COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Undergraduate:

• “Musical Literature: Intertexuality Between Music, Literature and Film,” Fall 2011. This course addresses the vibrant relationship between music, literature and film in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean beginning with the vanguard poets of negritude to contemporary novels. By using Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s theory on transculturation and Ángel Quintero Rivera’s theory of “música mulata” we will explore the specific way in which music has contoured the arts in general, and use the notion of transculturation in Latin America and the Caribbean as a hermeneutic to interpret the influence of music as not only an art form but also a popular collective will and unofficial history. We will focus closely on the musical traditions throughout the Caribbean, emphasizing the travel and transculturation of Cuban musical rhythms and their trajectory throughout the Caribbean and the circum-Caribbean, including the great filmic tradition of Mexico’s “época dorada” as part of the “gran Caribe”; a moment when Cuban musicians were particularly coveted and a whole genre of films called “cabareteras” emerged featuring afro-Cuban music and performers.

• “Bandits, Fanatics, and the Idea of Death in Mexico and Brazil,” Fall 2010. This course comparatively explores the articulations of death as a trope and epistemological system that informs the cultural practices and production in rural regions of Brazil and Mexico.

• “Decadent and Captive Bodies: Introduction to 20th Century Latin American Literature,” Spring 2009, Fall 2009. This course provides an introduction to 20th century Latin American literature by organizing readings of novel, poetry, theatre and film around the trope of the decadent or captive body. The notion of captivity is understood in broad terms which include sexual, social and political captivity. By examining the recurrent figure of the prostitute, the political prisoner (and the larger body politic) in the grasp of oppressive regimes and marginalized figures whose fragmented bodies descend into abjection, we will begin to examine the important metaphors surrounding the body that emerge in Latin American texts of the 20th century.

• “Cultural Encounters: Introduction to Latin American Civilization and Culture,” Fall 2008, 2010, 2011. This course introduces students to a critical history of Latin American culture from before the Spanish Invasion to the present day. I designed the course around the trope of the “encounter,” which organized the readings on the various historical moments of contact, change and transculturation in three primary regions: Mexico (pre-colonial Mesoamerica), the Caribbean and the Southern Cone.
Graduate:

• “¿Vive la revolución? Literature and Art of the Mexican Revolution,” Fall 2009. This graduate course engages the cultural production surrounding the reality and myth of the Mexican Revolution. Our approach delves into the debates that have emerged from the cultural and socio-political legacy of the Revolution, both during and immediately after the violent phase (1910-1920) to contemporary interpretations. Diverse literature and art forms (including fiction, corridos and films) as well as historical documents underscore the contradictory and aleatory nature of the Revolution as both an idealistic project and harsh military reality.