Course information:

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1. Course name: Brazilian Literature in Translation

2. Department: POR

3. Number: 215

4. Cluster requirement: Literature

Faculty information:

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5. Name: Christopher Larkosh

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7. Phone: x6291

Required components:

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8. Master syllabus: [http:///webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/por215mastersyllabus.docx](http://webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/por215mastersyllabus.docx)

9. Course overview statement:

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of Brazilian literature in English translation that aims to impart a degree of cultural literacy about Brazil. The course content consists of representative literary readings drawn from different periods of the country’s history, which are examined critically in their respective social and cultural contexts. It thereby aligns with Outcome 1 of the University Studies cluster 3A, in that it seeks to “articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history.” For example, students reading a novel such as Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas by Machado de Assis, Brazil’s most celebrated nineteenth-century author, will examine the author’s criticism of Brazilian cultural norms, while at the same time exploring the effects of his representations of Brazil and its political elites from Machado’s own time to the present. Viewing the

text through the prism of such broadly contextual perspectives will be predicated, however, on in-depth textual exploration, thus enabling precise and focused understanding of “how the text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings” (Outcome 2). In order to promote such understanding, “appropriate disciplinary terminology” (Outcome 2) will be introduced; for example, students may discuss how Machado’s unreliable homodiegetic narrator produces distinct meaning effects from those associated with the heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator of earlier Realist fiction. The above-described directions of contextualizing (Outcome 1) and formal (Outcome 2) analysis will be accompanied by an ethical/political reflection on “the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences” (Outcome 4). Thus, for example, a twentieth-century novel by Clarice Lispector, one of Brazil’s most acclaimed novelists, may be read as a subtle

philosophical inquiry into the effectively gendered nature of human values held to be universal (and thus gender-neutral) by male-dominated Western cultural tradition.

Through targeted course assignments, students will learn to “evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically” (Outcome 3). In order to achieve such actively constructive approach to literary readings, assignments are based on the principle of engaged learning, which requires students to make informed connections and hypothesize critically about the meanings embedded in literary texts instead of passively absorbing and reproducing the information conveyed by the instructor. For instance, the lists of questions addressing key points of the week’s readings (which the students answer individually in writing and which also provide the springboard for classroom discussion) offer varied opportunities for such critical engagement with course material. The longer written assignments (take-home exams and essays) incorporate all of Cluster 3A outcomes, in that they require incorporating formal (rh

etorical) and contextualizing (sociocultural and historical) elements of analysis in an extended, multi-paragraph format that calls for formulating and sustaining a logically developed argument based on an autonomous understanding of the literary texts explored in the course.

10. Signed faculty and chair sponsor sheet: sent separately.

11. Official course catalog description for the course:

Outstanding works of Brazilian literature and culture, with readings, lectures, and discussions in English.

**Master Syllabus**

**Course: POR 215 Brazilian Literature in Translation**

**Cluster Requirement: 3A**

**Course Overview:**

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of Brazilian literature and culture in English translation. It focuses on providing a basic level of cultural literacy about Brazil through representative readings drawn from various periods of the country’s history and regional cultures, and situated in their social, cultural, and historical contexts, especially as a way of approaching course themes such as social inequality, ethnic and racial diversity, political shifts and upheavals, and cultural and linguistic difference. Course assignments lead students to develop skills in textual analysis and interpretation, critical thinking and discussion, and academic writing, including scholarly norms of structure, formatting and citation. The course will serve as an introduction for the further study of literature, history, and culture, whether in the Portuguese language or any other language or literary tradition.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

*By the end of the course students will be able to:*

1. demonstrate a general understanding of cultural, social, and historical realities of Brazil, both at the national and the regional level;

2. identify and describe a range of artistic forms, styles, and themes specific to the Brazilian literary and cultural tradition, both national and regional;

3. apply critical reading skills in analyzing and debating meanings conveyed in Brazilian literary texts;

4. relate forms, themes, and meanings of Brazilian literature to culturally and historically situated forms of human and social experience;

5. convey their understanding of course content in a clear and effective manner through both oral and written communication.

University Studies Learning Outcomes (Cluster 3A):

*After completing this course, students will be able to:*

1. articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history;

2. explain how a text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings using appropriate disciplinary terminology;

3. evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically;

4. explain the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences.

