

**OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE  
FALL 1 - 2021**

# **Latin American Studies I**

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# AGENDA

## WEEK 6 - LAS APPROACHES TO LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

- Ch. 5, 6, 8 from Swanson's *Companion to Latin American Studies*



# COURSE SCHEDULE

## WEEK 1

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WHAT IS LATIN AMERICAN  
STUDIES (LAS)?:  
DISCIPLINARY INTRODUCTION,  
HISTORY, AND CONCERNS

## WEEK 2

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THE COLONIAL ERA:  
CONTACT TO 1800

## WEEK 3

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THE COLONIAL ERA:  
1800-PRESENT

## WEEK 4

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NATIONALISM AND THE  
AFTERLIVES OF COLONIAL  
VIOLENCE

## WEEK 5

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LAS APPROACHES TO THE  
CARIBBEAN

## WEEK 6

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LAS APPROACHES TO  
LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

<https://prestontaylorstone.com/2021/07/17/las1/>





**LEFT:** *GESTACIONES DE VIDA Y PINTURA VI (2011)*  
**ABOVE:** *LA TABERNA DE LOS SUEÑOS SINCOPADOS*  
**JAZZAMOART VÁSQUES**





# FINDING A LITERARY IDENTITY

- "Most of the newly formed states failed to build the stable democracies envisioned by the liberators. Consequently, literary production became further diversified as it strived to embody, both ideologically and aesthetically, the nation-building projects of local elites and to confront the anarchical times dominated by despotic regimes and punctuated by violent political strife between competing ideological groups." (Swanson)
- "While the specific manifestations of these overlapping movements were influenced by regional contingencies, individual creativity assumed a surprising variety of forms...[this literature is] firmly rooted in the belief that writing can be an effective vehicle for fostering projects of political reform and denouncing social injustice"
- **Romanticism (1810-1860s)**: a fashionable tendency to frenzy, melancholy, world-weariness, and even self-destruction; focus on sentimentality (Rousseau's famous quote inspirational to the Romantics is "I felt before I thought")
  - **Indianism** (generally confined to Brazil): focus on Indigenous protagonist, nationalist zeal (think "noble savage"); emphasis on the beauty of Brazilian flora and fauna
- **Realism (1850s-1900s)**: described by the French writer Stendhal as 'carrying around a mirror' to reflect reality objectively to itself
  - **Picaresque**: written as a pseudo-autobiography about a lower social class individual who lives by their wits, this style of Realist novel dates back to the Spanish Golden Age (1492-1659).
  - **Costumbrismo/la tradición**: "vivid renditions of everyday customs, local milieux, folk beliefs, oral lore" (Swanson)
  - **Gauchesca**: based on *Fecundo*'s presentation of the unruly, savage gaucho, this transforms the fascination with the independent spirit of the gaucho into a nationalist embodiment



# SAB, GERTRUDIS GÓMEZ DE AVELLANEDA (1841)

Yo he pensado mucho en esto: he invocado en mis noches de vigilia ese gran nombre - ¡la virtud! Pero ¿qué es la virtud? ¿en qué consiste? yo he deseado comprenderlo, pero en vano he preguntado la verdad a los hombres. Me acuerdo que cuando mi amo me enviaba a confesar mis culpas a los pies de un sacerdote, yo preguntaba al ministro de Dios qué haría para alcanzar la virtud.

**La virtud del esclavo**, me respondía, **es obedecer y callar, servir con humildad y resignación a sus legítimos dueños, y no juzgarlos nunca**. Esta explicación no me satisfacía. ¡Y qué! pensaba yo: ¿la virtud puede ser relativa? ¿la virtud no es una misma para todos los hombres? **¿El gran jefe de esta gran familia humana, habrá establecido diferentes leyes para los que nacen con la tez negra y la tez blanca?** ¿No tienen todos las mismas necesidades, las misma pasiones, los mismos defectos? ¿Por qué pues tendrán unos el derecho de esclavizar y los otros la obligación de obedecer? Dios, cuya mano suprema ha repartido sus beneficios con equidad sobre todos los países del globo, que hace salir al sol para toda su gran familia dispersa sobre la tierra, que ha escrito el gran dogma de la igualdad sobre la tumba; ¿Dios podrá sancionar los códigos inicuos en los que el hombre funda sus derechos para comprar y vender al hombre, y sus intérpretes en la tierra dirán al esclavo "tu deber es sufrir: la virtud del esclavo es olvidarse de que es hombre, renegar de los beneficios que Dios le dispersó, abdicar la dignidad con que le he revestido, y besar la mano que imprime el sello de la infamia?" **No, los hombres mienten: la virtud no existe entre ellos...** Si son los hombres los que me han impuesto este horrible destino, ellos son los que deben temer al presentarse delante de Dios: porque tienen que dar cuenta terrible, porque han contraído una responsabilidad inmensa.



