1. **Written Reflections** (15% of final grade all together)

   Deadlines for written reflections are noted on the calendar section of this syllabus: **1/29, 2/19, 3/05, 3/19, and 3/26.** (There are five listed in all, of which you must complete any four.)

   Reflections are succinct and pithy engagement with assigned readings, listenings or viewings, of about 125 words or \( \frac{1}{2} \) a page in 12 point, double-spaced (please be sure that all reflections are typed and double-spaced). Sometimes there will be a specific topic assigned for reflections; otherwise, you will be free to choose anything we have discussed in class as a springboard for your writing.

   Because the reflections are so brief, you need to skip any introductory ramblings, historical contextualizations, or summing-up. They should be as substantial as possible, distilling your thoughts into a small space.

   Reflections have a dual purpose: to provide a less structured space to practice writing in Spanish about popular culture (i.e. a practice space to develop the skills that will make essay-writing easier and your essays more effective); and to develop confidence communicating about aspects of the reading, listening and viewing experiences that may be difficult to articulate according in essay form (ex. broaden the area of engagement beyond what seems easiest to say properly or most likely to get a good grade). Reflections may include diary-style introspection about feelings associated with the reading, creative riffs on the reading in any genre, questions or doubts about the reading that we haven’t addressed in class, etc. Reflections may serve as a springboard to essay writing; a topic begun in a reflection may ultimately grow into a full-length paper. But it is no less useful to reflect on things that may not fit into academic papers, since these reflections will help clarify the purpose and meaning of what you do choose to write about in essay form.

   Logically, then, reflections are not graded in the same way as essays. I consider them an opportunity for students to take risks that don’t always seem viable in essays. Essays are, necessarily, evaluated according to a set of pre-established conventions, since their main purpose is for students to learn to become proficient in these conventions. Reflections, on the other hand, are evaluated mostly according to the more subjective criteria that are only one component of essays’ grades (but are very important in all areas of cultural production): interest, enjoyment, readability, creativity, effort, originality, etc. They are not evaluated based on grammar, vocabulary or mechanics except where these make comprehension impossible.

2. **Pop Quizzes** (7.5%)

   At random times throughout the semester, I’ll give brief pop quizzes at the beginning of class to test reading comprehension.
3. **Show and Tell (7.5%)**

Pop culture is always evolving, and there is no way that in one semester we can get anywhere near exploring thoroughly the myriad forms of popular culture in Latin America and Spain. Students will be responsible for bringing in one new example of pop culture and presenting it. This can be almost anything—a song, a clip from a movie or TV program, a sports figure, that we haven’t studied in class;—or alternatively it can be going more in depth about something we have studied in class already. The presentation should take about 3-7 minutes, depending on how long it takes to “show” before you “tell” about your topic. You should think about what interests you about the thing you are presenting, what possibilities for analysis it suggests, or perhaps analyze your own response to it: why do I love this so much, or why does it annoy me tremendously?

I will pass around a sign-up sheet for the Show and Tell during the first weeks of class. You may discuss your choice with me during office hours if you like.

4. **Essays (3 essays, making up 50% of final grade all together, weighted as indicated)**

You will write three academic essays during the course of the semester, each of which is described in detail below. Please note that workshop dates generally precede the due date by one class period. All essays will be written in Spanish. Essays should be typed and double-spaced in a Times New Roman 12-point font, following MLA format.

**Essay 1 (10% of final grade): due Wednesday 02/12 in class**

In this essay, 2 pages in length, you will analyze one of the films that we have studied.

Consider that you are writing this essay in order to show something both about how the particular film works, as both an independent work and as inevitably part of a complex industry. You should include both a formal analysis of the plot, themes, and visual and sound effects, (according to your interests and abilities) and an analysis of its production context and/or its intended audience.

**Essay 2 (20% of final grade): due Monday 04/07 in class**

Note: *Please read this description to the end.* This is a two-part essay, four pages in total, which should be tied together with a few brief comments at the end. If you wish to reverse the order here, with part two coming before part one, that is also fine.

