

## **Inter L&S 110: Contemporary Brazilian Society**

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Fall 2010

Tues & Thurs 11:00-12:15pm

4322 Social Science

Prof. Mara Loveman

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00pm, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Inter L&S 110 is a survey course that introduces students to the social scientific study of Brazilian society. The seminar surveys a broad range of social, political, environmental, and cultural issues affecting Brazilian society today. We will explore many critical questions confronting Brazilian citizens at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will also learn about the struggles of Brazilians to make their society more inclusive for all citizens and to understand their place in a changing world.

In addition to providing students with knowledge of contemporary Brazilian society, this seminar also introduces students to the benefits of adopting a *comparative perspective* to improve understanding of any social issue or problem. Learning about the roots of major social controversies in contemporary Brazil will provide students with new insights and perspectives from which to consider analogous issues and struggles unfolding in the contemporary United States and elsewhere around the globe.

Inter L&S 110 is one of three courses in the Contemporary Brazilian Society FIG (First Year Interest Group). Students in this FIG are simultaneously enrolled in the following courses:

Inter L&S 110: Contemporary Brazilian Society

Professor Mara Loveman

History 242: Modern Latin America: 1898 to the Present

Professor Florencia Mallon

Portuguese 101: Introductory Portuguese

Professor Joyce Gausmann

Inter L&S 110 is the synthesizing course for the Contemporary Brazilian Society FIG. This means that in addition to its own curriculum, this seminar aims to help students draw connections between what they are learning in each of the three individual courses.

Sometimes this will be accomplished by allocating class time to discussion of substantive connections between topics explored in Inter L&S 110 and your other FIG classes. Other times, we will draw conceptual or analytical connections across courses, by using critical thinking tools or analytical strategies introduced in one class to tackle a problem or topic that arises in another. For example, in History 242, you will learn how historians make sense of primary documents and piece them together to tell a story about societies of the

past. In Inter L&S 110, we will use this same historical lens to analyze present-day cultural artifacts. What will future historians have to say about some of the newspaper stories, political cartoons, blogs, facebook groups or YouTube clips that Brazilians are creating today?

Inter L&S 110 also provides opportunities for students to practice and apply the language and intercultural literacy skills introduced in their beginning Portuguese class. While the required reading for Inter L&S 110 is all in English, we will supplement these texts with a variety of Portuguese language sources, including Brazilian websites, popular media, music, and videos related to the topics covered in the seminar. By engaging with these materials, students will experience first-hand how learning a new language can help us understand things about other cultures that might otherwise escape our notice. Learning to “decode” the culture of another society, to recognize the unwritten rules that govern social interactions and relationships, students will gain a deeper understanding of contemporary social issues in Brazil. While developing this lens to analyze contemporary Brazilian society, we will also turn it back on our own society, to consider how an outsider to American society might analyze us.

### **Primary Course Objectives**

Over the course of the semester, students enrolled in this FIG seminar will:

- \* Gain a foundational knowledge of contemporary Brazilian society, including a solid grasp of a broad range of critical and contentious issues confronting Brazilian citizens today. This knowledge will be acquired through reading, discussion, and reflective writing.
- \* Learn to recognize the ways in which history informs present-day social dynamics. This historical sensibility will be developed by applying the skills acquired in History 242 to analyze contemporary social issues in Brazil.
- \* Develop critical thinking skills, specifically, the use of analogical and comparative reasoning. This skill will be cultivated through guided discussions and writing.
- \* Develop Portuguese language skills. The knowledge acquired in Portuguese 101 will be reinforced and extended through myriad opportunities to apply emerging skills and directly engage with Brazilian Portuguese sources in a variety of media.
- \* Acquire or reinforce foundations of Information Literacy. Through step-by-step completion of an independent research project, students will engage in proactive learning, gain familiarity with library resources available to students on the UW Madison campus, and develop the skills needed to find and use information to accomplish a specific task.