# GABRIEL DE LA CONCEPCIÓN VALDÉS, "PLÁCIDO"

**"Oh Liberty, I Wait For Thee" (1844 Trans. *The New York Tribune*)**

Oh Liberty! I wait for thee  
To break this chain and dungeon bar;  
I hear thy spirit calling me  
Deep in the frozen North, afar,  
With voice like God's, and visage like a star.

Long cradled by the mountain wind,  
Thy mates the eagle and the storm,  
Arise! and from thy brow unbind  
The wreath that gives its starry form,  
And smite the strength that would thy grace deform!

Yes, Liberty! thy dawning light,  
Obscured by dungeon bars, shall cast  
Its splendor on the breaking night,  
And tyrants, flying pale and fast,  
Shall tremble at thy gaze and stand aghast!





# SANTA, FEDERICO GAMBOA (1903)

- Mira, te quiero tanto, que si mil virginidades poseyera y las apetecieras tú, las mil te las daría, a tu antojo, una por una, para que la dicha que en mi cuerpo alcanzaras no la igualaran los cuerpos de las demás mujeres que de ti han de enamorarse
- Look, I love you so much, that if I had a thousand virginities and you wanted them, I would give them to you, at your whim, one by one, so that the happiness that you reached in my body would not be equaled by the bodies of the other women with whom you have fallen in love
- Siempre estos desencantos y este asco de continuar la misma vida fatigante e insípida, a las veces cruel, obligándole a compartir el placer genésico con quien menos lo apetecía... Siempre estas ráfagas de arrepentimiento al despertar únicamente, y después, en el curso del día, una lenta connaturalización con esa propia vida, un convencimiento de que ya jamás podía aspirar a otra...
- Always these disappointments and this disgust of continuing the same tiring and insipid life, at times cruel, forcing her to share the reproductive pleasure with whomever least wanted it ... Always these bursts of regret upon waking alone, and later, in the course of the day, a slow coming-to-terms with her own life, a conviction that she could never aspire to another ...
- Ya que era esclava de todo el mundo, ya que no se pertenecía, defendería su corazón —en el dudoso caso que algo le quedara de él— y que se conformaran con su cuerpo magnífico, resistente, desnudo de ropas y desnudo de afectos; que en él saciara el público su lascivia inmensa, feroz, inacabable; que unos se lo bendijeran y besaran, y otros se lo magullaran y maldijeran
- Since she was the slave of the whole world, since she did not belong to herself, she would defend her heart — in the doubtful case that something was left of it — and that they were satisfied with her magnificent, resistant body, naked of clothes and naked of affections; that in it the public would satisfy their immense, ferocious, endless lust; for some to bless and kiss it, and others to bruise and curse it



