Course Description: In this class we will examine a range of Latin American popular cultural forms: from dances such as tango and samba, to Carnival and other festivals, soccer, television and soap operas, sex and sexuality, and musical forms such as corrido, samba, and rap music. These everyday cultural productions are examined as a key site where Latin American national, racial, gender, and class identities are constructed, commodified, contested, and globally circulated.

Among the questions that we will examine are: how have anthropologists and other social scientists examined and thought about popular culture? Why do Latin Americans invest so much energy and passion in these cultural productions? What do they tell us about Latin American culture and society, and how can we evaluate them not only as symbols or signs of something else, but as important cultural products in their own right?

Course Objectives:

1. Examine Latin American popular culture as a way to learn about Latin American societies. Emphasis will be on race, gender and class identities, and how these factor into popular culture. The class will focus on four case studies: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Cuba.

2. Learn about how anthropologists analyze popular culture. What is unique about an anthropological analysis of popular culture?

3. By examining Latin American popular culture, we will also be able to turn a critical eye upon popular culture in our own society: how do people (in both Latin America and the U.S.) participate in popular culture? As passive spectators, consumers, active producers, or some mixture of all of these? How is popular culture connected to dominant ideas about national identity, and to national and global economic systems?

4. Increase students’ research and scholarly skills through preparation and presentation of information related to the subject.
**Required books:**


**Additional readings:** The additional readings listed on the course schedule below are available on reserve at TCU’s library, in either electronic or physical format. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have copies of the books and additional readings in time to be able to complete the assigned readings on schedule.

**Course requirements:** The requirements for this class include: attendance and participation in class discussions; two essay exams, one final research paper. As part of the participation component, students will be required to give one presentation over the course of the semester. Regular attendance and participation are also required, and students must come to class having completed the assigned readings. Over the course of the semester I may also require occasional reflection papers on the readings. The essay exams will be take home essays: students will be given a choice of questions and will be required to hand in a 4-6 page essay on the assigned due date (see below). The final research paper will be a 10-12 page paper on a topic agreed upon in advance. All assignments must be completed on the dates specified below, and late assignments will not be accepted.

**Grading:**

Participation: 20%
Essay 1: 25%
Essay 2: 25%
Final research paper: 30%

**Due dates:**

FIRST ESSAY DUE: Monday October 4 in class (by 11:00 am)
SECOND ESSAY DUE: Monday November 15 in class (by 11:00 am)
Research paper proposals due: Friday December 3.
FINAL PAPER DUE: Wednesday December 15 by 5 pm.

**Attendance Policy:** The university attendance policy states that regular and punctual class attendance is essential and that no assigned work is excused because of absence, no matter what the cause. Your participation grade is contingent upon your presence in the class: if you’re not in
class and prepared to discuss the material, you can’t be participating. If there are additional absences I may invoke the university attendance policy.

**Deadlines and due dates:** Deadlines for all assignments are absolute unless you have an official excuse from the Dean or University. Otherwise, there will be no make-up exams or extensions. Written assignments must be turned in by the due date, or will result in a grade of zero.

**Contacting me:** If you are having problems with the class, or simply want to discuss the class material, please do not hesitate to come speak to me. My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 10-12, in 104 Sociology. During those times, simply come by my office. I am also available during other times, but you should email me to make sure that I’ll be in my office.

**Plagarism and cheating:** It is your responsibility to know and understand the TCU policy on cheating and plagiarism. For specific rules, refer to TCU’s Code of Student Conduct, which is available at: [www.campuslife.tcu.edu/Code%20of%20Conduct.htm](http://www.campuslife.tcu.edu/Code%20of%20Conduct.htm). If you plagiarize or cheat, you will receive an F for this course. If you plagiarize, your case will be referred to the Dean of Addran College for further action. Penalties may include expulsion.

**Criteria for grading:**

**Presentations:** Successful class presentations must do three things: 1) Provide the class with an overview of the two or three most important points that came up in the reading for that week. 2) Provide a critique of the issues for that week. What don’t you agree with? What seems especially provocative? 3) Last, presentations must provide suggestions for further debate. What issues require more discussion and debate?

**Criteria for essays:** Successful short essays must present a reasoned and well-structured argument addressing the question, building upon the readings and class discussions and referring to them in appropriate detail, and presenting an original critical argument. It is not necessary to do any additional reading (beyond what is required) for the essays. But it is essential to discuss the readings in detail, critique them as appropriate, and not simply review the readings but present your own well-reasoned argument.

**Final research paper:** Papers must present an argument and analysis: a simple description of some form of popular culture in Latin America is not enough. They must be 10-12 pages of text, double space, 12 point. Papers must be based upon the students’ own research: 5-6 references is regarded as minimal. Appropriate references include, but are not limited to scholarly books and articles. Generally, textbooks, web sites and encyclopedia are not appropriate. However, many scholarly journals that have on-line versions are appropriate. The essays must be thoroughly edited and proofread: I will subtract points for typos, grammatical errors and sloppy writing.