**PART 1:**

Write a 2 page, concise analysis of one advertisement found in a Latin American magazine or newspaper, or on-line, for a product made by a multinational corporation headquartered in the U.S. and marketed explicitly at Latin Americans. For example, you might choose an ad for a Ford car that is targeting the Argentine market, or the classic example of all-American Levis marketed at Costa Ricans, or more generally at a Latino/a population. Alternatively, you may choose a figure who has become commercialized and globalized (Che Guevara,
Frida Kahlo, el subcomandante Marcos, etc.). The ad must be in Spanish, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be a print ad; it can also be a commercial or video clip you find online. In any case, be sure to provide me with either a copy or a working link.

The analysis should address some (but obviously not all) of these kinds of questions:

- In doing your textual analysis you can draw upon work many of you have done in English classes by asking questions like: What is the setting? Who are the characters? What are the key images, metaphors, displayed? What is the plot and how is it structured (this may include implied but not shown scenes that precede or follow the scene shown).
- What story or "plot" does the ad offer on its surface? (You should summarize this very briefly. Do not dwell on this dimension. The “story” may be more like a subliminal suggestion, a very minimal element or absent entirely.)
- How does the story told on the surface relate to or differ from underlying stories? What relationships do you see between the manifest "denotations" (what is said explicitly) by the ad and the latent "connotations" (or suggestions or implications it makes)?
- Where and when did the ad appear? What relation is there between the ad, the place where it appeared and the audience for the ad? What relationships, if any, do you see between the ad and the magazine or newspaper in which you found it?
- What cultural assumptions and values seem built into the ad? How are those values and assumptions conveyed?
- What associations are implied between the product and some value, lifestyle, person, or place?
- Does the ad seem to be aimed to pull in a new set of consumers, or is it appealing to what you think of as its current consumers?
- How do the stories told connect to larger stories or Myths told in the culture at large? What key images or symbols connect the ad to one or more of these American stories?
- Does the ad simply reinforce these larger myth/stories? Or does it subvert, modify, confuse, reinterpret or redirect these larger stories?
- What "subject position" (or positions) is projected by the ad? In other words, what kind of person is constructed as the viewer/reader of the ad? How does the ad convey this positioning?
- How are you responding to the ad, and how is your response partly dependent upon your own "subject position"?
- What markers of race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, region, class, and/or sexual orientation appear in the ad? Do the markers seem to align their subjects stereotypically or play against stereotype?
- What relationships exist among the images, and between the images and the written text? Do they complement? Contradict? Add nuance? Comment ironically or seriously on each other?
- Which features (objects, people, the product) are foregrounded and which are in the background?
- What relation exists between the ad and the product? Is the actually product talked about or shown? Or is it more a lifestyle being sold and associated with the visible or invisible product?
Essay 2, PART 2:

Using your own research skills on and offline, find out and report in 2 additional pages what you find out about the production process that created the item in the ad you analyzed in part one.

Questions you might ask include: Where is the product made? What are the conditions for workers? How much are they paid? How is the labor divided up (is it all in one country, or one factory, or are parts made and put together in different places?) What monitors, regulations, or other protections exist for workers? Is there a union? Are unions permitted? And so on.

You may not be able to easily answer all these questions, but do not worry; part of the point of the assignment is to show that it is not easy to find answers to these questions.

Essay 3 (20% of final grade): due Monday May 12; rough draft due Monday May 5 for workshopping

The final essay must include at least two of the four main kinds of analysis practiced in class (formal, production, audience, historical). You are encouraged to discuss the choice of topic with me ahead of time, and you are required to turn in a preliminary sketch in the format of your choice (outline, list of points, prose paragraph, etc.) but not exceeding one typed, double-spaced page in length. The essay must also contain the following at least 2 scholarly references relevant to your argument. A scholarly reference is rather circularly defined as a text written by a scholar about her or his field. It is distinguished from a “lay” resource, which is written by a non-specialist. Wikipedia, then, while very useful for finding answers quickly—and sometimes providing links to scholarly resources—is not in itself a scholarly reference. You cannot cite Wikipedia as an authority in an academic paper, simply because the vetting process on Wikipedia is not the one used in the academic world. When in doubt about whether a resource is scholarly or not, please ask.