A. Course Description

TOPICS IN BRAZILIAN CULTURE
Number and Title of the Course: PORT UA-700 Topics of Brazil: Critical Perspectives on Brazilian Culture and Society

1. Course Description: This course is designed as an interdisciplinary and critical introduction to the history, society, literature, and culture of Brazil, the largest nation of Latin America. Students will learn about Brazil’s colonial experience as the only Portuguese colony in the Americas, its unique experiment with monarchical institutions in the nineteenth century, and the trajectory of its uneven modernization in the twentieth century. We will also explore the particularities of Pernambuco, its Dutch past, and overall relevance in the culture, economy and, politics of Brazil. The course will examine diverse topics including contemporary race relations, gender, sexuality, religion and spirituality, class conflict, and migration, as well as various aspects of Brazilian cultural production and performance, as reflected in film, music, literature, and other forms of popular culture. Students will engage in critical analysis of a variety of texts, including films, fiction, and ethnographic and historical accounts, as they also pursue their own areas of intellectual and research interests. The course will be taught in English. Portuguese-language texts will be available in English translation or with English subtitles. Students with knowledge of Portuguese will be able to read and view the texts in the original language.

2. Objectives

A. To develop course material more consistent with student needs.
B. To create more course opportunities for students in Portuguese Studies who want to study topics not currently covered by courses taught at Washington Square.
C. To supplement the existing curriculum with relevant academic experiences that broadens and deepens student knowledge.
D. To engage in interdisciplinary research and scholarship at an advanced undergraduate level.
E. To improve their writing and critical analysis skills.
F. To gain an understanding of Brazilian society, politics and culture, as well as developing increasing sensitivity to the concerns of Brazilian populations in Brazil and abroad.
G. To be able to establish links between Brazilian historical events and contemporary society and gain a broader transnational and global perspective.
H. To understand the connections between Brazilian cultural practices and various social contexts of inequality, including a focus on class, racial, gender, sexuality, and regional forms of difference.

3. Scope: PORT-UA 700 is an existing course in our department. This particular syllabus is different from the courses taught at Washington Square for providing a broader scope of information that includes economics, politics and history of Brazil on a local level in order to students learn and connect with the locale of their Summer program.
B. The Syllabus

1. Course Description: This course is designed as an interdisciplinary and critical introduction to the history, society, literature, and culture of Brazil, the largest nation of Latin America. Students will learn about Brazil’s colonial experience as the only Portuguese colony in the Americas, its unique experiment with monarchical institutions in the nineteenth century, and the trajectory of its uneven modernization in the twentieth century. The course will examine diverse topics including contemporary race relations, gender, sexuality, religion and spirituality, class conflict, and migration, as well as various aspects of Brazilian cultural production and performance, as reflected in film, music, literature, and other forms of popular culture.

2. Topics covered and Mode of Delivery: Students will engage in critical analysis of a variety of texts, including films, fiction, and ethnographic and historical accounts, as they also pursue their own areas of intellectual and research interests. Classes will be a mix of lecture and workshop. Films screenings will be scheduled outside of class, with clips from the films shown during class. The course will be taught in English. Portuguese-language texts will be available in English translation or with English subtitles; if a text was originally written in Portuguese, the instructor will also provide the original text for the students with knowledge of Portuguese.

Course Requirements and Grading

Assessment:

- Participation and Attendance: 10%
- Research for Cultural Workshops (report to be posted on student Vlogs): 20%
- Weekly Response Papers (Blog Article; one page to be written per day): 25%
- Final Oral Presentations: 20%
- Final Research Paper: 25%

- Class Participation/Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class and workshop, and to be prepared to discuss the assigned readings; make relevant and original critical comments in their assignments; and draw connections between past and present readings and class topics.
- Cultural Workshops: students are required to attend cultural workshops with local artists and guests (in fields such as Capoeira, Brazilian dance, music, etc.); to conduct research on the particular topics addressed in these workshops; and to create brief entries in their Vlogs. The professor will provide recommended readings and movies to facilitate students’ research.
- Weekly Response Papers (in hard copy and posted on the course blog): Students will be asked to submit a one-page (typed, double-spaced) description and critical analysis of the readings assigned for the particular week. These responses must be written carefully and demonstrate a clear understanding of the week’s readings. No late papers or sent by email will be accepted. Students will post their response papers on the course blog adding visuals and important supplementary content (such as external links).
- Student Presentations: Students will be asked to present on a given topic to the rest of the class. Each presentation should be 10 minutes long and be engaging.
and well organized. Students are encouraged to explore different presentational modes: film or video (which could take the form of personal footage of their experiences in Brazil), short lecture, PowerPoint presentation, performance (including musical performance), photo essay, creative writing, etc.). Students will choose a topic and be assigned a day for their presentation at the start of the course.

