

Course Description

This seminar will introduce students to key figures and texts addressing the intersections between ethics, social and political power and cultural production in twentieth and twenty-first century Latin America. The course will reconstruct the history of philosophical and ethical discourse in Latin America as seen in the work of liberation theologians, political philosophers and pedagogues. The writings of Paulo Freire, Enrique Dussel, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Ernesto Laclau and Roberto Unger are among the key works examined in this seminar. Students will study the specific contextual conditions that influenced the evolution and development of these philosophical and political discourses, exploring the current relevance of these thinkers today. In addition, students will reflect on the theme of Latin America’s changing identity through cultural production, urban development, memory politics and the birth of new academic fields (such as Subaltern Studies and cultural studies). The seminar will emphasize the ongoing project of identifying the adoptions of universal philosophical and political discourses and their adaptation to
the specific context of Latin American realities. Seminar discussion and written analysis will culminate in a critical reassessment of official historiographies and narratives of Latin American history, encouraging students to rethink and reinvent their own understanding of Latin America’s past and future.

**Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to identify key concepts and ideas present in some key philosophical, political and cultural discourses in Latin America. Close reading of the assigned texts will train students to think critically and to understand the central arguments in each text.
2. Students will learn to summarize the central arguments in each of the week’s readings. The selected texts and authors are a challenging opportunity for students to dissect the central aspects in each reading. Students will submit a weekly response providing a 1-2 page summary of the author’s argument. Each student will choose a key passage and show how the passage connects to the central argument in the reading and to the key ideas in the assigned text.
3. Students will establish insightful and critical connections between ethics and social empowerment as recurrent questions in the history of Latin America.
4. Students will produce two essays: a mid-term essay critically interpreting one of the texts from sessions I-VII and a final essay on an original research topic related to one of the seminar’s themes. The written projects will allow students to develop a lucid discussion that reflects their own understanding of the seminar’s central themes, reconstructing the intellectual genealogy of key concepts in political philosophy and cultural history. Students will prepare a bibliography and engage in serious secondary research for their final essays.

**Course Rationale**

This course is designed as a two-hour seminar discussion. Each session will be devoted to a close analysis and reading of the assigned text(s) and author(s). I will offer a 10-15 minute introduction to each session, offering context to the life and times of the author(s) in question. Discussion will require attentive reading of the assigned material and active participation. The course syllabus (pp.4-8) outlines the themes, central ideas and reading assignments for each session. Students are required to reflect on the three listed topics underneath each session’s title. I will email discussion questions and general comments related to the assigned material two days before the seminar for students to prepare for the upcoming meeting. Suggested readings and other sources will also be posted on the course’s website.

**Course Requirements**
Active Class Participation 20%
Weekly Reading Responses 20%
Mid-Term Essay 30% (Due Date: Session VII)
Final Essay 30% (Due Date: Session XIV)
Required Texts


Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity* (Continuum, 1995)


Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (Marion Boyars Publishers, 2000)


Power, Ethics and Cultural Production in Latin America

Session I: A Latin American Version of Ethics

Readings

Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (Marion Boyars Publishers, 2000)

Session II: The Discourse of the Oppressed and the Power of Faith

Required Readings

Helder Camara, “A Church of Service and Poverty”, “From Paternalism to Liberation”, Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings (Orbis Books, 2009)

Recommended Readings


Session III: Liberation through Education

Readings

Paulo Freire, “On the Relationship between the Educators and the Learners”, “Cultural Identity and Education”, “Concrete Context/Theoretical Context”, Teachers as Cultural Workers
Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (Marion Boyars Publishers, 2000)

Session IV: Forms of Power (I): Community and Education

Readings

Paulo Freire, “Education versus Massification”, Education for Critical Consciousness
Paulo Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (Westview, 2005)

**Session V: Deconstructing the Myth of the Americas**

Readings

Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism”, “From the Invention to the Discovery of the New World”, “Amerindia in a Non-Eurocentric Vision of World History”, *The Invention of the Americas. Eclipse of “the other” and the Myth of Modernity*


**Session VI: The Rise of Postcolonial Consciousness**

Readings


Recommended Reading


Session VII: The Revival of Liberation Theology

Readings


Session VIII: Feminist Theology

Readings

Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century (Orbis Books, 1996)

Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Eduardo Mendieta, Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy (Fordham University Press, 2011)

Session IX: Forms of Power (II): Populism

Readings

Ernesto Laclau, “Hegemony and Radical Politics”, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (Verso, 2001)

Session X: Forms of Power (III): Redesigning Latin American Cultural Spaces

Readings


**Recommended Reading**


**Sebastiao Salgado**, *Workers* (Aperture, 2005)

**Session XI: Forms of Power (IV): Creating and Reinventing Latin American Music**

**Readings**


**Session XII: Latin America’s Political Imaginary**

**Readings**


**Session XIII: Memory, Politics and Identity: Reconstructing the Future through Knowledge of the Past**

**Readings**


Session XIV: The Future of Philosophy in Latin America

Readings
