

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

HIS-319

## *SUGAR, SOCCER, & SAMBA: THE HISTORY OF BRAZIL*

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Welcome! Brazil is the largest country in Latin America, its biggest economy, and wields strong cultural influence. Nonetheless, given its size and importance, Brazil continues to “punch beneath its weight” in global awareness. While each of us consumes Brazilian products every day, the country’s foreign reputation remains overly defined by a relatively small handful of cultural exports, such as its unique and infectious music traditions and its storied legacy of soccer superstars. Indeed, there is a fantastic, semi-mythic quality to outsiders’ notions of *brasilidade*, or “Brazilianness,” perhaps best exemplified by the famous, samba-driven tradition of Carnaval: tropicality, sensuousness, joyousness.

Yet Brazil is too vast and its people too diverse to be accurately summed up by any single notion of *brasilidade*. For most of its history an agricultural exporting nation, today it is a rising regional power boasting of large and growing manufacturing, technology, and science sectors. Its armed forces lead UN peacekeeping missions, its multinational corporations are present throughout the hemisphere, and it may someday be a major oil-producing nation. Brazilian music, television, and films are watched as far away as China, South Africa, and the United States. Meanwhile, the Amazon and other sensitive ecological zones are critical to the health and stability of the global environment.

On another level, Brazilian social and cultural history is of particular interest to students in the United States, as it provides a series of natural and instructive comparisons to our own history. Like the US, it is geographically vast and demographically diverse, yet nonetheless exhibits a strong sense of nationalism. Its Native American populations had a foundational historical influence; it was the destination for millions of slaves imported from West Africa; and it incorporated generations of immigrants from Europe and Asia. Unlike the US, however, the tendency in Brazil was frequently toward ethnic and cultural blending rather than separation, a tradition that many have (controversially) held forth as a shining model for the US to follow in pursuit of true tolerance and equality. Yet perhaps paradoxically, while the US industrialized early and developed a large middle class, Brazil retained its “agricultural vocation” much longer, and today remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, a land where fabulous wealth and heart-wrenching poverty rub shoulder-to-shoulder in the streets.

This class explores the general history of Brazil from 1500 AD to today. It will explore the roots of *brasilidade* and Brazilian social, cultural, and economic development from its birth among the Portuguese-Indian interactions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to the slave plantations of the 17<sup>th</sup>, the conquest of the backcountry in the 18<sup>th</sup>, the uneven quest for modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup>, and the ongoing struggle for democracy, identity, and soccer supremacy in the 20<sup>th</sup>.

## HISTORY DEPARTMENT LEARNING GOALS

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. *[Historical Comprehension]*
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. *[Historical Analysis]*
3. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. *[Historical Research]*
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. *[Historical Interpretation]*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

As an advanced course in History, the graded component will consist primarily of reading comprehension, historical inquiry integrating lectures with films and primary sources, and writing. Grades will be given for: 1) attendance; 2) 6 brief reflections on assigned readings; 3) a series of film reviews; 4) contributions to in-class discussions and activities; and 5) a final essay (8-10 pages). Grading is based on a points system, with 100 points possible overall. **The points system rewards both quality and quantity;** while it may be possible to improve your score by doing extra work, it is easier to do better work rather than simply more of it.

Attendance	10 points
Reading reflections	20 points
Film reviews	20 points
Discussion and participation	20 points
Essay 2	30 points

## TEXTS AND FILMS

This class requires heavy—but interesting!—reading. **All readings are mandatory.** There is one required text, a sources reader titled *The Brazil Reader*, edited by Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti (Duke University Press, 1999). All other sources are online or otherwise posted to the course website in pdf format.

A series of Brazilian films will also serve as our sources. Most of these will be available online, linked from the class website. Some of them, however, are only available in DVD or VHS format. These will be placed on reserve in Jackson Library, and students must make time to watch them there. You may also find some available for rent on Netflix or Amazon, if you prefer.

**Four specific films are required of everyone, while students may choose which among the rest they will watch.** The required films are: *Quilombo* (1984, DVD on reserve in the library); *Cidade de Deus* (2002, online); *Denying Brazil* (2002, online); and *Central do Brasil* (1998, online).

## READING REFLECTIONS

Six times during the semester, students will respond briefly in writing to the assigned readings. Handwritten responses are fine. These reflections will form the basis for our classroom discussions. Students should read the assigned materials and then reflect briefly on their broader significance for the course, particularly how they link with and inform the issues addressed in the lectures, films, and other readings. Then you will write a few sentences representing your reactions. Inconclusive remarks and open-ended questions that occur to you while reading are fully acceptable—the point is *reflection*, not necessarily *conclusions*. **All responses are due on the dates indicated on the course schedule.** They will be graded in this way: each response will receive a mark of (S)atisfactory, (U)nsatisfactory, or Z(ero). S's are worth 4 points, U's are worth 2 points, and Z's are worth zero points, up to 20 points total.