## **Course Requirements**

**(1) Attend Class.** This class is a seminar, not a lecture course. This is not the kind of class where students show up and listen attentively to their professor delivering a lecture. Rather, the role of students in this class is to show up and participate in an informed discussion of the topic on the table. *Participation in discussion is a core component of the course.* For this reason, the attendance policy is very strict. You are allowed one unexcused absence over the course of the semester with no questions asked. After that, any unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade. Absences for legitimate reasons (such as medical crises, family emergencies, and religious observances) do not count towards this policy. However, it is your responsibility to inform me of the legitimate reason for an absence in a timely manner or it will count as an unexcused absence and result in a reduction of your final course grade. For absences due to religious observances, this means informing me of your anticipated absence ahead of time. For absences due to medical or family emergencies, this means letting me know why you missed class at the very first opportunity to do so.

**(2) Read.** In order to be an *informed* participant in class discussions, you need to be prepared for class. Concretely, this means you must do the required reading and assignments before the first class meeting each week. If you are not prepared for class, you not only undermine your own learning, you also lower (or at least do not help to elevate) the overall level of the discussion, and thus detract from the learning experience of others. Preparation for class is an integral part of this seminar, so make sure to budget your time so that your reading for this class gets done by the beginning of each week, not the end.

All the required reading for the course is compiled in a course packet that will be available for purchase from the Social Science Copy Center (6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Sewell Social Science Building). A copy of this course packet will also been placed on reserve at the Social Science Library (8<sup>th</sup> floor of the Sewell Social Science Building).

All required reading will also be available online on the class website.

**(3) Write.** There are two types of writing assignment for this course:

***Discussion Posts:*** These are short, weekly writing assignments in which you will be asked to reflect on something you read, a topic covered in class, a movie, or some other cultural artifact. You will upload these posts to a Discussion board on the class website by 8pm on Mondays. More details will be provided in class.

***Final Research Paper:*** The final assignment for the class is a research report that poses and addresses a question pertaining to a contemporary issue in Brazilian society. You will be provided with a list of possible research questions, but you are encouraged to propose your own question on a topic that most interests you. Please note: Your research question must be approved by Prof. Loveman before you begin your research. More details about this final assignment will be provided in class.

## **Grades**

Attendance:	15%
Participation:	15%
Discussion Posts:	35%
Final Paper:	35%

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100%

## **Grading Scale**

94-100% = A

88-93 = AB

83-87 = B

78-82 = BC

70-77 = C

60-69 = D

<60 = F

**A note on Academic Honesty:** It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with the University's policies regarding academic honesty and misconduct. (See <http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>) On this website you can find a clear definition of academic misconduct and an explanation of plagiarism. Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility; lack of familiarity with the rules does not excuse misconduct. You should also read through the disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct. The University takes academic misconduct very seriously. I adhere strictly to the Dean of Students' guidelines for dealing with cases of academic misconduct.

## **Course Schedule**

### ***Sept. 2: Introductions and Course Overview***

#### **Week 1**

#### ***Sept. 7 & 9: Images of Brazil***

At the mention of “Brazil”, what images or ideas come first to your mind? What do you associate with Brazil, and where do you think these associations came from? How do popular images of Brazil produced for international consumption compare to the reality of social, political, economic, and cultural life in Brazil? This is a question we will begin to explore now, and return to at the end of the semester, after learning more about various aspects of contemporary Brazilian society.

#### **Week 1 Assignment (complete by 9/6, 8pm)**

1. Visit the website of Brazil’s official Ministry of Tourism:

<http://www.embratur.gov.br/site/en/home/index.php>

Browse through the entire website exploring all links and reading content that piques your interest.

2. Write discussion post and upload to class website. (Discussion Question is posted on class website. Instructions for writing posts and uploading them to class website handed out in class and available on class website).

#### **Week 2**

#### ***Sept. 14 & 16: Getting into College in Brazil***

If you had grown up in Brazil, what would your education have been like? Who graduates from high school in Brazil and who goes on to college? What is the process for getting into universities? What factors shape children’s chances for educational success in Brazil? How does this compare to the factors that shape chances for educational success in the United States?

Sept 14: In class screening of documentary: “Brazil in Black and White”

#### **Week 2 Assignment (complete by 9/13, 8pm)**

1. Read “Basic Education in Brazil: What’s wrong and how to fix it”

This article is included in your reading packet. Here is the link to the e-version:

[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ThinkingBrazil\\_25.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ThinkingBrazil_25.pdf)

This link is also posted on the class website.

