Contemporary Latino Cultures (V55.0529)
Instructor: Arlene Davila
SILVER (Main) Building, Room 207
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30 – 10:45
285 Mercer Street
Office Hours: Thursdays 12-2 PM
8th Floor
Or by appointment Ext. 87592
TAs: Leota Lone Dog
Khary Polk
Manu Vimalassery

This course examines the development of Latinos as a distinct group out of the highly
diverse populations of Latin American background in the U.S., paying particular attention to the
social processes that are shaping and fueling this emerging identity. This task involves a detailed
examination of the processes of cultural creation behind the rising growth of transnational cultures
and identities worldwide, and of the global, national and local forces that are fueling their
development. We start by exploring the economic and political factors that have historically fueled
the immigration of Latin American peoples to U.S. cities and shaped their incorporation into U.S.
society as “Latinos.” We then turn to three case studies of emerging Latino communities in Los
Angeles, Miami and New York to examine similarities and differences among these different
Latino social and cultural formations. The last two sections examine contemporary issues
involving Latinos in urban centers, such as New York, as well as the impact of global economic
and social forces on contemporary Latino cultural politics.

Requirements: There will be an essay-driven midterm and final exam. Additionally, you will be
asked to write 3 (3-5 pages each) response essays throughout the semester. There will be no make-
ups for these essays. Your grade will be based on the midterm (20%), final exam (30%), papers
(30% -10% each-) and attendance and participation (altogether a value of 20%).

Books:
-Juan Gonzalez
-Pablo Vila Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors and Narrative
Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier
-Homero Villa, Raul
2000 Barrio Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture
-Agustin Lao and Arlene Davila,
2001 Mambo Montage. The Latinization of New York
**All other readings can be found in a course packet available at Unique Copy center, 252 Greene
St.)
*Please refer to the accompanying flyer detailing NYU policy on academic ethics and
plagiarism
I. History and the Cultural Politics of Labeling

1. Week of January 20: Introduction to the Course
   Session #1
   Introduction

   Session #2
   The State of Latino USA-
   Read Handout “The New Latinos” and Browse and study the following website:

2. Week of January 27/The Historical Legacy: The U.S. in/and Latin America History
   Session #1:
   Juan Gonzalez, Harvest of Empire

   Session #2:
   Juan Gonzalez, Harvest of Empire
   Film: Gringo in Manana Land

3. Week of February 3/ The Labeling of a People: Hispanics/Latinos, etc...
   Session #1:
   Film: The Americans

   Session #2
   Arlene Davila “Culture in the Marketplace”
   Juan Flores: “The Latino Imagery”

4. Week of February 10/ The Making of Latinos in Place and Space: From Mexicans to Chicano
   Session #1:
   Barrio Logos

   Session #2:
   Barrio Logos
   *(Essay #1 Due)

5. Week of February 17/ Politics, Expressive Culture and the Arts
   Guest Speaker: Tomas Ybarra Frausto

   Session #2:
   Film: Chicanos! Quest for a Homeland/Viva la Causa
6. Week of February 24/ Puerto Ricans and the Growth of Latino New York
Session #1
Arlene Davila away on a conference, -class will not meet today-

Session #2:
"Puerto Ricans: Citizens yet Foreigners" in Harvest of Empire
Essays by Nancy Mirabal in Mambo Montage and Juan Flores’ essay “Que Asimilao”

7. Week of March 2/Cultural Nationalism and Latino Social Movements

Session #1:
Young Lords Party 13th Points
Davila, From Nationalist to PanLatino Projects in Mambo Montage

Session #2
Essay by Torres “Transnational Political and Cultural identities”
(*Essay #2 Due)

8. Week of March 9/ Flows of People, Work, Ideas

Session #1
Rene Francisco Poitevin will speak about Latinos and Labor Markets

Session #2
Midterm

9. Week of March 16
Spring Break

10. Week of March 23/Flows of People, Work, Ideas
Session #1:
Pablo Vila Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier
Short film: Animaquiladora

Session #2

Pablo Vila Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Social Categories, Metaphors and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier

11. Week of March 30/ Race and Nation at the Crossroads of Transnationalism
Session #1:
Burgos, Adrian “‘The Latins from Manhattan’ Confronting Race and Building Community in Jim Crow Baseball’
Rivera, Raquel “Hip-Hop, Puerto Ricans and Ethnoracial Identities in New York” Both in Mambo Montage

Almaguer, Tomas, “At the Crossroads of Race”

Session #2:
Film: My American Girls

12. Week of April 6  Latinos and the Remaking of U.S. Borders
Session #1
Essays by Solis, Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral, Aponte Pares, and Irizarry in Mambo Montage

Session #2

Essay #3 Due

13. Week of April 13 The Latinized City? On Class and the Neoliberal City

Session #1
Browse and study website “Welcome to East Harlem” in preparation for class lecture on the Cultural Politics of Space and Gentrification in East Harlem
http://www.east-harlem.com

Session #2
Assignment: Read Hoy/El Diario/Noticias del Mundo for local news to report in class. Discussion of local news

14. Week of April 20

Session #1
Assignment: Read Hoy/El Diario/Noticias del Mundo for local news.

Session #2
Session #1: Overview and concluding comments

15. Week of April 27

End of Classes and Final Exam will be distributed on Tuesday (end of classes).