REL. 3381/LAS. 3930: RELIGIONS OF LATIN AMERICA
MONDAYS: 7TH PERIOD FLINT 121 &
WEDNESDAYS: 7th and 8TH PERIODS, 015 MATHERLY
FALL 2012

Instructor: Kerri Blumenthal
Office: Anderson 017 Anderson Hall    E-mail: blumentk@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Monday 3pm-5pm, Wednesday 4pm-5pm & by appointment

DESCRIPTION

This course provides a survey of the main religious traditions in Latin America, namely, indigenous religions, Catholicism in its various forms, Protestantism, and African-based religions, including Brazilian Candomblé, Cuban Santería, and Haitian Vodou. Through a comparative study of these religious traditions, the course seeks not only to identify commonalities, but to highlight theological, ritual, and symbolic specificities. Special emphasis will be placed on the issue of syncretism, or hybridity, that is, the on-going cross-fertilization among various religions, which has given the Latin American religious arena its particular flavor. We will also focus on the social and political roles religion plays in contemporary Latin America, exploring the ways in which those at the margins of society (i.e., the poor, women, Latin Americans of African descent, and indigenous people) use religious beliefs, practices, and institutions to make sense of rapid social change and globalization.

OBJECTIVES

1. To familiarize students with the diversity and complexity of religious expressions in Latin America.

2. To teach students to approach critically studies on the relationship among religious, cultural, and societal dynamics.

3. To help students enhance their writing and expository skills.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Two Cumulative Take-Home Exams (Midterm and Final): For each exam you will respond to your choice of two to three essay questions that address issues raised in the readings, class discussions, and lectures for each of the course sections. A list of potential essay questions will be distributed and reviewed in advance of each exam. Original, analytical, and well-developed (and edited!) essays will receive the highest marks. The midterm exam is worth 30% of your final grade, the final exam 35%.

2. Quizzes: There will be 5 quizzes throughout the semester (on 09/10, 01/25, 02/15, 03/08, and 03/31) representing 25% of the final grade. Quizzes will include definitions of key terms and identification of important figures and concepts. The instructor reserves the right to give additional quizzes on the required readings at any time. Quizzes will serve to encourage students to engage with the readings.
3. **Participation:** You are expected to attend class and participate actively in class discussion. Active and informed participation demands that students read the material carefully before coming to class. Participation and attendance represent 10% of your final grade.

**POLICIES**

1. **Plagiarism or cheating:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a zero tolerance policy. **Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course.** In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm) & [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm) for more information on UF policies.

2. **Incompletes are strongly discouraged** and will be given only when students who have finished most of the assignments satisfactorily cannot complete the final requirements due to unforeseen events. If this is the case, students must arrange for the incomplete before the end of the semester.

3. **Make-up quizzes and exams** will only be given to students who can present proper, legitimate written documentation (in the form of a medical excuse or a funeral notice, for example) to justify their inability to take a quiz or an exam during the scheduled time.

4. **Late assignments** will be marked down half a grade (from A to A-, for example) for each day they are late, unless the student can present proper, legitimate written documentation to justify the tardiness. Late assignments will not be accepted a week after the deadline. In that case, the student will receive a 0 (zero) in the assignment.

5. **Grading Scale:** A: 100-95; A-: 94-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E: <60. Please keep in mind that a C- will not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule or College Basic Distribution credit.

6. Given that religion is often a very personal and potentially contentious topic, I expect students to treat each other with civility and respect. I hope that our debates will be lively and that people will feel free to express their opinions and disagree with each other. However, these opinions and disagreements must be presented in a manner that is appropriate to an academic setting.

7. **Students engaging in any sort of disruptive behavior,** including passing notes, reading a newspaper, playing computers games, checking their e-mail, texting, tweeting, facebooking, or chatting while lectures and class discussions are taking place, will be asked to leave the classroom. **They will be counted as absent for that particular day.** Please turn your phone off and put it away during class.

8. **Please make sure to arrive to class on time.** I dislike being interrupted once class has started and do notice habitually late students.
9. **Students with Disabilities.** Students requesting classroom accommodation or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then give this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation or special consideration.

10. **NB:** I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. You have three “passes” that you may use at your own discretion throughout the semester, should you need to miss class. An excess of three absences throughout the semester will result in the deduction of your participation score and, where necessary, your final grade. Exceptions will be made only in extenuating circumstances and with official documentation.

