

CORE-UA 555—Cultures & Contexts: Brazil (Spring 2023)

MW 11:00-12:15, Meyer Hall, Room 121

Instructor: Barbara Weinstein, 212 992-7994; bw52@nyu.edu

Office Hours: KJCC 503, Tu 10:30-12:30, Wed 2:00-4:00

Recitation Instructors:

Natalia Mahecha Arango nma395@nyu.edu

Gabriel Levine-Drizin gl2219@nyu.edu

Michael Salgarolo mls850@nyu.edu

“Brazil is the country of the future, and always will be.” This ironic observation—expressed by Brazilians and foreigners alike—neatly encapsulates the gap between predictions of Brazil’s rise to great power status and its continuing struggles with social and racial inequalities, economic instability, corruption, and threats to democracy. In a more subtle fashion, it also alludes to the tension between the drive for economic development and (westernized) cultural “modernity,” on the one hand, and the enduring embrace of non-European aspects of Brazilian culture and tradition, on the other. This tension has deeply informed the way Brazilian scholars and scholars of Brazil view its history and culture.

During the first 12 years of this century Brazil seemed to be on the verge of joining the community of rich and powerful nations, and was even making significant progress in reducing income inequality and race-based discrimination. It seemed like “the future” had finally arrived. But recent developments have demonstrated how quickly conventional wisdom about a nation’s “character” or “destiny” can shift, and shift again. Over the last ten years, Brazilians have witnessed a severe slump in their economy, the revelation of massive corruption, major public health crises caused first by the Zika virus and then (more lethally) by Covid-19, the incineration of priceless collections in its National Museum and Cinemateca by easily preventable fires, the impeachment and removal of a democratically-elected president on questionable charges, ongoing economic recession, and then the catastrophic election of a far-right politician to the presidency whose leadership in the face of the pandemic one global public health expert described as “wretched.” He also oversaw the worst period of environmental destruction in the Amazon in recorded history, something that has provoked global outrage. By every conceivable measure, things have not been going so well for Brazil lately. While many Brazilians take comfort in the recent defeat of Bolsonaro at the polls, and hope that Lula’s inauguration will usher in a period of greater prosperity and social equity, the country continues to be deeply and dangerously divided. The unsuccessful but unnerving attempt on January 8th to violently overthrow the new administration is only one manifestation of the problems that Brazilians currently face.

The geopolitical entity known as Brazil began life as an overseas colony of a European empire, and as is the case with most nations that emerged from colonial rule, there has been a simultaneous emphasis on the formation of a distinct “national culture” and on the need to forge a recognizably “modern nation,” in both the political and economic sense. This course will focus on postcolonial Brazil, which refers not just to the period following independence from Portugal, but also to the ways in which the colonial experience, including the massive displacement and enslavement of indigenous and African peoples, has shaped Brazilian society and culture and Brazil’s place in the global order. The course will also focus on three principal locales: Rio de Janeiro (the major focus), São Paulo, and Salvador da Bahia. Because Brazil, like the US, Russia, and China, is a nearly continental nation, it would be virtually impossible to cover every segment of its national territory, but these three very different cities, and the regions in which they are situated, will allow us to appreciate the diversity of Brazilian society and culture, and the range of historical experiences that have produced them.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a midterm and a final exam, both consisting mainly of essays questions. Course requirements also include one brief (5-page) analytical paper, based on a recommended film, as well as two very short (2- to 3-page) response papers on assigned readings. Prompts elaborating on the paper assignments will be posted under Assignments in the main Brightspace site. In addition to these paper assignments, all students will be expected to attend and participate in recitation sections, where attendance will be recorded. **In preparation for section meetings, you will be required to post at least one question or comment on the Brightspace site for your section about the weekly reading assignment, including the document(s), by 9pm Monday evening.** In the calculation of final grades, we will assign the following (approximate) weights to the required assignments: Final exam—25%, Midterm exam—20%, Longer paper—15%, Two short papers (combined)—15%, Class participation—25%.

