



*Presencia de América Latina (Presence of Latin America)* by Jorge González Camarena

## REL 3938/LAS 3930: RELIGIONS OF LATIN AMERICA

Instructor: Prea Persaud

Time: MWF, 1:55 – 2:45 pm, TUR 2328

Office Hours: 12 – 1:45 MWF and by appointment, Anderson Hall 17

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

For this survey course, we will be looking at the religious traditions most associated with Latin America (and the Caribbean), including Catholicism, Protestantism, and Umbanda, as well as the less studied traditions of Islam and Hinduism. This is an interdisciplinary course that seeks to use a variety of resources including primary sources, films, and novels. We will also pay attention to issues of gender, race, and class. Among the questions asked in this course are: (1) How can we understand the practice of human sacrifice among some indigenous groups? (2) How did conquest change the religious landscape of Latin America? (3) Why has Pentecostalism become so popular? (3) How did human labor routes, including the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the indenture labor system, introduce new religious movements? No prerequisites or prior knowledge of Latin America is required.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will endeavor to help students:

1. think critically about how the history of Latin America and the Caribbean informs and transforms religious traditions
2. develop an understanding of the religious traditions of the Latin America as dynamic and evolving
3. appreciate the ways in which literature, film, and music can contribute to a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of a religious tradition
4. think more deeply and critically about religious experience and its modes of expression and forms of interpretation
5. improve their abilities to read actively, to think analytically, and to write compellingly<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Objectives 3-4 adapted from Courtney O'Dell-Chaib's *Introduction to the Study of Religion* syllabus

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### (1) Attendance and Participation (15% or 15/100 pts)

This class is a discussion course *not* a lecture class which means a substantial portion of the student's final grade depends on their attendance AND participation. Students are **allowed (2) absences** after which the student's grades will be affected, unless there is a medical issue (documentation required) or an emergency. For full participation points, students need to contribute to the class discussion. If a student is particularly averse to speaking in class, they should come speak to me and an alternative method of participation can be decided on, such as talking to me before class about the readings or having me address a particular question to the student in class, etc.

### (2) Readings

Students should purchase the following books:

Peterson, Anna and Manuel Vasquez. *Latin America Religions: Histories and Documents*.  
Amar Chitra Katha. *Valmiki's Ramayana*.

These books are available at the bookstore, but students are encouraged to purchase them online as they are often cheaper. The rest of the readings will be available on the course website. Students are expected to complete all the assigned readings for that day **before** class and they should **bring all of the assigned readings for the day to class**.

**Technology note:** I do allow students to access the readings on their computers and/or tablets, but if a student is found to be engaging in other activities (checking email, facebook, gaming, etc.) that student will no longer be allowed to use such devices (unless it is for a medical reason) and participation points will be docked.

### (3) Two Cumulative Take Home Exams – Midterm and Final (60% or 60/100 pts)

Each exam will consist of three essay questions that address the issues raised in the readings, class discussions, and lectures. Students will answer two out of the three questions. Original, analytical, and well-developed essays will receive the highest marks. 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 schedule time. Late exams will not be accepted.

### (4) Quizzes (25% or 25/100 pts)

There will be 5 quizzes throughout the semester. Three of these quizzes will be announced beforehand, two will not. 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 material and to come to class prepared. 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 schedule time.

### GRADING

Attendance and Participation	15 pts (15%)
Midterm	30 pts (30%)
Final	30 pts (30%)
<u>Quizzes (5 pts each X 5)</u>	<u>25 pts (25%)</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 pts (100%)</b>

GRADE	POINTS
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D/PASS	65-69
F/FAIL	64 and below

Grade A is reserved for work that is exceptional in quality, for work showing keen insight, understanding and initiative. (Note: No A+ grades).

Grade B is for work that is consistently superior, for work showing interest, effort and/or originality.

Grade C is a respectable grade that reflects consistent daily preparation and completion in a satisfactory manner of all work required in the course. A minimum "C" average (2.00) is required for graduation.

Grade D is below the average necessary for meeting graduation requirements and ordinarily is not accepted for transfer by other institutions. A grade of a "D-" is the lowest passing grade.

Grade F is failing.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to complete their own work and include necessary citations. There is no particular citation style that is required, but students should be consistent. Any assignment turned in that proves not to be the work of the student and is not properly cited will receive a zero. Please visit <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> for additional details and information on citations.

### DISABILITY STATEMENT

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> to make an appointment to discuss your needs or request accommodations. Once the appropriate forms have been filled out, I will happily accommodate any specific student needs.

### RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

Please visit <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#religious> for information on UF's policy on religious observances. Please note that students are required to inform instructors of any religious observances in order for it to be excused and students are responsible for any work that will be missed.

## INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE STATEMENT<sup>2</sup>

It is expected in this course that all participants use inclusive language in all verbal and written assignments especially with respect to humanity, cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender/sex, sexual identities, social class, age, and dis/abilities. We are all a part of creating a space for dialogue and engagement where the importance of differences in relationships are engaged in a substantive manner. The goal of this class is to think carefully about the words we use and the images, metaphors, similes, and linguistic ideas that we are invoking. In keeping the vision of thinking thoughtfully about language, here are some resources for further reflection on the importance of inclusive language.

