

# Latin American History of Sexuality

History 17102

Gender 20600

M-W 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm.

Judd Hall, room 111.

Instructor: Pablo Ben

paben@uchicago.edu

## Course Goals:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Analyze the theoretical, methodological and epistemological differences between essentialist and constructivist approaches to the history of sexuality.
- 2) Understand the diversity of sexual cultures within the history and geography of Latin America comparing the peculiarities of each case.
- 3) Explain how different scholars consider the social construction of sexual identities and practices and their relationship to economics, culture, kinship and social structure.
- 4) Discuss the relationship between sexuality and political power, taking as examples the relationship between sexual norms and colonial power, social control and the nation-building process, machismo and modern revolutionary states, etc.
- 5) Describe and compare sexual identities and practices (sodomy, bigamy, sexual inversion, female prostitution, homosexuality, transvestites, etc.) in different social and cultural settings.

## Evaluation:

This course will encourage students to develop a critical analysis through a comparison of the texts. In order to facilitate that goal, the exams will be take-home assignments. Grades will be based on the following percentages:

Mid-term exam: 30%

Final exam or Research paper: 50%

Class participation: 10%

Questions/comments: 10%

Class participation involves the active and critical engagement in the debates about the assigned texts. Students should be prepared to discuss the main topics concerning those readings. The course includes the projection of a group of recent movies depicting sexual culture in Latin America, and students should

attend at least three of them. On Mondays and Wednesdays before 10:00 am, students must send questions/comments about the texts. For this assignment you can:

1. express your doubts about the topics and the perspective(s) that the author considers,
2. identify paradoxes or contradictions in the analysis,
3. briefly compare other descriptions of the same and different phenomena,
4. criticize the text from an alternative theoretical approach, yours or another authors,
5. suggest topics or themes that you would like to debate in the class.

You do not need to include all these features, but only one or some of them. These questions/comments are meant to encourage class discussion and to prepare the students to develop the kind of analysis that they will need for the exams and/or the research paper. The length of these assignments will be between 5 and 15 lines. If you fail to send these e-mails more than three times it will affect your grade.

Research paper (optional): Students can opt to write a research paper instead of the final exam. I encourage those who are interested in this option to talk to me at an earlier stage of the quarter to discuss the topic and its possibilities. The research paper requires the critical analysis of primary sources in order to explore a topic in the history of sexuality in Latin America. Considering that most of the sources were written in Spanish or Portuguese, those students who are interested in Latin American cultures and languages could take advantage of this opportunity. This optional assignment should turn to the theoretical approaches discussed in the course bibliography and establish comparisons with other cultures and historical moments within Latin America.

### **Course policies:**

Class attendance is a fundamental component in the process of learning. More than two absences will lower your grade. If for any reason, the student compiles four absences, that student may be asked to withdraw from the course. If you have to miss classes due to an illness, please make sure to bring a doctor's note. Please let me know in advance if there is any other reason why you cannot attend a class. You will still be expected to complete your assignments (questions/comments, mid-term, final exam) on time. If you have any problems doing so, please contact me to explain your situation at least two days before the due date; otherwise, late assignments could lower your grades. Students are also expected to be on time and should not leave class early without prior notification.

**Warning:** presentation of the words or ideas of another as one's own is plagiarism and constitutes a serious offense.

### **Bibliography**

#### **1st week**

Monday 3rd January:  
General introduction to the course.

Wednesday 5th January:  
Native American Sexualities and the Conquest

Gutierrez, Ramón, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Read Introduction and Part I.

## **2nd Week**

Monday 10th January:  
FILM: *Yo, la peor de todas / I, the worst of all*  
Director: Maria Luisa Bemberg.

Sigal, Pete, *From Moon Goddesses to Virgins: The Colonization of Yucatecan Maya Sexual Desire* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). SELECT CHAPTERS

Wednesday 12th January:  
Sodomy and Bigamy in Colonial Society

Garza Carvajal, Federico, "Vir: An Emasculation of the 'Perfect Sodomy' or Perceptions of 'Manliness' in the Harbours of Andalusia and Colonial Mexico City, 1560-1699," Prepared for delivery at the 1998 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, The Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, September 24-26, 1998.