2. Watch part of the documentary series “Time for School 3”. The video can be viewed by clicking on this link:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/time-for-school-series/full-episode-time-for-school-3/5558/>

Segments from 0-3:36min, and 15:30- 26:26 are required. The rest is optional.

3. Read “Racial Quotas and the Culture War in Brazilian Academia” by Stanley Bailey and Michelle Peria. *Sociology Compass* 4/8 (2010): 592-603.

4. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for Discussion Question).

### **Week 3**

#### **Sept. 21 & 23: The Myth of Racial Democracy**

For nearly a century, the idea that Brazil is a racial democracy has been central to Brazilian national identity. To paraphrase Brazil’s most famous anthropologist, Roberto da Matta, the notion that Brazilian society is racially democratic is a story that Brazilian society has long reveled in telling itself about itself. What does it mean to say a society is a “racial democracy”? Where did Brazil’s myth of racial democracy come from and how did it manage to endure for so long, despite glaring evidence to the contrary? What challenges to this myth have emerged in recent years? Has the myth of racial democracy been discredited once and for all, or will it likely persist into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

#### **Week 3 Assignment** (complete by 9/20, 8pm)

1. Read “The Myth of Racial Democracy” by Emilia Viotti da Costa (p.234-246 in *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories*).

2. Read ““Mapping the Ideological Terrain of Racism” Ch3 in *Racism in a Racial Democracy* by France Winddance Twine

3. Read “Talking about Brazil with Lilia Schwarcz”

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/aug/17/talking-about-brazil/>

4. Read “Off Runway, Brazilian Beauty Goes Beyond Blond”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/08/world/americas/08models.html>

5. Watch: “Finding Supermodels in Rural Brazil” (click on video on left column of online NYTimes article linked above. Or on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlUHx4h5zxw>

6. Write and upload discussion post (see class website for Discussion Question)

#### **\* \* \* Special Event: Friday, Sept 24 \* \* \***

On Friday, Sept 24, the UW Madison Brazil Initiative will sponsor a panel discussion on contemporary racial politics in Brazil by three scholars and activists who are current participants in this debate in Brazil. You are all invited and strongly encouraged to attend this event. I will provide more information about the speakers and the logistics in class.

#### **Week 4**

**Sept. 28 & 30: Poverty, Insecurity, and Social Invisibility**

**Sept 30: Class Visit to College Library: Research Tutorial**

**Sunday Sept. 26, 7pm: MOVIE NIGHT. Screening of Bus 174.**

#### **Week 4 assignment** (complete by 9/27)

1. Watch the feature-length documentary film “Bus 174”. You may watch this movie independently at the LSS Library or you can watch it with your FIG classmates on **MOVIE NIGHT, Sunday, Sept 26**.
2. Read: “Public Security, Private Interests, and Police Reform in Brazil” by Anthony W. Pereira” (Ch9 in Kingstone and Power, eds, *Democratic Brazil Revisted*)
3. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

#### **Week 5**

**Oct 5 & 7: Living Inequality: The View from Above**

#### **Week 5 Assignment** (complete by 10/4, 8pm)

1. Read “Fortified Enclaves: Building Up Walls and Creating a New Private Order” Ch7 in *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in São Paulo* by Teresa P.R. Caldeira
2. Visit three websites advertising secure living in Rio or São Paulo (links to be provided)
3. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

#### **Week 6**

**Oct 12 & 14: Living Inequality: The View from Below**

#### **Week 6 Assignment** (complete by 10/11, 8pm)

1. Read “Redemocratization Viewed from Below: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro, 1968-2006” by Janice E. Perlman (ch12 in Kingstone and Power, eds. *Democratic Brazil Revisted*)
2. Read “Growing up Black in Minas Gerais” by Carolina Maria de Jesus, and “My Life” by Maria das Dôres Gomes Batista (pp.359-364 and 327-339 in *The Brazil Reader*)

3. Read translation of newspaper article: “Mayor Orders Billboard Shacks Destroyed”, from *Correio da Cidadania* (1996) (p.441-446 in *The Brazil Reader*)
4. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 7**