**READINGS**

Students are responsible for **ALL** of the following readings:

**Books:**


**Additional Articles (available on Sakai)**


**SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**Wed. 08/22:** Introduction to the Course  
No Readings

**Mon. 08/27:** Understanding Religion and Society in Latin America  

**Part I: Indigenous Religions**

**Wed. 08/29:** Mayas and Aztecs I  

**Mon. 09/03:** LABOR DAY NO CLASS  
Mayas and Aztecs II  

**Wed. 09/05:** Mayas and Aztecs III  
Film: The Blood of the Kings

**Mon. 09/10:** Andean Indigenous Religion  
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, pp. 27-29 and 44-49  
QUIZ #1

**Wed. 09/12:** Amazonian Indigenous Religions:  
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, pp. 29-32 and 49-54  
Wright, “Guardians of the Cosmos.”
Part II: Colonial Encounters and the Rise of Traditional Popular Catholicism

Mon. 09/17: The Conquest
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, Latin American Religions, pp. 55-72.

Wed. 09/19: Religious Hybridity: Domination, Accommodation, and Resistance

Mon. 09/24: Domination, Accommodation, and Resistance Cont’d
Read: De Theije pp. 189-204, Favrot-Peterson pp. 39-47

Wed. 09/26: Reclaiming the Past: Contemporary Hybridities and The Chicano Renaissance
Read: Espinosa pp. 151-171
QUIZ #2

Part III: Religions of the African Diaspora

Mon. 10/01: The African Diaspora

Wed. 10/03: Brazilian African Based Religions: Candomblé and Umbanda
Read: Murphy, Working the Spirit, pp. 44-80
Film: Bahia: Africa in the Americas

Mon. 10/08: Candomblé and Umbanda II
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, Latin American Religions, pp. 112-119, Engler, “Umbanda and Africa”

Wed. 10/10: Regla Lucumí (Santería)
Read: Murphy, Working the Spirit, pp. 81-104 and Peterson and Vasquez, Latin American Religions, pp. 119-123
Video: The King Does Not Lie

Mon. 10/15: Regla Lucumí (Santería) II
Read: Murphy, Working the Spirit, pp. 104-113; Peterson and Vasquez, Latin American Religions, pp. 123-126; Murphy, “Ifá”

Wed. 10/17: Haitian Vodou
Read: Murphy, Working the Spirit, pp. 10-43
Film: Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti

***Midterm Exams Distributed***
Mon. 10/22: African Diaspora Wrap-Up; Midterm Exam Review
QUIZ # 3

Part IV: Religion in Latin American Post-Independence

Wed. 10/24: Transformations in Church-State Relations
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, pp. 127-148 and 156-158

Mon. 10/29: Millenarian Movements
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, pp. 148-155 and
Diacon, “The Search for Meaning in a Historical Context.”

Part V: Progressive Popular Catholicism: Liberation Theology and Base Christian Communities

Wed. 10/31: The Rise of Progressive Catholicism: Vatican II and Medellín
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, pp. 202-218
***Midterm Exams Due***

Mon. 11/05: Liberation Theology and CEB’s

Wed. 11/07: Romero, Eschatology, and Liberation Theology
Read: Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*, pp. 43-117 and Gutierrez, Chapters I and II of *God of Life*
QUIZ # 4

Mon. 11/12: Veteran’s Day – No Class

Wed. 11/14: Progressive Catholicism, Politics, and Social Change
“Religions Narratives and Political Protest”

Part VI: Protestantism in Latin America

Mon. 11/19: From Mainline Churches to Pentecostalism
Read: Peterson and Vasquez, *Religions of Latin America*, pp. 159-191 and
Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, pp. 3-48, Chesnut pp. 3-38
Wed. 11/21: Thanksgiving Break

Mon. 11/26: Pentecostalism and Gender

Wed. 11/28: Pentecostalism and Gender Cont’d
Read: Chesnut, “Pragmatic Consumers and Practical Products”
Film: Pentecostal Exorcism – IURD
QUIZ #5

Mon. 12/03: Pentecostalism and Politics
***Final Exams Distributed***

Wed. 12/05: The Latin American Religious Field: Present and Future

***THIRD EXAM (TAKE-HOME) DUE BY TUESDAY 12/14 10:00 AM***

BRING A HARD COPY OF YOUR EXAM AND SUBMIT IT TO MY MAILBOX IN THE RELIGION DEPARTMENT OFFICE AT 107 ANDERSON HALL