Stavig, Ward, "Political 'Abomination' and Private Reservation: The Nefarious Sin, Homosexuality, and Cultural Values in Colonial Peru," Sigal, Pete (ed.) *Infamous Desire: Male Homosexuality in Colonial Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

## **3rd Week**

Monday 17th January:  
FILM: *Antes que anochezca / Before Night Falls*  
Director: Julian Schnabel

Sigal, Pete, "Introduction: (Homo)Sexual Desire and Masculine Power in Colonial Latin America: Notes toward an Integrated Analysis," in: Sigal, Pete (ed.), op. cit.

Gruzinski, Serge, "The Ashes of Desire: Homosexuality in Mid-Seventeenth-Century New Spain," in: Sigal, Pete, op. cit.

Boyer, Richard E., *Lives of the bigamists: marriage, family and community in colonial Mexico*(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Read Chapter 1., "Bigamy and the inquisition."

Wednesday 19th January:

Nation-Building and the emergence of male homosexuality

Brazil

Beattie, Peter, "Conflicting Penile Codes: Modern Masculinity and Sodomy in the Brazilian Military, 1860-1916," in: Guy, Donna and Balderston, Daniel (eds.), *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

Mexico

Irwin, Robert McKee, "The Famous 41: The Scandalous Birth of Modern Mexican Homosexuality," in: *GLQ, A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2000, Vol. 6 Issue 3, p353, 24p

#### **4th Week**

Monday 24th January:

FILM: *Madame Satã*

Director: Karim Aïnouz

Brazil

Green, James, *Beyond carnival: male homosexuality in twentieth-century Brazil* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 1-146.

Wednesday 26th January:

Mexico

Buffington, Rob. "Los Jotos: Contested Visions of Homosexuality in Modern Mexico." In Balderston and Guy, *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, 118-132.

Nesvig, Martin, "The Lure of the Perverse: Moral Negotiation of Pederasty in Porfirian Mexico," *Mexican Studies*, 16 (2000).

#### **5th Week**

Monday 31st January:

Argentina

Salessi, Jorge, "The Argentine Dissemination of Homosexuality, 1890-1914," in: Bergmann, Emilie L. and Smith, Paul Julian (eds.), *Entiendes?: queer readings, Hispanic writings*(Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

Latin America

Nesvig, Martin, "The Complicated Terrain of Latin American Homosexuality," in: *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 3-4, Special Issue: Gender and Sexuality in Latin America. (Aug. – Nov., 2001), pp. 689-729.

Wednesday 2nd February:

Prostitution

Argentina

Guy, Donna, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires: prostitution, family and nation in Argentina*(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). Read Introduction and chapter 1.

#### **6th Week**

Monday 7th February:

FILM: La virgen de los sicarios / Our Lady of the Assassins

Director: Barbet Schroeder

Guy, Donna, op. cit., chapter 2, 3, 4, 6 and conclusion.

Wednesday 9th February:

Brazil

Caulfield, Sueann. "The Birth of Manguê: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Prostitution in Rio de Janeiro." In Balderston and Guy, *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, 86-100

Mexico

French, William, "Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work and the Family in Porfirian Mexico," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 72, No. 4. (Nov., 1992), pp. 529-553.

### **7th Week**

Monday 14th February:

FILM: Fresa y Chocolate / Strawberry and Chocolate

Director: Tomas Gutiérrez and Juan Carlos Tabio.

Bliss, Katherine, *Compromised positions: prostitution, public health, and gender politics in revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

Wednesday 16th February:

New Sexual and Gender Subjects in Latin America

Kulick, Don, *Travesti : sex, gender, and culture among Brazilian transgendered prostitutes*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Read chapter 1.

### **8th Week**

Monday 21st February:

FILM: Plata quemada / Burnt Money

Director: Marcelo Piñeyro

Kulick, Don, op. cit., chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Wednesday 23rd February:

Prieur, Annick, *Mema's house, Mexico City: on transvestites, queens and machos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Read Introduction: The First Night

### **9th Week**

Monday 28th February:

FILM: El lugar sin límites / Place without limits

Director: Arturo Ripstein

Prieur, Annick, op. cit., chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Wednesday 2nd March:

Lancaster, Roger, *Life is Hard: Machismo, Danger and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). SELECTION

10th Week

Monday 7th March:

Lancaster, Roger, op. cit., SELECTION

Wednesday 9th March:

Discussion class. Conclusions of the course. Doubts about the exam or research paper.

---

If you have appropriate syllabi, please contact CLGH chair Karen Krahulik at [Karen\\_Krahulik@brown.edu](mailto:Karen_Krahulik@brown.edu).