback from the instructor and classmates, which you should incorporate into your 250 word written report, to be posted on line (via Packback "deep dives") within one week of your presentation. Please email or speak to the instructor to confirm your topic before you present. Oral presentation is worth 5 points and write up is worth 5 points.

**Wikipedia Contribution (20%)** related to any topic covered in our course. Your contribution should include at least three secondary sources, as stipulated in wikipedia's guidelines. In groups of two, this assignment involves attending a training on line and generating an encyclopedia entry (or a portion of an entry) that may be read by millions. Students are encouraged to use university librarians and the instructor when locating sources to cite in your entry.
Final Project/Paper 2 (10-14 pages or 5-6 pages to accompany a public activity, visual, music, film or digital humanities project) (30%). For the final paper, project, students will be required to meet with the instructor or TA to discuss the project or paper topic, and will engage in revision with feedback from the instructor and from a peer reviewer. Final revised portfolio is due May 4 online (with links to documentation of your project, if you choose to do one).

Midterm Exam (10%) In class exam featuring short questions and one short essay in which you demonstrate familiarity with all the readings covered up to that point.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

January 17 "Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx" What’s in a Name?


- Required Discussion Board Assignment: Introduce Yourself

January 19:

- Presentation Sign-up Distributed and Scheduled

January 24
Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, "Affective Communities and Millennial Desires: Latinx, or Why My Computer Won't Recognize Latina/o" Cultural Dynamics 29.3 (2017): 141-159

- Wikipedia Assignment Distributed

January 26
Claudia Milian, LatinX (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), Intro + Articulations pp. 1-34. Available online through the libraries.

January 31 Whose America?
Martí, José, "Our America" (1891) and 'The Truth About the United States" (1894)

- Wikipedia Assignment Distributed

February 2
Martí, José. "Coney Island," and excerpt from the Versos Sencillos (1891) and "Sad Sunday," from the Versos Libres.

**February 7 Latina/o/x in the Two United States**
Jesus Colón, "The Mother, the Young Daughter, Myself and All of US"
--"Grandma Please Don't Come!"
--"The Two United States"
--"The Jewish People and Us"
--"My Wife Doesn't Work" all from Ilan Stavans et al Norton Anthology of Latino Literature

**February 9**
Piri Thomas, "Brothers under the Skin," from Down these Mean Streets

**February 14**

**February 16**
Lourdes Casal, "Memories of a Black Cuban Childhood" Nuestro (1978), "Reclaiming our Roots" Nuestro (1977) and poems: "For Anna Veltfort"

**February 21**
Luis Valdez, "Los Vendidos" (Extra credit available for students who prepare the scene for performance in class) from Herencia: Oxford Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States (2002)

**February 23**

**February 28**
Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987)

**March 2**

**March 7. Mid-Term In-class Exam** (Show your knowledge of all the others readings up to this point)

**March 9: Lila Quintero Weaver Darkroom (2012)**

SPRING BREAK March 14-16

**March 21** Lila Quintero Weaver Darkroom

**March 23, Lila Quintero Weaver Darkroom**
March 28, Undocumented and Unafraid
"My Name is Julio: A Short Film by his Best Friend Jesus Iñiguez" available on youtube
Zamora, poems from Unaccompanied

March 30 Zamora, poems from Unaccompanied

April 4, Alex Rivera and Cristina Ibarra, The Infiltrators. Film available

April 6, CLASS TO ATTEND JOHN JAY LATINX LITERARY THEORY CONFERENCE.

➢ Required Discussion Post reporting on one session or the Key Note Address
➢ There is a $10 registration fee. If this presents a problem, please contact the instructor.