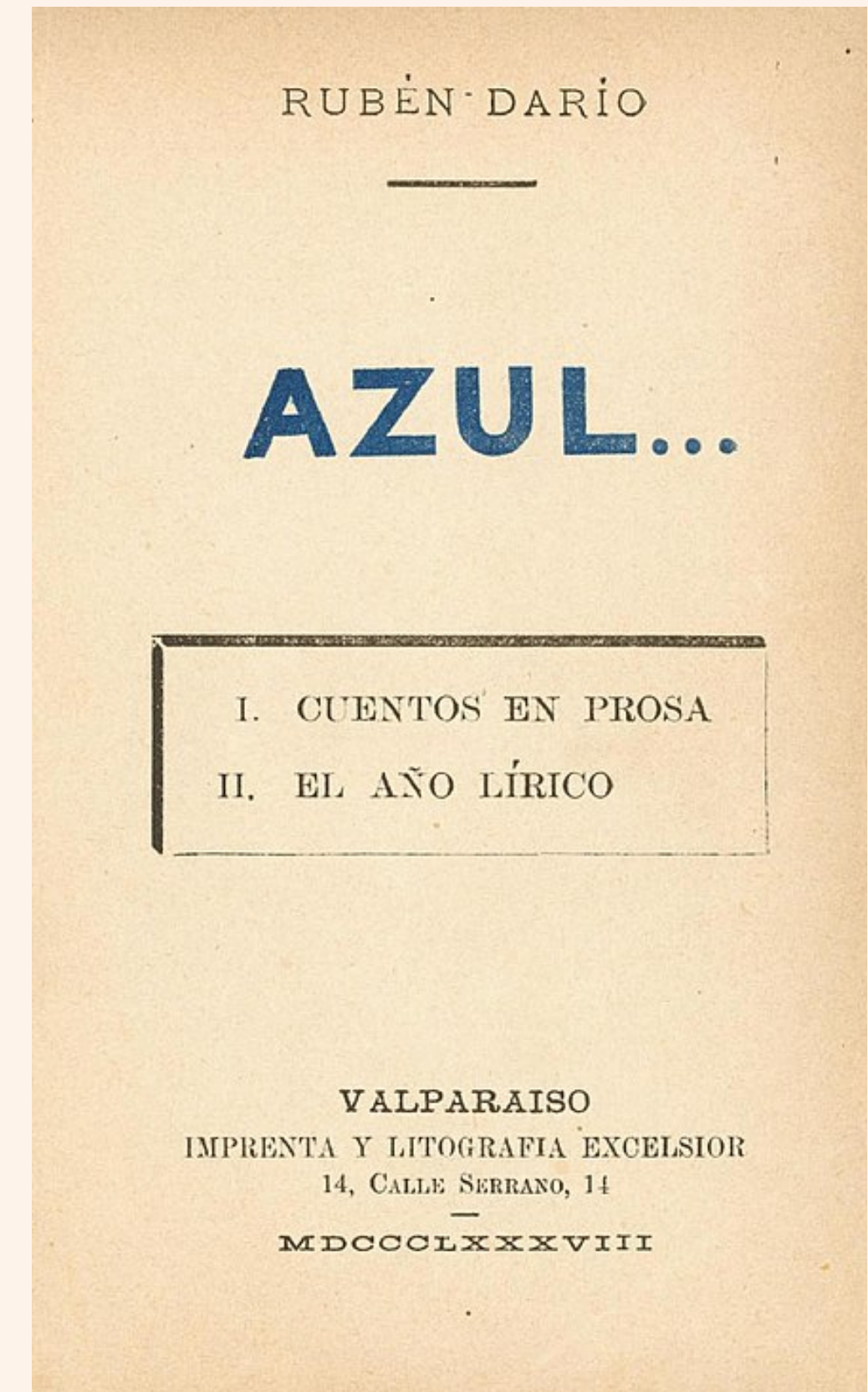
# THE POSTHUMOUS MEMOIRS OF BRÁS CUBAS (1881), JOAQUIM MARIA MACHADO DE ASSIS

- "The work of a dead man. I wrote it with a playful pen and melancholy ink and it isn't hard to foresee what can come out of that marriage. I might add that serious people will find some semblance of a normal novel, while frivolous people won't find their usual one here. There it stands, deprived of the esteem of the serious and the love of the frivolous, the two main pillars of opinion...The work itself is everything: if it pleases you, dear reader, I shall be well paid for the task; if it doesn't please you, I'll pay you with a snap of the finger and goodbye." (Preface)
- "As it so happened, one day in the morning while I was strolling about my place an idea started to hang from the trapeze I have in my brain. Once hanging there it began to wave its arms and legs and execute the most daring antics of a tightrope-walker that anyone could imagine. I let myself stand there contemplating it. Suddenly it took a great leap, extended its arms and legs until it took on the shape of an X: decipher me or I'll devour you. That idea was nothing less than the invention of a sublime remedy, an antihypochondriacal poultice, destined to alleviate our melancholy humanity... But now that I'm on the other side of life I can confess everything: what mainly influenced me was the pleasure I would have seeing in print in newspapers, on store counters, in pamphlets, on street corners, and, finally, on boxes of the medicine these three words: Bras Cubas Poultice. Why deny it? I had a passion for ballyhoo, the limelight, fireworks. More modest people will censure me perhaps for this defect. I'm confident, however, that clever people will recognize this talent of mine. So my idea had two faces, like a medal, one turned toward the public and the other toward me. On one side philanthropy and profit, on the other a thirst for fame. Let us say: —love of glory." (The Poultice)
- "And now I have the feeling that if some lady has followed along these pages she closes the book and doesn't read the rest. For her, the interest in my love, which was love, has died out. Fifty years old! It isn't invalidism yet, but it's no longer sprightliness. With ten more years I'll understand what an Englishman once said, I'll understand that "it's a matter of not finding anyone who remembers my parents and the way in which I must face my own OBLIVION." Put that name in small caps. OBLIVION! It's only proper that all honor be paid to a personage so despised and so worthy, a last-minute guest at the party, but a sure one." (Oblivion)