- **Final Research Paper:** Students will choose a topic related to Brazil and its diverse populations. The final paper will be approximately 15-pages long (typed, double-spaced) and should demonstrate the ability to construct a critical argument, creativity, and familiarity with the chosen topic. The papers must be well written and clearly organized, and provide evidence of high-quality research and analysis.

**Course Overview**

**Day 1 Introduction:** The goal of this session is to introduce to the course syllabus, themes, requirements and expectations. We will also assign the topics and dates for presentations and familiarize ourselves with the regional complexity of Brazil. We will situate Pernambuco in a broad Brazilian historical perspective by presenting its specific history and cultural intricacies. We will screen parts of the movie *Aquarius* to have to have a critical understanding of our locale, its social issues, and the local arts scene as a tool for social criticism.

*Activities: Go over syllabus. Assign dates for student presentations.*

*Film: Aquarius* (dir. Kléber Mendonça Filho, 2016)

*AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:* An introduction to the variety of musical rhythms of Pernambuco that we will cover during our trip (capoeira, caboclinho, forró, baião, coco, afoxé, maracatu de baque virado, maracatu de baque solto and frevo.)

**Day 2 Politics and Historical Background:** In this session, we will consider the urban and rural divides in Brazil, as well as conditions of social inequality. While highlighting the historical chronology of important political movements and economic cycles, we will expand on the different depictions of the colonial period through the arts. We will explore Pernambuco’s role during colonial times, its socio-economic structure based on its sugar plantations and reflection in the present times.


*Reading:*
Thomas E. Skidmore. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change.* Oxford University Press, 2009 (Slavery/colonial)
**Film:**
*Sugar (Açúcar)* (dir. Renata Pinheiro and Sérgio Oliveira, 2017)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** Capoeira, *loas* and rhythms

**Day 3 Anthropophagy and Modernismo:** This session will discuss the importance of indigenous culture in colonial times and Oswald de Andrade’s concept of Anthropophagy as a way of discussing Brazilian culture and society. We will talk about Brazilian *Modernismo* in the 1920’s, paying particular attention to the contributions of painter Cícero Dias and poet Manuel Bandeira, both natives of Pernambuco, to the *Modernismo* movement in Brazil.

**Readings:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Film:**
*How Tasty Was my Little Frenchman (Como era gostoso o meu francês)* (dir. Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1971)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** Caboclinho

**Day 4 Brazil and its Myths of Identity:** In this session we will explore the different attempts to conceptualize Brazilian identity. We will talk about the *malandro* (or trickster) figure as a national hero in Mario de Andrade’s novel *Macunaima*, and its re-working in a new literature of violence, such as Paulo Lins’s novel *Cidade de Deus*. We will also touch upon the 1970’s local movement *Movimento Armorial* and its concept of *raça parda* (mixed race).

**Readings:**
Film:

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Maracatu de Baque Virado**

**Day 5 Race, I:** In this session we will discuss the social and racial structures in Brazil from the XV-XVII centuries, with a particular focus on slavery, an institution that lasted in Brazil longer than in any other country in the Americas. We will take into account the long-term impact of the African slave trade on Brazilian culture and society and critically analyze the myth of racial democracy within Gilberto Freyre’s narrative and his national building discourse as a whole.

Readings:

Film:
Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)(dir. Marcel Camus, 1959)

Recommended visit:
Casa de Gilberto Freyre

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Maracatu de Baque Virado**

**Day 6 Race, II:** This session will discuss contemporary racial politics in Brazil, in particular, recent discussions about “blackness,” racial privilege, and racial quotas. This session will also analyze how movements in the US such as “Black Lives Matter” dialog with Black movements in Brazil, such as “Vidas Negras Importam.”

Readings:

Film:
What is it worth? (Quanto vale ou é por quilo?) (dir. Sergio Bianchi, 2005)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Forró/ Baião**
**Day 7 Cultural Production, I:** This session will introduce students to various forms of Brazilian cultural production and ideologies of hybridity in Brazilian art. We will be particularly attentive to foreign and domestic depictions of the celebration of hybridity, engaging in critical analysis of the concept’s multiple meanings and representations.