#### **Oct 19 & 21: Rural Brazil: Insecurity as a way of life**

Oct. 19. Screening of *Vidas Secas* (selected segments)

#### **Week 7 Assignment (complete by 10/18, 8pm)**

1. Read *Barren Lives* by Graciliano Ramos
2. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 8**

#### **Oct 26 & 28: Combating Inequality: Some Surprising Success**

**Oct 26:** Guest Speaker: Professor Gay Seidman, UW Madison, Sociology

#### **Week 8 Assignment (complete by 10/25, 8pm)**

1. Read “Unexpected Success, Unanticipated Failures: Social Policy from Cardoso to Lula” by Marcus André Melo (ch 8 in *Democratic Brazil Revisited*)
2. Read “Brazil’s Pro-Poor Strategies: What South Africa Could Learn” by Gay Seidman. *Transformations*, July 2010.
3. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 9**

#### **Nov 2 & 4: Struggling to Survive in the Amazon**

**Movie Night: Thursday Nov. 4, 7pm (Screening of *Central Station*)**

#### **Week 9 Assignment (complete by 11/1, 8pm)**

1. Read “The Loneliest man in the world”  
<http://www.slate.com/id/2264478/>
2. Read “The Defenders of the Amazon” and “The Ecology of Justice” (pp.180-239 in *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon* by Susanna Hecht and Alexander Cockburn.

3. Look at two photos taken by Brazil's Indian Protection Agency in the early 1900s (link to photos on class website)
4. Watch footage from abandoned documentary about Chico Mendes (link on class website)
5. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 10**

#### **Nov 9 & 11: The Landless Peoples Movement (MST)**

Nov 9: Guest Speaker João Peschanski, UW Madison Ph.D. Candidate

#### **Week 10 Assignment (complete by 11/8, 8pm)**

1. Read translation of MST manifesto: "The Reality of the Brazilian Countryside" pp.264-67 in *The Brazil Reader*
2. Read "Cutting the Wire" (p.1-70)
3. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 11**

#### **Nov 16 & 18: Music and Nationalism: The Invention of Samba**

#### **Week 11 Assignment (complete by 11/15, 8pm)**

1. Watch the music video clips posted on the class website for this week.
2. Read "Samba of my native Land", "Nowhere at all", and "Conclusion" (pp.77-118) in *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* by Hermano Vianna.
3. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 12**

#### **Nov 23: Social Rituals**

**(No Class Nov 25: Thanksgiving!)**

This week we will explore social rituals as cultural artifacts that reveal the stories societies tell themselves about themselves.

#### **Week 12 Assignment (complete by 11/22, 8pm)**

1. Read "Carnivals, Military Parades and Processions" by Roberto Da Matta. (p.26-49 only) (Chapter 1. in *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*)

2. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 13**

#### ***Nov 30 & Dec 2: Carnival: Inverting social order***

In class: Video of Carnival 2000: “Brazil 500 Anos”

#### **Week 13 Assignment (complete by 11/29, 8pm)**

1. Watch Carnival footage on YouTube (links on class website)
2. Read Roberto da Matta. “The Many Levels of Carnival” and “Carnival in Rio and Mardi Gras in New Orleans: A Contrastive Study” (pp.116-136)
3. Optional additional reading: Da Matta’s famous essay: “Do you know who you’re talking to?!” (available on the course website)
4. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 14**

#### ***Dec 7 & 9: Brazilian Values, American Values: What are they and how do we know?***

#### **Week 14 Assignment (complete by 12/6, 8pm)**

1. Read “Core Values, Education, and Democracy: An Empirical Tour of DaMatta’s Brazil” by Alberto Carlos Almeida
2. Write and upload Discussion post (see class website for question)

### **Week 15:**

#### ***Dec 14: The Answers to Your Research Questions: Student Presentations***

#### **Week 15 Assignment**

1. Prepare your presentation of key findings from independent research (instructions posted on class website)
2. No Discussion Post this week!

***Dec 21: University Scheduled Final Exam Date: 12/21. 5:05-7:05pm. This is the deadline for turning in your final papers.***