# MODERNISMO (1885-1920)

- Founded by (and lasting for just about the duration of his life) Rubén Darío, **modernismo** (not to be confused with Modernism) was a movement of literary arts that could be characterized by a rejection of positivism—that all knowledge is derived from empirically-derived experience—and naturalism.
- Characteristics of **modernismo** include
  - the intense process of perfecting verse in order to use rhetoric to find deeper meaning
  - using Latin/Greek mythological characters, myths, and the displacement of the reader to an exotic elsewhere away from everyday life
  - national pride
- Despite only lasting about the span of Darío's life, modernismo has been extremely impactful to literature (especially poetry) in Latin America. Darío is often seen as the greatest writer of poetry in Latin America before Paz and Neruda.
- Paz describes him thusly: "At times, he reminds us of Poe; at other times, of Whitman. Of the first, in that portion of his work in which he scorns the world of the Americas to seek an otherworldly music; of the second, in that portion in which he expresses his vitalist affirmations, his pantheism, and his belief that he was, in his own right, the bard of Latin America as Whitman was of Anglo-America."





# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

- **Negrismo (1920s-1930s):** Arising with the New Negro Movement in the US and the Négritude movement in the Francophone Caribbean, Negrista poets largely emphasized the biological and cultural hybridity of Afro-Caribbean people, centering on the performative aspects of poetry such as Afro-Cuban dancers, singers, and percussionists. Not all Negrista writers viewed Blackness or Africanness the same, meaning there were different ideas circulating about what constituted one's *main* identity (having been descended from Africans or the country in which one was born)
- **Pablo Neruda:** Chilean poet and diplomat who was a close advisor to the socialist president Salvador Allende. Nobel Laureate (1971); Márquez calls him the greatest poet of the 20th century in any language; he is known for his writer-activist style (he wrote several poems about the Spanish Civil War); Seen as 'the people's poet' by Chileans
- **Octavio Paz:** the Mexican poet who once wrote, "Wouldn't it be better to turn life into poetry rather than to make poetry from life?", Paz was encouraged by Neruda to write poetry; during his travels he became inspired by the Modernists and the Surrealists, and wrote particularly about Mexican life and history

## YO NACÍ DEL AFRICA by Arsenio Rodriguez

Yo no soy Rodriguez  
Yo no soy Travieso  
Tal vez soy Lumumba  
Tal Vez soy Kasavubu  
Yo naci del Africa  
Si, Africa  
Soy el Congo  
Tu eres mi tierra, mi tierra linda.

[I was born in Africa  
I am not a Rodriguez  
I am not a Travieso  
Perhaps I am a Lumumba  
Perhaps a Kasavubu  
I was born of Africa  
Yes, Africa  
I am the Congo  
You are my homeland]





# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

- **Magical Realism (1940s-):** the employment of the realist mode but presentation of non-realistic, fantastical events; sometimes called *lo real maravilloso* (though some critics say this is different from magical realism); it often employs methods of metafiction or authorial presence in order to focus the constructedness of the text while also appealing to the 'reality' of the text's content; very often uses these methods as forms of political criticism. Many will say that this movement relies on the fantastical to prevent the real-world writers who wrote in this genre from being persecuted by the governments which they were criticizing in these novels. Jorge Luis Borges is seen somewhat as the 'father' of the Latin American movement, largely because of his 1935 essay encouraging writers to participate in it as a mode of writing; the experimental style is often lumped into the Post-Modernist aesthetic (especially when we consider writers like Toni Morrison, who use the magical real to the same effects).
- **Testimonio (1980s-1990s):** A non-fiction movement of socially conscious writing that combines the epistemological concerns of several disciplines; "recognized as a unique narrative form representing the creative vitality of Latin American culture and its power to express the defiance of subordinate groups and to recover historically muted voices. As a form of life-writing that attempts to 'interface' several disciplines (literature, ethnology, historiography) with a progressive political agenda, testimonio does not fit comfortably within the contours of any single disciplinary model. Nonetheless, the paradigm of rebellion that underlies testimonio, combined with the moral responsibility of the intellectual, inspires multiple associations with confession, autobiography, ethnography and New Journalism, on the one hand, and the Latin American tradition of giving voice to the marginalized and defying hegemonic forms of expression, on the other.



# LITERARY CRITICAL MOVEMENTS

- **Historicism, Nationalism, Culturalism (1880-1945):** These three currents are, according to Swanson, exhibited by the text first introducing Latin American literature to the academic community in the US, *Literary Currents* (1945). The text argues for the extreme importance of literary culture to understand the social cultures of the region. Additionally, and why I have grouped this into the three terms 'historicism' 'nationalism' and 'culturalism' is because these are the terms we use today to describe a focus on literary production as a form of historical documentation (historicism), a form of nationalist identity- and nation-making (nationalism), and an articulation of cultural issues (culturalism).
- **Social Criticism (1900-1950s):** This era is marked most by poetry, particularly poets who (like Paz and Neruda) are also heavily involved with political movements that shape their artistic expression. We might also call this a kind of **Political Modernism** since while it was inspired by the Modernists in Europe and the US, it was also very much inspired by the left-leaning Surrealists and was not as moderate as the traditional Modernists of the Anglo-American canon (Eliot, Pound).
- **Boom era (1960s):** Focused primarily on novels, this takes place mostly in the postwar era, when globalization becomes an exponentially ascendant movement. The most famous novelists of the region are from this era, which is marked by the popularity of Latin American authors throughout the world. Borges, Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes are all part of this 'movement' or, more accurately, era.
- **Dependency Theory (1960s-1970s):** "Dependency theorists understood the economic success of the USA and Europe as resulting from their dominance over peripheral regions: overdevelopment in some regions caused underdevelopment in others. Breaking this cycle meant altering the periphery's dependence on the global economy through a realignment of political and economic power. In keeping with its Marxian roots, dependency theory was thus a revolutionary paradigm which advocated radical social change."
- **Myth and Archive (1990s):** Modeled after González Echevarría's text (1990), this school of thought undermines the traditional humanist assumption that literature represents a collective subject of Latin American-ness; instead, Echevarría focuses on the interplay of other discourses (namely science, law, and anthropology) with literature to make the case that narrative is 'doubly-mimetic' (represents reality by mimicking the discursive practice of other truth-'knowledge'-discourses).
- **Transculturation vs. Post-coloniality (1980s-):** transculturation is similar to the melting pot or mosaic theory of humanity while post-coloniality (and later decoloniality) will refute this as ignoring the inherent power differentials in the history of the region, power differentials that have decided what is and is not considered literature and how groups of people have been portrayed





**ABOVE: *TIGRES* (1993) AND LEFT: *VIVIR ES TODO SACRIFICIO* (1996)**

**FELICIANO CENTURIÓN**

[HTTPS://VISUALAIDS.ORG/ARTISTS/FELICIANO-CENTURION](https://visualaids.org/artists/feliciano-centurion)





# LAS II COURSE SCHEDULE

## **WEEK 1**

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RACE AND INDIGENEITY IN  
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

## **WEEK 2**

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AFRO-DIASPORIC RELIGIONS  
IN THE CARIBBEAN

## **WEEK 3**

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U.S. IMPERIALISM AND  
HEGEMONY IN LATIN  
AMERICA

## **WEEK 4**

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THE SUBALTERN: HEGEMONY,  
CULTURAL STUDIES, AND  
DECOLONIALITY IN LATIN  
AMERICA

## **WEEK 5**

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LAS APPROACHES: FEMINIST,  
GENDER, AND SEXUALITY  
STUDIES

## **WEEK 6**

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LAS APPROACHES: AFFECT  
AND POST-HEGEMONY