

LALS/POLS/GWS 275
GENDER IN LATIN AMERICA
Fall 2005

Prof. Janise Hurtig
T-Th 9:30 – 10:45 am
Room 104, Stevenson Hall

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Course Description: This course introduces students to the historically, geographically, and culturally distinct experiences of Latin American women. The course revolves around two themes:

- (1) The historical, economic, political, social and cultural contexts of Latin American women's lives, and the struggles Latin American women engage in (as individuals or as groups) in order to change those contexts.
- (2) The relationships and tensions between the realities of Latin American women's personal and political lives, on the one hand, and representations of Latin American women (as individuals or as groups) to wider audiences, on the other.

We will explore these themes in terms of three key concepts: gender, place, and “*desalambrar*” (to unfence).” We will use these concepts to explore how women's place in society is differently shaped by geography, culture, history, social location, as these are mediated by gender roles, relations, ideologies and identities. These are the “*alambres*” or “fences” that frame and constrain Latin American women in different ways in different places. We will also examine how women resist those “fences,” how they “unfence” and (re)shape their environments, experiences, and identities through formal and informal economic activity, political participation, and social action. Throughout the course we will examine how other social dimensions, particularly race, ethnicity and class relate to gender roles and women's experiences in diverse ways across the continent. We will also use the concept of “*desalambrar*” to consider how our own frameworks shape the ways we tend to represent and understand gender and women in Latin America. One of the goals of the course is to encourage students to unfence their own preconceptions and think in new ways about the contexts, struggles, realities and representations of Latin American women's experiences across the continent.

In the course we will take an interdisciplinary approach to these themes. We will read articles and texts from the social sciences and humanities, a testimonial, a novel – all by and about Latin American women. We will also watch several films, some documentary, some non-documentary. Each of these “texts” addresses the contexts, struggles, realities, and representations of Latin American women in unique ways.

The course is divided into three sections:

Section 1 introduces the **concepts** of gender, place, *desalambrar*, and constructions of gender, femininity and masculinity that have been associated with the region, such as *machismo* and *marianismo*, house and street. We examine these constructions from a critical perspective in order to challenge the universality of such notions and the tendency to generalize about the continent and women's place in it.

Section 2 is an **historical** section, involving a review of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods. This section highlights women's (formal and informal) participation in historical processes and regional struggles, and attends to regional variations in roles and representations of gender and women.

Section 3 focuses on **contemporary** issues through which to consider Latin American women in their roles as activists, feminists, workers, intellectuals. The themes include women's productive and reproductive labor, women and capitalist “development”, political participation and democracy, women's involvement in grassroots struggles and revolutionary movements, women's and feminist movements. Cross-cutting these themes is the issue of cultural representations of gender, race, and class as formed by and forming women's participation in these various realms.

Readings: The primary required reading for the course includes five books dealing with women and gender from different periods and places in Latin America. There will also be a small number of supplemental assigned articles for each section described above. Students can purchase these reading packs from me at a discounted price.

Books are available at the UIC Bookstore in CCC. The titles are as follows:

1. *Gender's Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America*, Lessie Jo Frazier, Rosario Montoya, Janise Hurtig (eds.).
2. *Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Restoring Women to History*, Marysa Navarro and Virginia Sanchez Korrlo.
3. *Let Me Speak! Testimony of Domitila, a Woman of the Bolivian Mines*, Domitila B. De Chungara, Victoria Ortiz (Translator), Moema Viezzer
4. *Dreaming in Cuban*, Cristina Garcia
5. *Silent Looms: Women and Production in a Guatemalan Town*, Tracy Bachrach Ehlers

Written Assignments:

Mid-term take-home short essay exam.

Comparative research paper of 10-15 pages, due the Monday after the last day of classes.

Two (2) short film response papers of 2-3 pages each. You should respond to one film during the first half of the course and another film during the second half of the course.

Class attendance and participation:

Students are expected to attend class and come prepared to discuss the readings for each week.

During the second part of the term the class will be divided into five or six research and discussion groups based on the key themes that will be the basis for individual research papers. Each group will be responsible for leading one class session on their theme.

NB: Students will receive a separate sheet describing the purpose of and expectations for each assignment in detail.