**POR 215 Rationale Statement**

This course offers an introductory critical overview of major works of Brazilian literature in English translation that aims to impart a degree of cultural literacy about Brazil. The course content consists of representative literary readings drawn from different periods of the country’s history, which are examined critically in their respective social and cultural contexts. It thereby aligns with Outcome 1 of the University Studies cluster 3A, in that it seeks to “articulate how literature (fiction, poetry, drama and literary nonfiction) both reflects and helps shape culture, society and history.” For example, students reading a novel such as *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* by Machado de Assis, Brazil’s most celebrated nineteenth-century author, will examine the author’s criticism of Brazilian cultural norms, while at the same time exploring the effects of his representations of Brazil and its political elites from Machado’s own time to the present. Viewing the text through the prism of such broadly contextual perspectives will be predicated, however, on in-depth textual exploration, thus enabling precise and focused understanding of “how the text’s literary form, style and content express its meanings” (Outcome 2). In order to promote such understanding, “appropriate disciplinary terminology” (Outcome 2) will be introduced; for example, students may discuss how Machado’s unreliable homodiegetic narrator produces distinct meaning effects from those associated with the heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator of earlier Realist fiction. The above-described directions of contextualizing (Outcome 1) and formal (Outcome 2) analysis will be accompanied by an ethical/political reflection on “the ways in which literature expresses the values that humans attach to their experiences” (Outcome 4). Thus, for example, a twentieth-century novel by Clarice Lispector, one of Brazil’s most acclaimed novelists, may be read as a subtle philosophical inquiry into the effectively gendered nature of human values held to be universal (and thus gender-neutral) by male-dominated Western cultural tradition.

Through targeted course assignments, students will learn to “evaluate the rhetorical and contextual elements of ideas presented by literary texts and respond to them critically and analytically” (Outcome 3). In order to achieve such actively constructive approach to literary readings, assignments are based on the principle of engaged learning, which requires students to make informed connections and hypothesize critically about the meanings embedded in literary texts instead of passively absorbing and reproducing the information conveyed by the instructor. For instance, the lists of questions addressing key points of the week’s readings (which the students answer individually in writing and which also provide the springboard for classroom discussion) offer varied opportunities for such critical engagement with course material. The longer written assignments (take-home exams and essays) incorporate all of Cluster 3A outcomes, in that they require incorporating formal (rhetorical) and contextualizing (sociocultural and historical) elements of analysis in an extended, multi-paragraph format that calls for formulating and sustaining a logically developed argument based on an autonomous understanding of the literary texts explored in the course.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings**

**Literary readings**

Assis, Joaquim M. Machado de. *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* (*Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas*).

Andrade, Oswald de. *The Cannibalist Manifesto* (*Manifesto antropófago*).

Ramos, Graciliano. *Barren Lives* (*Vidas Secas*).

Lispector, Clarice. *The Passion According to G. H.* (*A Paixão segundo G. H*.).

Scliar, Moacyr. *Collected Stories of Moacyr Scliar*.

Additional readings from the work of Paulo Freire (critical pedagogy), Carolina de Jesus (autobiographical memoir), Milton Hatoum (chronicles).

**Films:**

Salles, Walter. *Behind the Sun* (*Abril despedaçado*).

Amaral, Suzana. *The Hour of the Star* (*A hora da estrela*).

Barreto, Bruno. *Four Days in September* (*O que é isso, companheiro?*).

**Music:**

Selections from bossa nova, Tropicália and MPB movements (Vinícius de Moraes and Tom Jobim, Caetano Veloso, Milton Nascimento, Gal Costa, Elis Regina, etc.).

**Example Assignments**

*Questions on Current Readings*: Each student will be required to respond in writing to a set number of weekly discussion questions based on current readings. These assignments will be posted on the course’s online learning platform (if the course is taught in a web-enhanced or blended format) or distributed in class and/or by email. They will be graded on a scale determined by the individual instructor; the sample grading rubric below assumes that each completed assignment can earn from 1 to 10 points. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #2 and #3 from Cluster 3A.]

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0 points | 1-6 points | 7-8 points | 9-10 points |
| Assignment not turned in. | |  | | --- | | Assignment completed with minimal effort; some points not addressed at all, others addressed superficially. Does not demonstrate basic-level understanding of the text. Appropriate disciplinary terminology (if required) not used or applied haphazardly. Writing abounds in errors, lacks coherence, and is difficult to follow. | | Assignment addresses most or all points, but in little depth. Basic-level understanding of the text evidenced. Some use of appropriate terminology present. Writing mostly error-free in spelling and syntax, but expression poorly developed (some lack of clarity and/or coherence). Overall satisfactory but could be strengthened with greater effort. | Assignment addresses most or all points with well-developed and insightful analysis. Writing is nearly or completely error-free, fully comprehensible, and stylistically elaborate. Appropriate terminology is used. Ideas are presented clearly and their expression is logically developed and connected. |