Plagiarism, including borrowing from the internet or the work of others without attribution, will be grounds for a failing grade and will be reported to university authorities. NYU's policies on academic integrity can be found at <https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html>

If you have any sort of disability that may affect your ability to carry out assigned course work, I urge you to contact the staff in the Moses Center for Students Accessibility (212-998-4980) to explore what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. Information and documentation of disability will be kept confidential. The website is <https://www.nyu.edu/about/leadership-university-administration/office-of-the-president/office-of-the-provost/university-life/office-of-studentaffairs/student-health-center/moses-center-for-student-accessibility.html>

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the peer tutoring services at the University Learning Center, located in University Hall, 110 E. 14th St. (212-998-8047) and in the Academic Resource Center, 18 Washington Pl. (212-998-8085). The website is www.nyu.edu/students/academic-services/undergraduate-advisement/academic-resource-center/tutoring-and-learning.html

Required readings include the two novels and the textbook listed below. These are available in hard copy from the NYU Bookstore. For those who cannot access the bookstore, readings are available through Bobst Library in electronic form or will be scanned and posted on the main Brightspace site under "Resources." The same applies to any supplementary readings: they will either be available as sections of e-journals or e-books accessible through Bobcat or scanned and posted. If you have any difficulty accessing the readings, please contact me or your recitation section instructor right away.

Joaquim M. Machado de Assis, *Dom Casmurro* (Oxford U. Press, 1998—other editions acceptable)

Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star* (2nd ed.)

James N. Green and Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (3rd edition only)

This course (including recitations) will be taught in person. To accommodate students who are quarantining, lectures will be recorded on Zoom but our expectation is that students who are present in the NY area will attend the lectures in person. The power point for each lecture will be posted on the Brightspace site under Resources after the lecture.

Week 1 (1/23, 1/25): From Imperial Center to Independent Empire

Readings: Green and Skidmore, pp. 1-7, 9-13, 24-27, 30-33, 44-58

Unit I: Building a Free Nation on Slave Foundations**Week 2 (1/30, 2/1): The Second Slavery and the Second Empire**

Readings: Machado de Assis, pp. 3-45 [chaps. 1-22]
Green and Skidmore, pp. 59-80

Docs: José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, “On Slavery,” pp. 173-5; “From the Journal of Maria Graham,” pp. 176-80, both in James N. Green et al. *The Brazil Reader* (2nd ed.)

Week 3 (2/6, 2/8): African Cities of the Americas

Readings: Machado de Assis, pp. 45-99 [chaps. 23-53]
João José Reis, “The Malê Revolt,” in *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 184-6
João José Reis, *Divining Slavery and Freedom*, pp. 64-74

Doc: “Workers for Sale or for Rent,” Daryle Williams, et al, *The Rio Reader*, pp. 112-115

Docs: Robert E. Conrad, *Children of God’s Fire*, Docs. 9.6 and 9.7, pp. 381-386 (scanned)

Docs: “Domingos’ Manumission and Manumissions Granted by Him,” *Divining Slavery and Freedom*, Appendix 2, pp. 313-6.

Week 4 (2/13, 2/15): Ending Slavery and Empire

Readings: Machado de Assis, pp. 99-160 [chaps. 54-91]
Green and Skidmore, pp. 81-105

Doc: “Selections from *Abolitionism*, Joaquim Nabuco,” *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 246-9

Week 5 (2/22): The Intersections of Race and Gender in Late 19th-Century Rio

Readings: Machado de Assis, pp. 160-209 [chaps. 92-121]
Cassia Roth, “From Free Womb to Criminalized Woman: Fertility Control in Brazilian Slavery and Freedom,” *Slavery & Abolition*, v.38, 2 (2017), pp. 269-85.

Doc: Francisca S. da Motta Diniz, “Early Brazilian Feminism,” *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 240-2.

