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BRAZILIAN TV AND CULTURE

COMM 465 – Fall 2009

Course Description:

This course analyzes the dynamic interactions between television and culture in Brazil. We start by looking at some of the available theoretical perspectives on culture, media, and society, including those developed in the fields of cultural studies and democratic theory. Based on these approaches, we examine the role of television as one of the central institutions that mediate the constitution of hegemonic values and meanings in Brazilian society. After a brief introduction to Brazilian culture and its roots, the course identifies the main features of the television industry, of the dominant media company (TV Globo), and of the most popular programs (*telenovelas*). Special emphasis will be given to the role of television in shaping gender, ethnic, class, religious, and political identities in Brazil. The course concludes with a discussion of contemporary controversies about the cultural role of television in Brazil.

This course draws on knowledge gained from other communication classes, especially the core seminars, to develop a critical and comprehensive analysis of the role of television in Brazilian culture. Communication majors who wish to take the seminar as a capstone course must also enroll in COMM 511 for 0 credits. Communication majors taking this course as their capstone experience are expected to apply skills and knowledge gained from other courses. They will therefore be expected to explore in more detail the linkages between media texts, cultural relations, and the political economy of media industries.

Course Goals and Objectives

The central goal of this class is to provide conceptual tools that will enable students to critically evaluate the role of television in Brazilian culture and society. More specifically, students will learn how to analyze the processes by which media representations construct specific understandings of gender, ethnic, class, religious, and political identities.

Our objectives to reach this central goal include learning how to:

- Identify, understand, and apply some of the main theories about media, culture, and society that have emerged from the fields of cultural studies and democratic theory.
- Identify the main constitutive elements of Brazilian culture and their historical roots.
- Analyze the main patterns of interaction between television and culture in Brazil, especially in terms of the construction of gender, ethnic, class, religious, and political identities.
- Conduct research and gather data in library archives to apply the analytical frameworks of the course in the development of a specific case study.

Textbook:

- Joseph Page, *The Brazilians*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995.
The book will be available through Tulane Bookstore.

Blackboard

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and other information. It will also be used for online discussions. The system can be accessed at < <http://tulane.blackboard.com> >. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Required texts

Besides the main textbook, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

Attendance

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. Arriving late or leaving early is considered equal to ½ absence and repeated occurrences will affect your final grade. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a “WF”.

Use of laptops and cell phones

The use of cell phones and pagers is prohibited during class hours, unless the professor has given previous authorization for emergency situations. Chatting, e-mailing, internet browsing, or any activity not related to official class activity will affect your participation grade negatively and may result in other penalties. Laptops are permitted solely for the purpose of taking notes, but students who want to use them need to submit a written request in advance to the professor. If you are authorized to use a laptop, you will be required to submit your notes to the professor as an email attachment at the end of each class. The quality of the notes will not affect your grade, but the authorization to use the laptop can be suspended if they are not considered sufficient.

Evaluation:

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers parts I and II of the course. A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be chosen by the instructor to be included in the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;

2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 14-page long (cover page, tables, figures, and references excluded) final paper, spaced 1.5, and with font size 12. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: It is very important that students complete all the assigned readings before each session. The course will adopt a seminar format, meaning that I expect students to participate in class discussions. You should be prepared to engage with the main arguments of the readings in class. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) Presentation: In the second unit of the class (Part II), students will be required to develop a report about a specific topic related to Brazilian culture, which will include a written and an oral component. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the class, reports might be developed in groups. The written report should be five-page long (cover page, tables, figures, and references excluded), spaced 1.5, and with font size 12. Students will also prepare an oral presentation of the report. Oral presentations should make use of visual support softwares (such as PowerPoint) and should also include specific questions for discussion. More specific guidelines for the written and oral components of the report will be given later;

5) Readings summaries: Students should bring a one-page summary of the reading/s assigned for each session. Summaries should include the author/s' main arguments and will be due in the beginning of class. They can be typed or hand-written and should include the student's full name and the date of the session. Summaries will be graded as "sufficient" and "insufficient" and only the former will satisfy the requirement. If you deliver all summaries and they are graded "sufficient," you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible "F" (50 points);

6) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the course's online discussions, which will take place in the "Discussion Board" area of Blackboard. There will be one forum for each unit of the course, distributed according to the following schedule:

- Forum 1: Theories on culture, media, and society = September 1-14.
- Forum 2: Brazilian culture and television = September 15-October 4.
- Forum 3: TV and national identity = October 8-26.
- Forum 4: TV, gender, race, and politics = October 27-November 11.
- Forum 5: Contemporary controversies = November 12-24.

Students should post at least three messages in each forum. One of the postings has to be an original thread and the other two postings have to respond to two different threads created by two different classmates. You cannot post more than one message per day and your first posting has to be created in the first four days of discussion (between Tuesday and Friday of the respective week). Whether you post more than these fifteen messages is entirely up to you.

The online board should be used to debate issues related to the readings or class discussions. In the case of new threads, they should include specific questions and/or topics for discussion. They can also include attachments or external links to encourage debate. There are no major restrictions on the postings, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates' arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties. The instructor will provide specific guidelines for the postings in class.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective forum; 3) add a new "thread" (a new topic, with a subject title) to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to an existing thread. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click "reply" to comment on someone's posting.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	20 %	Participation	15 %	Presentation:	15 %
Final paper	25 %	Discussion board:	15 %	Readings summaries:	10 %

Grading scale:

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

Academic dishonesty:

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course in the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: < <http://college.tulane.edu/code.pdf> >.

Course Schedule:

PART I
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON CULTURE, MEDIA, AND SOCIETY.

Aug 25 (Tue) – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course

Aug 27 (Thu) – Cultural theories

* Wendy Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1994, pp. 1-38.