*Critical Essays*. Students will write two or three (depending on instructor) short papers in the course of the semester. The papers will discuss one or more literary texts studied in the course from a focused perspective, which will incorporate a combination of rhetorical/formal and contextual approaches, although any given individual paper may be predominantly formal or predominantly contextual in its direction. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Exams*. Students’ learning will be tested in this course, with the precise number, format and timing of the tests to be determined by individual instructors. Testing assessment instruments may include short (unannounced) quizzes, non-cumulative tests given during the semesters (e.g., a midterm), and a cumulative final exam. Tests will typically require short-paragraph answers, but may incorporate other assessment techniques, such as multiple-choice questions or essays. Regardless of their precise number and format, overall the tests given in the course will require students to demonstrate their ability to interpret literary texts from the multiple perspectives described above in the POR 215 Course Rationale Statement and summarized in the list of Cluster 3A Learning Outcomes. [Addresses Learning Outcomes #1-4 from Cluster 3A.]

*Course Artifacts for Assessment*:

1. Discussion Questions

2. Critical Essays

3. Exams

**Sample Course Outline**

**Week 1-2:** Introduction: discussion of norms reg. academic integrity, classroom participation, etc. Basic information on Brazil: regions, facts and figures, history, geography, etc. Read and discuss *Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas,* paying attention to the ways in which the narrator destabilizes or calls into doubt elements of his own narrative, and engages in subtle forms of social, cultural and political critique.

**Weeks 3:** *Cannibalist Manifesto.* Discussion of Modern Art Week. How does Brazilian modernism attempt to make a break with cultural norms and practices prevalent in Brazil up to this point in time? What does modernity signify or represent in the Brazilian context?

**Weeks 4-5:** Reading, discussion of *Baren Lives* (pp. 3-34, pp. 35-62, pp. 63-100, pp. 101-131). Discussion of the Northeast, its geography (the *sertão*), history, people and culture (transculturation, especially with West Africa; syncretism, esp. the Afro-Brazilian religion *candomblé*).

**Week 6:** Film: Salles, *Behind the Sun*, followed by discussion and review. Overview of the Cinema Novo movement in Brazil (origins, foreign influences, main figures, political and aesthetic objectives). Introduction to critical pedagogy: Paulo Freire, selections from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* **Thursday: First paper due.**

**Week 7-8:** Lispector, *The Passion According to G. H.:* reading and discussion (pp. 3-43, pp. 44-86, pp. 87-128, pp. 129-173). Discussion of different possible reading strategies: examination of philosophical/existential questions, representation of interior states of the author and/or narrator (love, fear, shock, horror, disgust, etc.), social/political issues.

**Week 9:** Film: Amaral, *The Hour of the Star.* Discussion of Rio de Janeiro as a cultural capital of Brazil (what is culture in everyday terms?), locus for internal migration, and showcase of socioeconomic inequality. Short reading from the diary of Carolina de Jesus.

**Weeks 10:** Moacyr Scliar and Milton Hatoum, short stories and chronicles*.* The Amazon region and South of Brazil.

**Week 11:** Film: Barreto, *Four Days in September.* Discussion of military rule and popular insurgent movements in Brazil (1964-1985), especially in urban centers such as Rio and São Paulo. **Thursday: second paper due.**

**Week 12-13.** Readings of short stories and poems, combined with 15-minute group presentations (3 people per group) on themes covered in class: e.g., racial, gender or socioeconomic inequality in culture; transculturation between Brazil and other global regions (food, music, religion); periods of military rule and transition to democracy and developing understandings of citizenship (*cidadania*); the diary of Carolina de Jesus and other writings by women of color; Paulo Freire and his pedagogy of the oppressed (*conscientização*); readings of contemporary Brazilian short stories or poetry in translation (or in the original, if you read Portuguese); contemporary Brazilian cinema, esp. representations of urban violence and social, regional and racial inequality in films such as *Central Station,* *City of God,* and *Elite Troop*); the planning and construction of Brasília, Brazil’s Modernist capital; figures from Brazilian popular music (MPB) such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Milton Nascimento, Gal Costa, Maria Bethânia, Elis Regina, or others; Brazilian hip hop or other urban contemporary musical genres; the telenovela; or a topic of your choice, as approved by the professor.

**Week 14:** Review for final exam. **Final exam** will consist of three sections: 1) identification of vocabulary and key terms discussed in class and highlighted on study sheets; 2) identification and interpretation of quotes from the works read, and 3) a short essay on a topic chosen from three possible options. Consult exam schedule for date and time.