**GENERAL POLICIES:**
Class Attendance: The University's policy on class attendance is clear and straightforward: Students are expected to attend classes to take exams on schedule except under extraordinary circumstances. Students are expected to discuss all absences with faculty.

The university absence policy is that regular and punctual class attendance is essential and no assigned work is excused because of absence, no matter what the cause. Records of class attendance are kept by faculty. When an accumulation of absences reaches the point of endangering a student's academic status, the faculty member should report this situation to the Campus Life Office. An instructor should not assume that continued absence from class indicates an official withdrawal until notified by the Registrar. When a student is absent to represent the university (as in athletics, chorus, band, national or state meetings of organizations represented at TCU), then official university absence may be granted by the Campus Life Office. Faculty are required to permit students to make up work missed because of official university absences. Serious illness or family emergencies may be verified by the Campus Life Office but are not considered official absences. Illnesses that will be verified are those involving hospitalization, or catastrophic accidents or illness. When a serious illness or emergency has been verified, each instructor should assist the student to make up any missed work. Time lost through such absences should not prejudice class standing. Faculty members should specify the appropriate time frame for making up missed work. Students who miss an instructional experience are expected to meet with faculty to discuss their situation as soon as possible. Faculty may permit a student to make up missed work or assess a penalty for class absence.

Statement on Disability Services at TCU: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Accommodations are not retroactive: therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-7486.

I will provide reasonable accommodations for each eligible student who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, (b) has a record or history of such an impairment, or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment. The student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator of Academic Services for Students with Disabilities. If this information is not supplied to me before exams or work has been accomplished, student work and related grades will stand. If a student fails to provide documentation and/or does not provide verification and information regarding appropriate accommodations, accommodations will not be made. If the documentation is provided too late for accommodations to be made students will NOT be given an opportunity to re-do course related work or exams.

Academic Misconduct (Sec. 3.4 from the Student Handbook) – Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:
• Cheating: Copying from another student’s test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings; Using, during any academic exercise, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test; Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or laboratory without permission; Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release; Substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself;

• Plagiarism: The appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another’s work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one’s own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another’s work without giving credit therefore.

• Collusion: The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.

Communication Courtesy Code: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all classroom discussions, email messages, threaded discussions and any other forms of communication in or outside the classroom that are related to this course.

Email Notification: Only the official TCU student email address will be used for all course notification. It is your responsibility to check your TCU email on a regular basis.
COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1: INTRO

Week 1: Intro to Class

Wednesday August 25: introduction


Week 2: What’s Popular Culture?  How can we study it?  Why should we?


PART 2: BRAZIL

Week 3: Brazil: background and history

Mon Sept 6 (Holiday – Labor Day)


Week 4: Carnival


Wed Sept 15: Guillermoprieto (cont.)
Fri Sept 17: Guillermoprieto (cont.)

**Week 5: Samba, Capoeira and Afro-Brazilian identity**


Fri Sept 24: discussion

**Week 6: Sex and love: Pleasures and Passions**


Fri October 1: discussion

**FIRST ESSAY DUE: Monday October 4 in class (by 11:00 am)**

**PART III: MEXICO**

**Week 7: Mexico: History and Background**


Fri Oct 8: (no class)

**Week 8: Narcocorridos: Ballads of the drug trade**

Wed Oct 13: Wald (cont)

Fri Oct 15: discussion

**Week 9: Masked Superheros, Cartoons and Cantinflas**


Fri Oct 22: discussion

**PART IV: ARGENTINA**

**Week 10: Argentina: History and Background**


Fri Oct 29: discussion

**Week 11: Tango and Memories of Violence**


Wed Nov 3: Taylor (cont).

Fri Nov 5: discussion

**Week 12: Football (soccer) and Masculinity**


SECOND ESSAY DUE: Monday November 15 in class (by 11:00 am)

PART V: CUBA and the Caribbean

Week 13: Cuba: background and history


Fri Nov 19: (no class American Anthro Association meetings)

Week 14: Son, salsa and the Buena Vista Club


Fri Nov 26 (Holiday - Thanksgiving)

PART VI: GLOBALIZATION, technology and consumer desires

Week 15: Global Hybrids: Mangue Beat, Latin Alt-rock, Cubano-rap


Fri Dec 3: discussion

**Friday December 3: Research Paper proposals due.**

**Week 16: Television and desire**


Wed December 8: (last day of class): class wrap-up

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER:** due Wednesday December 15 by 5 pm.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

This syllabus is subject to change: this syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. However, I reserve the right to change the syllabus if, as we go through the semester, I determine that such changes are necessary in order to enhance class learning opportunities. Such changes will be communicated clearly, are not unusual, and should be expected.