April 11 Brazuco Literature
Kathleen de Azevedo Samba Dreamers

April 13, de Azevedo Samba Dreamers(Continued)

➢ Abstract and Bibliography of Final Papers and Projects Due (5 %)

April 18: NO CLASS MEETING: Schedule an appointment with the Instructor, T.A. and attend Special Class Session with Lourdes Casal Project Visiting Speaker during FREE PERIOD ON 4/19
Continue reading: de Azevedo Samba Dreamers(Continued)

April 20: de Azevedo Samba Dreamers(Continued)

April 25: Transvisible: The Bamby Salcedo Story (DVD on reserve: we will watch excerpts in class)
➢ First Draft of Essay/Project DUE (5%)

April-27: Elevator Speeches based on final Essay Projects and Wikipedia entry (5%)
➢ Peer Review DUE (5%)

➢ Final Draft of Final Project/Essay DUE May 4 (10%)
Pristine, revised version should be stapled on top of Earlier Draft (to your Peer Reviewer’s Comments on it) Due in my Office. THESE SHOULD ALL BE SUBMITTED TOGETHER, which may mean you have to print out the comments provided to you by your peer reviewer

Elaboration on Course Requirements:
C+:76-79  C:70-76  D:60-69  F: 59- 

Writing (20% for wikipedia entry or revisions of other entries, featuring at least three printed sources— you must complete one packback post and present to the class about your editorial work; 10% Mid-term (Short Answers and One In-class essay); 30% for Final Project/Essay (10-14 pages or 5-7 pages + project): I will suggest topics for final essays and/or projects. See deadlines on calendar above. All students should discuss their topic with the instructor or TA before beginning to write. All papers should include a heading with the following elements in the left-hand corner:

A Captivating Title for Your Essay: Not Underlined and Centered at the Top>

<page number – your last name, after the first page, centered in footer>

Indent the first line of every paragraph, and include a clearly stated thesis and supporting evidence from the text that you are interpreting. Cite your evidence using the MLA citation style and a Works Cited list at the end. Double space and spell and grammar-check your essay before turning it in.

All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day indicated on the syllabus. They should be delivered to me in hard copy AND submitted online via Turn-it-in on Canvas. Late papers will be marked down half a grade (i.e. 2 pts) for each day the paper is late. To pass the class you must complete all course requirements. If you miss class the day that a paper is due, your paper will automatically be marked late. Students who wish to receive the final essay grade and comments in the mail after classes end should submit a self-addressed-stamped envelope along with the essay on the due date.

Oral Presentations of a key concept, a relevant historical context or a related current event that directly relates to our class reading (10%).

Attendance: Everyone has to miss class for a compelling reason (illness, personal or family emergency, religious holiday observance) once in while. You do not need a note. After three absences I will send you a note. After four absences your total points will go down by 5 points for each additional day that you miss. Three late arrivals or early departures (of more than ten minutes) together will constitute an unexcused absence.

Conferences: In addition to meetings as needed, all students are required to meet with me or Esperanza in person, by zoom or by phone or in the office, to discuss the final
essay or project. I will circulate a sign up sheet. We will use this meeting to discuss the thesis of your final essay, your critical sources and any questions about the reading. When you arrange to meet with one of us, bring all assignments and papers that I have returned to you. Be sure to cancel by phone and email if you will not be able to make your appointment.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism refers to work written by others (including computers) that you do not cite as such. I expect you to hand in original work only. Use AI to help you write a better paper (i.e. check for grammar or spelling), but do not turn in AI authored work. I will be using Turn-it-in to review for plagiarism for all assignments completed at home. Plagiarism in any form is one of the most serious offenses that a student can commit at Rutgers, mostly because it means you are undermining your own opportunity to learn to write and think. It will result in a failing grade and could lead to more serious charges such as dismissal from the University. If you have further questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

**Contacting the Instructor:**
I welcome your comments about the course and material. The best way to contact me is via email at lllomas@rutgers.edu. Monday through Friday, I will respond within 24 hours. Messages from the over the weekend will receive a reply on Monday. You may also meet with myself or our TA during our respective office hours. It is always best to confirm that you are coming by via email. I am also available for meetings via zoom by appointment.

**Netiquette:** Please maintain a professional, civil demeanor when posting online. Even when expressing your difference of opinion, you can do so with respect. Treat others as you would like to be treated.

**Accessibility:**
I am committed to creating an inclusive course by design. If you encounter barriers, please let me know immediately so we can work to create a solution, as long as it does not compromise learning or the assignment goals.

If you have or think you may have a disability, please contact the RUN Office of Disability Services: https://studentaffairs.newark.rutgers.edu/health-wellness/disability-services, ODS@newark.rutgers.edu, Paul Robeson Campus Center, Room 219.