### Related Links:

Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language, from the website of National Council of Teachers of English.

<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang>

### Tips for Using Inclusive, Gender Neutral Language:

<http://www.mu.edu/wac/neutral/NeutralInclusiveLanguage.shtml>

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<sup>2</sup> This section is taken from Adam Brett's proposed world religion syllabus  
[https://www.academia.edu/4230971/Proposed\\_Syllabus\\_Religion\\_101\\_Religions\\_of\\_the\\_World](https://www.academia.edu/4230971/Proposed_Syllabus_Religion_101_Religions_of_the_World)

WEEK 1: Introduction

- M (Aug 22): Introduction to the course  
W (Aug 24): Peterson and Vasquez (PV): 1-19.  
Lecture: Studying Religion in LA  
F (Aug 26): PV: 20 – 27  
Lecture: Introducing Indigenous Traditions

WEEK 2: Indigenous Traditions

- M (Aug 29): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*: Chapter 1  
W (Aug 31): PV: 33-54  
F (Sep 2): Read, *Time and Sacrifice*: 2-45 (skim 18 – 29)  
Watch in class: The Blood of Kings

WEEK 3: Indigenous Traditions

- M (Sep 5): **Labor Day. No Class.**  
W (Sep 7): Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches*: xvii – xxxi, 3 – 20, 81 - 108  
F (Sep 9): Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches*: 109 – 124 (QUIZ 1)  
Lecture: The Beginning of Colonialism; Quetzalcoatl and Cortez

WEEK 4: Colonial Contacts

- M (Sep 12): PV: 55 – 88  
W (Sep 14): Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica*: Chapter 5  
F (Sep 16): Mysofski, “Imagining Cannibals”: 142 – 155

WEEK 5: Colonial Contacts

- M (Sep 19): Burns, *Colonial Habits*: 15 – 40, Dean, *Inka Bodies*: 1 – 22 (Intro + Chapter 1),  
W (Sep 21): Favort-Peterson, “The Virgin of Guadalupe”: 39 – 47,  
De Theije, “Brotherhoods”: 189 – 204  
F (Sep 23): PV: 127 – 155  
Lecture: Millenarianism

WEEK 6: Millenarianism

- M (Sep 26): Levine, “Mud-Hut Jerusalem”: 525 - 572  
W (Sep 28): Diacon “The Search for Meaning in a Historical Context”: 47 - 57  
F (Sep 30): PV: 159 – 170  
Lecture: Pentecostalism

WEEK 7: Pentecostalism

- M (Oct 3): Stoll, *Is Latin America Turning Protestant*: 1 – 24,  
Chestnut, “Pragmatic Consumers and Practical Products”: 20 – 31  
W (Oct 5): Smilde, *Reason to Believe*: 3 - 15

F (Oct 7): Smilde, *Reason to Believe*: 184 – 207

WEEK 8: Pentecostalism

M (Oct 10): Brusco, “Reformation of Machismo”: 143 – 158, Gill, “Like a Veil”: 708 - 721

W (Oct 12): Chestnut, “Exorcising the Demons”: 165 - 182

**Take Home Midterm**

F (Oct 14): **Homecoming – No Class**

WEEK 9: Catholicism

M (Oct 17): PV: 202 – 238

Lecture: Liberation Theology, CEBs

W (Oct 19): Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism*: 1 - 30

**Midterm Due**

F (Oct 21): Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion*: 1 – 19.

WEEK 10: Catholicism

M (Oct 24): Pena, *Performing Piety*: 1 – 16, 55 - 86

W (Oct 26): Vasquez, “Upwards, Never Down”: 188 - 209

F (Oct 28): Peterson, “The Only Way I Can Walk”: 25 - 44

Lecture: African-Derived Traditions

WEEK 11: African-Derived Traditions

M (Oct 31): PV: 89 - 105

W (Nov 2): Brown, “Afro – Caribbean Spirituality”: 1 - 24

F (Nov 4): Engler, “Umbanda and Africa”: 13 - 27

WEEK 12: African Derived Traditions

M (Nov 7): PV: 112 - 126

W (Nov 9): Burdick, “Gossip and Secrecy”: 153 - 170

F (Nov 11): **Veterans Day. No Class.**

WEEK 13: Islam

M (Nov 14): Aisha Khan, “Approach Islam, Comparatively Speaking”: 23 - 48

Lecture: Ken Chitwood

W (Nov 16): Ali, “Bahamian and Brazilian Muslimahs”: 186 - 216

F (Nov 18): Korom, *Hosay Trinidad*: 1 – 15.

Lecture: Indentured Labor Trade

WEEK 14: Break

M (Nov 21): **Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

W (Nov 23): **Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

F (Nov 25): **Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

WEEK 15: Hinduism

M (Nov 28): Wahab, “West Indian Orientalism”: 283 – 311,  
Younger, “Trinidad: Ethnic Religion”: 95 - 124

W (Nov 30): Amar Chitra, *The Ramayana*: all.  
Singh, “Ramayana”: 201 - 223

F (Dec 2): Tsuji, “They Don’t Do Culture”: 59 - 81

WEEK 16: Conclusions

M (Dec 5): PV: 239-285

W (Dec 7): **Take Home Final**