Sep 1 (Tue) – Williams’ materialist cultural theory

* Raymond Williams, “Selections from *Marxism and Literature*,” in N. Dirks, G. Eley and S. Ortner (eds.), *Culture/Power/History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 585-608. (First forum of the discussion board begins!)

Sep 3 (Thu) – Tradition, modernization, and cultural hybridism

* Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995 (“Entrance,” pp. 1-11; chapter 2, pp. 41-65).

Sep 8 (Tue) – Media, hegemony, and cultural mediations

* Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*. London: Sage, 1993 (chapter 4, pp. 62-83; and pp. 203-240)

Sep 10 (Thu) – Symbolic representation and democracy

* Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 (Chapter 4, “Representation and social perspective,” pp. 121-141.

PART II
INTRODUCTION TO BRAZILIAN TV,
CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Sep 15 (Tue) – Presentations: Portuguese and Africans roots

* Page, chapters 1 and 2, pp. 35-84.
(Second forum of the discussion board begins!)

Sep 17 (Thu) – Presentations: The Amazon, Indians, and immigrants.

* Page, chapter 3 and 4, pp. 85-117, and chapter 12, pp. 291-318.

Sep 22 (Tue) – Presentations: Religious identities in Brazil

* Page, chapters 13, 14 and 15, pp. 321-383.

Make up session 1: Screening of the documentary “Bus 174”

Sep 24 (Thu) – Presentations: Violence and street kids

* Page, chapters 9 and 10, pp. 229-275.

Sep 29 (Tue) - Presentations: Carnival

* Page, chapter 16, pp. 387-411, and chapter 19, 466-485, pp. 466-485.

* Roberto da Matta, "Carnival in Rio and Mardi Gras in New Orleans: a contrastive study". In R. Matta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991, pp. 116-136.

Oct 1 (Thu) – Television and telenovelas in Brazil

* Page, chapter 6, pp. 154-176, and chapter 18, pp. 444-465.

Oct 6 (Tue) – MIDTERM EXAM

PART III
TELEVISION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:
FROM THE DICTATORSHIP TO THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Make up session 1: Screening of the film "Bye Bye Brazil"**Oct 8 (Thu) – TV's cultural impact: the question of acculturation**

* Raul Reis, "The impact of television in the Brazilian Amazon." *Human Organization*, Vol. 57, n. 3, 1998, pp. 300-306.

* Richard Pace, "First-time televiewing in Amazônia: television acculturation in Gurupá, Brazil." *Ethnology*, Vol. 32, n. 2, 1993, pp. 187-205.
(Third forum of the discussion board begins!)

Oct 13 and 15 – No classes. Fall break.**Oct 20 (Tue) – Telenovelas and political opening: The case of *O Bem Amado*.**

* Joseph Straubhaar, "The reflection of the Brazilian political opening in the telenovela [soap opera], 1974-1985," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. 7, 1988, pp. 59-76.

Oct 22 (Thu) – Telenovelas and the new democracy: the case of *Roque Santeiro*

* Randal Johnson, "Deus e o diabo na terra da Globo: [God and the devil in the land of Globo]: Roque Santeiro and Brazil's 'New' Republic," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. 7, 1988, pp. 77-88.

PART IV
TELEVISION REPRESENTATIONS
OF POLITICS, GENDER, AND RACE

Oct 27 (Tue) – Television, gender, and class: the case of *Xuxa*

* Amelia Simpson, *Xuxa: The Mega-Marketing of Gender, Race, and Modernity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993 (Introduction, pp. 1-11; chapter 2, pp. 49-95).

(Fourth forum of the discussion board begins!)

Oct 29 (Thu) – Telenovela representations of gays and lesbians

* Rousiley Maia and Angela Marques, “Media reflexivity and the struggle for recognition: groups of despised sexuality in Brazilian soap operas,” *Inter Sections*, Vol. 2, n. 3/4, 2002, pp. 59-68.

* Antonio La Pastina, “The sexual other in Brazilian television: public and institutional reception of sexual difference,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, n. 1, 2002, pp. 83-99.

Nov 3 (Tue) – Documentary screening: *Denying Brazil***Nov 5 (Thu) – Telenovela representations of Afro-Brazilians**

* Denise Ferreira da Silva, “The drama of modernity: color and symbolic exclusion in the Brazilian telenovela,” in L. Crook and R. Johnson (eds.), *Black Brazil*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1999, pp. 339-361.

Nov 10 (Tue) – Telenovelas and civil society: the Landless Movement

* Esther Hamburger, “Politics and intimacy: the agrarian reform in a Brazilian telenovela,” *Television and New Media*, Vol. 1, n. 2, 2000, pp. 159-178.

PART V

CONTEMPORARY CONTROVERSIES: MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS
OF GENDER, RACE, AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES**Nov 12 (Thu) – Gender, race, and violence in miniseries: the case of *Cidade dos Homens***

* Sarah McDonald, “Performing masculinity: From City of God to City of Men.” *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, Vol. 12, n. 12, 2006, pp. 19-32.

(Fifth forum of the discussion board begins!)

Nov 17 (Tue) – Documentary screening: *Televangelism in Brazil*.**Nov 19 (Thu) - Television and shifting religious identities**

* Patricia Birman and David Lehmann, “Religion and the media in a battle for ideological hegemony: the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and TV Globo in Brazil”. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. Vol. 18, n. 2, 1999, pp 145-164.

Nov 24 (Tue) – Conclusions. Course evaluation.**Nov 26 (Thu) – No class. Thanksgiving holiday.****Dec 1 and 3 – No class. Work on final paper.****FINAL PAPER DUE: Friday, December 11.**

Final papers should be uploaded to Blackboard until midnight of December 11. Late papers will not be accepted.