

**Spanish 4320: Popular Cultures in Latin America and Spain
Summer I 2015**

Professor: Dr. Sara Potter

Class: M-F 11:40-1:50pm, UGLC 210

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Office Hours: After class or by appointment

Texts: All of our texts—book chapters, academic articles, YouTube clips, films, etc.--will be scanned and posted on Blackboard OR available online. It is your responsibility to obtain these texts and to read them carefully before each class. **If there are any problems finding a text, or with the format, please let me know immediately. Showing up to class and informing me that the text could not be found is not acceptable.** Some films cannot be posted online, so they will be screened in class. I will be drawing from texts that include but are not limited to the following:

Course Description: In this course we will survey so-called popular culture in various Latin American and Spanish contexts. The uniting thread will be the figure of the hero and its evolution, beginning with the Cuban Revolution in 1959 to the present. Due to the condensed nature of the summer session, there will be a particular focus on the countercultural movements in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and Spain in the late 70s and 1980s, with the intention of sacrificing breadth to gain a measure of depth. We will examine in detail films, music, television programs, magazines, comics, advertisements, and pulp fiction, with attention to how they work as cultural phenomena (how they are unified and disseminated by the mass media, absorb, perpetuate or question dominant discourses, engage with countercultures and subcultures, national history and globalization, etc.). In other words, *we will be attentive to the multiple ways in which the very notion of popular culture is problematic*, and seek to always question the generalizations implicit in such a term. We will also focus on *personalities*, from Fidel Castro to el Che to counterculture rock stars to el Generalissimo (Franco) to insurrection leaders to political leaders, examining the construction of the hero, always differentiating between the person and the figure they became and considering the process of becoming a hero, as this process requires public and popular participation. In doing so, we will focus on 1) how culture *for* the people is not always the same as culture *by* the people, 2) the difference between a mass culture “for the masses” produced and distributed on a massive scale by corporations and the multiple forms of culture that are made by and for individuals, groups, and communities, and 3) how confusion results from the fact that all of these things are called “popular culture.”

We will analyze how such critical factors as ethnicity, race, gender, class, age, region, and sexuality are shaped and reshaped by and in popular culture. We will also read short sections of pop cultural theory in order to get a handle on the somewhat confusing definitions of popular culture and understand better the multiple ways in which they work.

Course Objectives: Students will develop the skills of critical and analytical reading and writing of the narratives addressed in this course, with particular emphasis given to the processes of close reading and academic writing. In all cases, but most particularly for those who are Spanish majors, the essays and in-class presentations will evaluate the student's ability to do the following:

- The student must demonstrate evidence of a careful and attentive reading through the analysis and/or synthesis of assigned texts.
- The student must consider the text in terms of its historical, cultural, political, and social context and be able to explain how it fits into the greater intellectual conversation.
- The student should be able to identify connections between and across texts and historical events.
- The student will be able to present his or her ideas in a well-organized manner, with a clear thesis statement and supporting paragraphs with good transitions and a conclusion. This, evidently, will be done in clear, correct academic Spanish.

Course Outcomes:

Students will produce written texts and oral presentations that demonstrate ever-increasing mastery of the above objectives. Students will also have a solid working knowledge of critical theory on popular culture in the Spanish-speaking world and have a broad critical vocabulary for discussing audiovisual media as well as textual analysis.

Attendance, Late Arrivals, and Participation:

Attendance is extremely important in a class of this nature, as is punctuality. For these sixteen weeks, we are forming a community of readers, writers, and thinkers, and as such it is important to be present. Part of this attendance grade involves a short and informal one-on-one meeting with me during the first two weeks of class (that is, by **Friday, June 19, 2015**). I am more than happy to work with your schedules to make this possible, as these meetings are a place for you to tell me about yourself, your studies and interests, your expectations, hopes, and/or concerns for the class, and so forth. Each class is worth 5 points, as is that first meeting with me. Certain days (such as writing workshops or in-class presentations) will count double. If you are here but arrive late (10 minutes or less), you earn 3 attendance points for the day. If you are more than ten minutes late, it is considered an absence.

Participation means that you are awake, pay attention to the lecture/discussion, and contribute to class discussion by coming prepared (with your texts and with the homework/reading complete), asking relevant and productive questions about the readings, engaging with and thoughtfully responding to other students, and participating actively in small group work. It is important to me to create an environment in which we are 'comfortable being uncomfortable,' in which it is safe to take intellectual risks and to explore new or difficult or uncomfortable ideas.

Late work will not be accepted except in extraordinary circumstances. If you are unable to come to class, you are responsible for finding out what you have missed from your classmates. If you miss an in-class quiz or assignment, contact me as soon as possible for a make-up. Except in *exceptional circumstances*, I will not accept late any work that has been assigned in advance (appearing on the syllabus).

Attendance policy: If you are absent an excessive number of times during the drop period—three consecutive absences or four sporadic ones—from the first day after the end of late registration (June 8) through the last day for faculty to drop students (July 2), you risk being dropped from the course. I will not do this without contacting you first; students who simply stop showing up will *not* be automatically dropped but will earn an F in the course. Once the last day for faculty to drop students has passed, your course grade will drop two percentage points per absence once you have reached four absences. (4 absences is 2% off; 5 absences is 4% off, etc.)

Late arrivals and early departures also carry penalties for purposes of dropping or lowering the course grade: two late arrivals equal one absence, two early departures equal one absence, and one late arrival plus one early departure equal one absence. If you arrive late to class and miss the sign-in sheet when it goes around, it is your responsibility to tell me at the end of the class period that you were indeed present so that I do not accidentally mark you absent.

Important dates to keep in mind:

- Wednesday, June 15: Census Day
- Friday, June 19: Last day for one-on-one interview AND to select Pass/Fail option
- Thursday, July 2: Course drop deadline
- **Thursday, July 2: Final Exam**

On Technology In Class:

Personal computers, iPads, tablets, etc., are allowed in class as long as they are used only for class-related activities (reviewing texts, taking notes, etc.). Please turn off or silence all cell phones, beepers, or anything else that goes off, beeps, vibrates, or otherwise makes noise. Any student caught doing otherwise (texting, checking email or Facebook, etc.) will be asked to put away the distracting device and will lose participation points as well.

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90 B = 89-80 C = 79-70 D = 69-60 F = 59-0

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP). It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Please consult the Handbook of Operating Procedures at <http://hoop.utep.edu> for the complete University policy on academic dishonesty. You may also consult with the Assistant Dean of Students at the Student Union Building West, Room 102, or by calling 747-5648.

Students with Disabilities

If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the Office of Disabled Student Services located in the Student Union Building East, Room 203 by phone 747-4148 or e-mail dss@utep.edu. If you have a condition that may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or that may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of Disabled Student Services.

Composition of Grade:

Attendance and Participation:	15%
Pop quizzes & reading questions/prep	15%
Midterm	20%
Written Reflections	10%
Final Presentations	20%
Final Exam (take-home essay):	20%

Further information will be given regarding the midterm, final exam, and final presentation during the first week of classes.