Unit II: Modernity in Black and White**Week 6 (2/27, 3/1): The Rise of São Paulo and the Longing to be Modern**

Readings: Machado de Assis, pp. 210-244 [chaps. 122-148]
Green and Skidmore, pp. 107-34

Docs: “Demands of the São Paulo General Strike of 1917,” *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 295-7; Oswald de Andrade, “The Cannibalist Manifesto,” *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 300-5

Week 7 (3/6, 3/8): “Black Rome”—Salvador da Bahia

Readings: Green and Skidmore, pp. 121-139, 141-162
Anadelia A. Romo, *Brazil’s Living Museum*, pp. 1-12, 133-50

Docs: Gilberto Freyre, “The Masters and the Slaves,” pp. 330-4, in *The Brazil Reader*

MIDTERM EXAM, 3/8

Spring Break (3/13-3/17)

Week 8 (3/20, 3/22): Populist Politics and the Changing Urban Landscape in Rio

Readings: Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, pp. 41-54
Green and Skidmore, pp. 141-85

Docs: “A Fond Farewell to Praça Onze,” *The Rio Reader*, pp. 206-7
“Excerpts from *Child of the Dark*,” *The Brazil Reader*, pp. 391-5

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE IN RECITATION SECTION MEETING, 3/21

Unit III: From Democracy to Dictatorship and Back Again

Week 9 (3/27, 3/29): Racial Democracy and Popular Culture

Readings: Lispector, pp. vi-xiv
Green and Skidmore, pp. 185-96
McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, pp. 96-128

Docs: “Vargas’ Suicide Letter,” pp. 380-2; Abdias do Nascimento, “The Myth of Racial Democracy,” pp. 445-8, *The Brazil Reader*

Week 10 (4/3, 4/5): Institutional Acts and Economic Miracles

Readings: Lispector, pp. 1-36
Green and Skidmore, pp. 197-230

Doc: “A Letter to Pope Paul VI,” pp. 460-5; “National Security and the Araguaian Guerillas,” pp. 471-3, in *The Brazil Reader*.

Week 11 (4/10, 4/12): Transformations and Transitions

Readings: Lispector, pp. 36-77

Green and Skidmore, pp. 231-247

Docs: “Second-Wave Brazilian Feminism,” pp. 479-80; “LGBT Rights and Democracy,” pp. 481-3, *The Brazil Reader*

Week 12 (4/17, 4/19): The Marvelous City and the Challenges of Urban Life

Readings: Green and Skidmore, pp. 247-73
The Rio Reader, pp. 304-7, 333-6, 344-56

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE IN RECITATION SECTION MEETING, 4/18

Unit IV: Whiplash on a National Scale

Week 13 (4/24, 4/26): The Workers’ Party in Power, 2002-2016

Readings: “Lula’s Legacy in Brazil,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44:2 (2011), pp. 11-12, 19-22, 23-26, 34-37
Green and Skidmore, pp. 273-96

Doc: “The Bolsa Família Program,” pp. 523-5, in *The Brazil Reader*

Week 14 (5/1, 5/3): Corruption, Collapse, and the Resurgence of the Right

Readings: Green and Skidmore, pp. 297-322
“Lula’s Legacy in Brazil,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44:2 (2011), pp. 31-3
Benjamin A. Cowan, “Holy Ghosts of Brazil’s Past,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 48:4 (2016), pp. 346-352

Doc: “On the Imperative of Transnational Solidarity: A U.S. Black Feminist Statement on the Assassination of Marielle Franco,” *The Black Scholar*, Mar. 23, 2018 (scanned)

Week 15 (5/8): Wrap-up and Review for Final Exam

Readings: Anakwa Dwamena, “How Jair Bolsonaro and the Coronavirus Put Brazil’s Systemic Racism on Display,” *The New Yorker*, July 9, 2020 (scanned).
<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-jair-bolsonaro-and-the-coronavirus-put-brazils-systemic-racism-on-display>
Forrest Hylton, “Chronicle of a Coup Foretold,” LBR Blog, Jan. 9, 2023
<https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2023/january/chronicle-of-a-coup-foretold>

LONGER PAPER (FILM ANALYSIS) DUE ON MONDAY, 5/8

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, 5/11, 12:00-1:50PM