## FILM REVIEWS

Throughout the semester the student will also be responsible for viewing the listed Brazilian films and producing short film reviews. These reviews should be about 250 words in length, about one page, double-spaced. **The reviews should *identify and discuss the important historical issues raised in the film.*** They should *not* merely emphasize the plot nor dwell on subjective questions about the film's aesthetics or quality (that is, whether or not you liked it, or whether the director did a good job). This is a History course, not film studies. Thus, the reviews should openly contemplate what the film teaches us about Brazilian history, particularly as they pertain to broader course themes. Each review will receive up to 4 points, based on thoughtfulness and insight, up to 20 points total. That means all students will need to watch at least five films (the four required films + one more) in order to receive a perfect score. Students may review up to seven films overall to accumulate points, but not more than that. **All reviews are due on the day they are listed on the course schedule. I cannot accept late reviews.**

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance at all class meetings is **mandatory, and I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences.** Understanding that life happens, all students start with a “perfect” attendance score (that is, 10 points, or A+) and are allowed two absences without penalty. After that, I will subtract 1 point per missed class. Since lateness is disruptive, I will also penalize excessive or habitual tardiness 1/2 to 1 point. **I reserve the right to drop any student with more than six absences.**

This class will feature an important discussion component, built from our interaction with the films and other primary sources. **You must come to each class prepared to discuss the readings, and to both ask and answer questions derived from them.** Every week each student will receive a participation grade of either S(atisfactory) or U(nsatisfactory). The final participation grade (20 points possible) will be determined by the formula  $G=(S+1/14)*0.2$ , where S is the number of weeks with a grade of S (the +1 is to allow for a missed class or a “bad” week).

## ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

In lieu of a final exam, at the end of the semester students must conceive and produce a historical essay integrating the materials encountered during the course, including lectures, readings, and films. The paper may build upon ideas and questions previously raised in reading responses and/or film reviews. The essay theme, broadly speaking, will be determined by the class as a whole, with the instructor's guidance. However, individual students will choose which particular sources (films and readings) they wish to use in their papers. The papers should be approximately 8 – 10 pages in length, and will count for up to 30 points toward the final grade.

### **CLASS WEBSITE AND EMAIL**

**You must have a working email address, and check it regularly**, as it is the primary means of communication out of class. I will send out reminders, assignments, and other announcements regularly. Students are responsible for any information sent out via email, as it has the same force as if it were announced in class.

The website on Canvas will also play a major role. I will post the mandatory readings, topics for short assignments, study questions, links, videos, and other materials necessary to perform well. Occasionally, I will also use the website to follow up on themes covered in lectures and discussions, and respond to student questions. **You should check the website regularly.**

### **STANDARDS AND POLICIES**

**All written work must meet basic university writing standards** regarding spelling and grammar. Proofread and spell-check, as grades account for clarity and quality. **Assignments are to be typed in Microsoft Word (or its equivalent), double-spaced, in 12-pt New Times Roman font, with all the standard 1-inch margins.**

Plagiarism—that is, when you quote or paraphrase somebody else's words or ideas without crediting him or her—is the “cardinal sin” of the university, the academic equivalent of lying, cheating, or stealing. **Plagiarism is simultaneously fraud and theft. Every word you write in this class must be your own, not copied from any other source, whether in print or online,** unless clearly indicated. If in doubt, ask! The UNCG Academic Integrity Policy is online at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu>. I reserve the right to fail and press for disciplinary action against any student who has plagiarized on any assignment, no matter how minor.

### **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

#### ***Civility and respect***

In this course we discuss sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as race, class, gender, imperialism, exploitation, and immigration. We will also see and read primary materials representing archaic and (frankly) offensive perspectives. They are part of our history whether we like it or not, and we will not censor or ignore them. Students should be prepared to address them directly and in a mature, academic fashion. We will not always agree with one another, yet we welcome diverse interpretations, as a discussion in which everyone agrees is more of a pep rally than a classroom, and unlikely to be enlightening. We aim instead to foster an atmosphere

in which all students feel free to express their ideas, and in which we can disagree and challenge one another openly without feeling threatened or disrespected. Thus, **personal attacks and offensive language will not be tolerated**, since they obstruct honest debate. A good rule to keep in mind: **when challenging another's arguments, try to do so in a way that assumes good faith on his or her part**. Address the strongest aspects of his or her ideas, not a cartoonish, simplistic, and easily dismissed version of them. This rule has the added benefit of requiring each of us to think harder and question our own assumptions.

### *Technology*

The proliferation of laptops, tablets, and other gadgets is a mixed blessing. While it can be useful, it can also be the ultimate distraction, and grades may suffer. My policy is as follows:

- **Students are adults**, and can decide for themselves whether to bring technology into the classroom, or if it would damage their class performance.
- **However, it is unacceptable to distract other students.** Students who wish to use a laptop or tablet in class must sit in the back row.
- I reserve the right to ask students whose laptop/tablet activities are disruptive to others, **for any reason**, to shut down the machines.
- **Cell phone use—including texting—is always prohibited.**

### *Food and drink*

You may have drinks—but not food—in class, unless you bring enough for everybody, plus a double portion for the instructor.

*Have a great semester!*