Seminar: Brazil in the Twentieth-Century: Race, Politics, and Culture

Course description

This seminar aims at providing an in-depth look at some of the most crucial aspects of the social and cultural history of twentieth-century Brazil: the centrality of race and the myth of “racial democracy,” the dynamics of gender relations, the struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, and the vitality of popular culture. Brazil abolished slavery in 1888 and became a republic in 1899. Over the course of the twentieth century, Brazilian society confronted serious challenges derived from the legacies of colonialism and slavery, regional rivalries, sharp social and racial inequalities, and a culture of authoritarianism that subverted efforts at developing democratic institutions and practices. The emergence of populism in the 1930s and 1940s dramatically changed Brazilian society, but many of the old issues remained unsolved. In the 1960s and 1970s, at the same time that it managed to produce sustained economic growth, Brazil entered into one of the darkest periods in its history as an anti-communist and repressive military dictatorship took over the government (1964-1985). Through selected readings, class discussions, and research, students will gain a deeper understanding of the historical roots of Brazil’s contemporary place in Latin America and the world, as well as the myriad ways in which Brazilian peoples have coped with usually dramatic historical circumstances.

Course requirements

Research proposal (10%). A preliminary proposal and bibliography for research papers will be due on Monday, April 15.

Weekly reports on readings (10%). Students will submit a two-page summary of the readings and a set of discussion questions.

Attendance and participation (10%). Attendance is mandatory. Students must complete the readings BEFORE class and participate in class discussions.
Two book reviews (10% each; 20% total). Students will have to write 2-3 page reviews of two of the assigned books. These will be due on the date we are discussing the chosen books.

Lecture and film attendance (10%). Students must attend at least FIVE events related to Brazil (lectures or films) during the spring term. The schedule of events will be circulated at the beginning of the term. Exceptions will be made when properly documented.

Research paper (40%). Students will write a 20-25 page research paper on a topic related to the course and chosen in coordination with the instructor. These papers will be due on June 10, 2013.

**Required readings**

The following books are available for purchase at the UO bookstore:


In addition, a number of articles and chapters will be available through Blackboard.

**Schedule of topics and readings**

April 1: Introduction – An overview of Brazilian History, 1899-2010


April 15: Race, Whiteness, and the Myth of Racial Democracy

April 22: Soccer, Race, and Culture

Readings:


April 29: Favelas: Poverty, Culture, and Race


May 6: Gender, Politics, and Society. Guest speaker: Keisha-Khan Perry

Readings:


Readings:


May 20: Samba, Race, and Popular Culture


May 27: No class. Memorial Day.

June 3: No class. Individual meetings with students to discuss research papers.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE ON OR BEFORE JUNE 10, 2013