Grading:

Mid-term exam 30%

Research paper literature review and draft 10%

Final research paper 30%

Group presentation 10%

Film responses 10% (5% for each review)

Attendance and class participation 10%.

PART 1: Gender in Latin America: Terms, Concepts and Theories

Week 1 What is gender? What is Latin America?

8/23-8/25 Readings: Introduction to Gender's Place, pp. 1-9; Introduction to *Machos, Mistresses, and Madonnas*, pp. 5-9.

Week 2 Gender roles, relations, and representations: Machismo/Marianismo

8/30 – 9/1 Readings: Stevens, "Marianismo, the other face of machismo"; Navarro in Gender's Place (Against Marianismo); Guttman, "The meanings of macho: changing Mexican male identities".

FILM: Entre Pancho Villa y una mujer desnuda"

Week 3 Gender roles, relations, and representations: House/Street, Nature/Culture

9/6 – 9/8 Readings: Montoya in Gender's Place; Lamas in Gender's Place; Harris, "Complementary and Conflict: An Andean view of women and men."

Week 4 Gender roles, relations, and representations Male/female, honor/shame

9/13 – 9/15 Readings: Lyons in Gender's Place; Stolen, "The power of gender discourses..."; Fox, "Honor, shame, and women's liberation in Cuba..."

PART 2: Gender and women from pre-colonial to post-independence periods

Week 5 Gender and women before and after the Conquest

9/20 – 9/22 Readings: Navarro & Sánchez Correl, pp. 1-32; Silverblatt, Andean women under Spanish rule; Nash, "Aztec women: the transition from status to class..."

Week 6 Gender, women, sin and slavery in the early colonial period

9/27 – 9/29 Readings: Navarro & Sánchez Correl, pp. 32-57; Behar, "The visions of a Quachichil witch..."; Socolow, "Women and Slavery" (Optional: Lavrín, Unlike Sor Juana)

FILM: Yo la peor de todas (Part 1)

Week 7 Gender, women, state and family in the late colonial and early national periods

10/4 – 10/6 Readings: Navarro & Sánchez Correl, 59-79; Alonso in Gender's Place; de la Cadena in Gender's Place

FILM: Yo la peor de todas (Part 2)

Week 8 Gender, women and feminism in the post-Independence period

10/11 – 10/13 Readings: Navarro & Sánchez Correl; 79-106; Miller, "Latin American feminism..."
Begin Dreaming in Cuban

Week 9 Women, war, and revolution

10/18 – 10/20 Readings: Dreaming in Cuban; Excerpts from "Soldaderas in the Mexican Military"; Excerpts from Sandino's Daughters

****FIRST FILM REVIEW DUE 10/18**

****TAKE HOME MID-TERM EXAM passed out 10/20; due back 10/25**

NOTE TO STUDENTS: Some of readings for this section may change as you define your research topics.

PART 3: Contemporary struggles, contested spaces

Week 10 Women and social protest

10/25 – 10/27 Readings: Begin reading “Let Me Speak.”
Stephen, excerpts from Women and Social Movements
(Optional: Navarro, Madres de la Plaza de Mayo)

FILM: Threads of Hope

Week 11 Women and political action

11/1 – 11/3 Readings: “Let Me Speak”; Cervone in Gender’s Place
Excerpt from “When Women Protest”

Week 12 Gender and social movements

11/8 – 11/10 Readings: “Let Me Speak”; Klein in Gender’s Place; excerpts from Babb,
“After Revolution.”

Week 13 Gender, (under)development and the global workforce

11/15 – 11/17 Readings: Silent Looms; Deere & Leon, Rural women and the development of
of Capitalism...”

FILM: In Woman’s Hands

Week 14 Women, work and family in transnational Latin America

11/22 – 11/24 Readings: Silent Looms; Ortiz in Gender’s Place;
Weinstein, “Unskilled worker, skilled housewife...”

Week 15 Women, Gender, literacy, and education

11/29 – 12/1 Readings: Hurtig in Gender’s Place; Jimenez, “Literacy, class, sexuality in debate on
women’s suffrage in Puerto Rico...”

Visit by “Parents as Writers” group from Little Village, Chicago

SECOND FILM REVIEW DUE 11/29

Week 16 Exam Week, No classes

****FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 6TH**

****NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED**