**Readings:**

**Film:**
*Beyond Ipanema* (dir. Guto Barra and Beco Dránoff, 2009)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** Forró/ Baião

**Day 8 Cultural Production, II:** This session will discuss the importance of the Northeast of Brazil as an important source of cultural production in the country. We will focus specifically on the dialog between folklore rhythms and commercial music in Recife, highlighting MangueBeat as a hybrid movement.

**Readings:**

**Film:**
*Moro no Brasil* (dir. Mika Kaurismäki, 2002)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** MangueBeat

**Day 9 Gender and Sexuality, I:** This section explores social constructions of gender and sexuality in Brazil, particularly definitions of masculinity/femininity and LGTBQPQIA+ groups. We will discuss current Brazilian debates on gender and sexuality in the face of a new conservatism and political influence exercised by the evangelical movement in Brazil.

**Readings:**
**Film:**
*Carandiru* (dir. Héctor Babenco, 2004)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Afoxé and Candomblé Rhythms of Recife**

**Day 10 Gender and Sexuality, II:** This session will explore resistance by feminist and LGBTQIA+ groups through activism, music, and film. We will focus primarily on Recife cinema, Funk music, and the networks of activism through music in the poor communities (*favelas*) of Rio de Janeiro and Recife. We will also discuss traditional folkloric music related to Candomblés in Recife.

**Readings:**

**Recommended film:**
*Tattoo (Tatuagem)* (dir. Hilton Lacerda, 2013)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Afoxé and Candomblé Rhythms of Recife**

**Day 11 Internal Migration:** In this session, we will focus on internal migration from the Northeast to other regions of the country. We will analyze how the discourse of a “dry Northeast” has been constructed and explored in the arts (theater, cinema, and literature).

**Readings:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Films:**
*Barren Lives (Vidas secas)* (dir. Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1963)
*Black God, White Devil (Deus e o Diabo na terra do sol)* (dir. Glauber Rocha, 1964)
*Entranced Earth (Terra em transe)* (dir. Glauber Rocha, 1967)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Frevo**
**Day 12 Immigration:** The session will focus internal migration to the Northeast of Brazil, focusing on specific migratory waves from the past and in recent times. 1) The myth of the Dutch: we will discuss the Dutch legacy to Recife’s identity as an anti-colonial resistance tool; 2) From Recife to Manhattan: we will explore Jewish migration to Recife and the establishment there of the first synagogue of the Americas; and 3) The Chinese in the Tropics: we will talk about recent Chinese immigration and issues of globalization.

*Readings:*

*Recommended reading:*

*Film:*

*Recommended visit:*
First Synagogue of the Americas in Downtown Recife

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** Caboclinho

**Day 13 Visual Arts and Urban Space: Activism and Community Work.** This session will explore current dialogs between Brazilian visual artists on issues of social inequality. We will focus on work by Jonathas de Andrade and the *O Norte* group.

*Readings:*

*Recommended visit:*
“Museu do Homem do Nordeste”

*Film:*
*The Transgressor (Os Transgressores)* (dir. Luis Erlanger, 2017)
*The Fish (O Peixe)* (dir. Jonathas de Andrade, 2016)

**AFTERNOON WORKSHOP:** Coco

**Day 14 Cordel Literature: Northeastern Identity in the Making:** In this session we will explore the historical, sociological and cultural context of *Cordel* literature (popular
broadsheets) reflecting upon its relevance to the Armorial Movement and local literary writers (such as João Cabral de Melo Neto and Ariano Suassuna), as well as to pop culture (such as Derlo Almeida’s works). We will analyze some traditional broadsheets, with their oral poetic forms, including discussion of bookmaking and printmaking. The weekly response paper will consist of the making of a Cordel book by students.

Readings:

Recommended reading:

Film:
A Dog’s Will (O Auto da Compadecida) (dir. Guel Arraes, 2000)

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: Coco

Day 15: Contemporary Brazilian Cinema: Recife in the Spotlight: In this session we will talk about Novo Cinema Pernambuco and Recife’s leading role in current Brazilian cinema production.


Film:
Neighboring Sounds (O Som ao Redor) (dir. Kléber Mendonça Filho, 2012)

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: A celebration of all rhythms

Day 16: Discussion of Research Topics for the Final Paper