HIST 399 - Spring 2014
Instructor: Carlos Aguirre
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Office hours: Tuesdays, 8-9 am; Thursdays, 10-12 am.

Soccer and Society in Modern Latin America

Course description
Soccer –known as fútbol in Spanish or futebol in Portuguese- is, without doubt, the single most popular sport in the world. In most countries of Latin America it has become the national pastime, the only exceptions being the Caribbean countries of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, where baseball occupies that place. This course will offer students the opportunity to explore and understand the complexities of Latin American societies using soccer as a cultural and sociological window. At a more general level, it will also allow them to think critically about the social, cultural, and political implications of sports and entertainment in contemporary societies. We will discuss, among other issues, the reasons why soccer captured the imagination of Latin Americans; the relationship between the dissemination of soccer and patterns of cultural, political, and economic change; the connections between soccer and the shaping of national identities in the region; the manipulation of soccer by military regimes in the 1970s; the racial, class, and gender dynamics behind soccer as a practice and a spectacle; the recent appearance of violent soccer fans and their connections with contemporary economic and social trends such as the spread of neoliberalism and the forces of globalization; and the use of soccer as a marker of identity by Latin American immigrants in the United States.

Course policies

1. Students are expected to attend lectures consistently. A passing grade will be hard to achieve without regular attendance. Students must also consistently read the assigned materials and actively participate in class discussions.
2. A common form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Students must become familiar with the University of Oregon rules about this issue. More information will be offered at the appropriate time.
3. An atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and fairness will be enforced by the instructor. Students must behave in ways proper to an academic environment--i.e. no talking, eating, or newspaper reading during lecture. Cell phones, i-pods, and other electronic devices can not be used during class. Laptops and tablets are allowed ONLY for note-taking, and students who use them in class must seat in the front row. If a student uses his/her laptop for other purposes during class time (web browsing, chatting, e-mail checking), he/she will be banned from bringing a laptop computer to the classroom.
4. “Incomplete” grades will be granted only in cases of extreme need and only to those students that have an acceptable record of class attendance and have at least a C average in their evaluations. Students that need an "incomplete" grade must make arrangements with the instructor on or before the last week of classes.

Course requirements

Two quizzes: 10% each.
Midterm exam: 30%
Two film reviews: 10% each (we will watch three films; students will have to write reviews of two of them)
Final exam: 30%

Course Readings: All readings will be available electronically through blackboard (BB)

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A basic knowledge of the history of Latin America between 1870 and 2000, including major social processes and events such as immigration, urbanization, populism, military dictatorships, economic trends, gender and racial dynamics, and nationalist ideas and practices.
- An overview of the history of soccer in the region and its relationship with the above-mentioned processes.
- How to think about history in terms of political, economic, social, and cultural forces and how they interact.
- How to connect sports (and other forms of spectacle and entertainment) with the larger social forces that shape them.
- An understanding of the impact of globalization in Latin American societies.

Schedule of topics and readings

Week 1 (March 31, April 2) Sports, cultural change, and modernization: The origins of soccer in Latin America

Readings:

Week 2 (April 7, 9) Soccer, populism, race, and national identities in Brazil and Argentina

Readings:


April 9: QUIZ No. 1

Week 3 (April 14) Brazil’s golden era, 1958-1970
(April 16): Film No. 1, “The year my parents went on vacation” (Brazil, 2006)

Readings:


Week 4 (April 21, 23) Soccer and state terror: Argentina 1978

April 21: Film review No. 1 DUE

Readings:


Week 5 (April 28, 30) Soccer, passion, and tragedy: From Maracanazo to the Soccer War

Readings:


Week 6 (May 5) Midterm exam
(May 7) Film 2: “Maradona by Kusturica”

Week 7 (May 12, 14) Soccer players as cultural icons: Pelé, Garrincha, Maradona, Messi

May 12: Film Review No. 2 DUE
May 14: Quiz No. 2

Readings:


Week 8 (May 19, 21) Soccer Fans: Violence, Clientelism, and Masculinity

Readings:


Film No. 3: “Rudo y Cursi” (Mexico, 2008)

Week 9 (May 26) Memorial Day; no class
(May 28) Soccer, Globalization, and the Latino Diaspora

May 28: Film review No. 3 DUE
Readings:


Week 10 (June 2, 4) Latin American Soccer in the World Scene: A Preview of the 2014 World Cup / Review for Final exam

Final exam: Monday, June 9, 10:15-12:15.