Course Description
Popular culture – the practices and products elaborated by ordinary people – is more than just an entertaining curiosity. In fact, it informs people’s identities and shapes their social commitments. As a result, an understanding of a society’s conflicts, its hierarchies, even its politics requires an understanding of its multiple forms of popular culture. This course will examine the history of popular culture in Latin America, delving deeply into popular religion, sports, music, food, and film. Focusing on a number of specific case studies, we will seek to understand the complex, transnational, and often commercial origins of popular culture in various Latin America countries. We will pay particularly close attention to the larger, political effects of developments in popular culture. The class will be composed of three units, each dedicated to a particular arena of popular culture: religion, music, and sports.

Learning Objectives
- Students will learn to identify and engage with scholarly arguments.
- Students will become familiar with several methodologies for the study of popular culture, including ethnography, musicological analysis, and sports history.
- Students will develop their ability to write clearly about complex topics in history and popular culture analysis.
- Students will learn how popular religion, music and sports have shaped modern Latin American history.

Required Books
Kristen Norget, *Days of Death, Days of Life: Ritual in the Popular Culture of Oaxaca*
Roger Kittleson, *The Country of Football: Soccer and the Making of Modern Brazil*

These books are available at the University bookstore and elsewhere. All other readings listed in the class schedule below are required and are available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements
- **Participation.** Students must come to class prepared to discuss the reading assigned for the day. Participation is graded. If many students are not participating, I reserve the right to give pop quizzes (don’t make me do it!)
- **Reading Response Papers.** Each student is required to submit eight (8) reading response papers over the course of the semester. These are brief essays of around 500 words in which you respond to the assigned reading for a class session by explaining the author’s principal argument and offering one critical intervention of your own. You might draw a connection to something else you’ve read in this class or elsewhere, or you might explain the author’s use of sources, or you could argue in support of or against the author’s
interpretation. You can select any of the 22 reading assignments you wish, but you must submit at least two response papers in each of the three units of the course. If you choose to write a response for an assignment that includes multiple book chapters, you should select one of the assigned chapters as the subject of your essay. Reading response papers are due before class on the day the particular reading assignment is due. Papers should be submitted as a Word doc attached to an email sent to me (mkarush@gmu.edu). No late papers will be accepted. You may write as many of these as you like; I will count your eight highest grades.

- **Take-Home Exam**: On the final day of class, I will circulate a take-home exam, composed of two essay questions. Students will select one of these and write a 6-8-page essay in response. The essay will be due one week later.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- Participation 20%
- Reading Response Papers 50%
- Take-Home Exam 30%

**A Note on Classroom Decorum**

Students should feel free to bring laptops, ipads, etc to class in order to take notes. However, please try to stay off of social media, email, and the web (unless you are googling a name or event that was mentioned in lecture or discussion). The material we will be discussing in class is complex; it requires your full attention. More important, the images on your screen are likely to distract students sitting behind you. If you (like me) are one of those people who will find it hard not to surf the web, then leave the laptop at home. Similarly, if you stayed out late the night before and you know you are unlikely to be able to stay awake, skip class and get the notes from a classmate. Sleeping students are a distraction to others. Finally, and most importantly, **DO NOT TEXT** (or use social media) in class. If you have a personal emergency to deal with, quietly leave class and go deal with it.

**Class Schedule**

1/21 Intro

1/23 What is Popular Culture?


1. **Religion**

1/28 Popular Catholicism in Mexico: The Cristero War I

**Reading**: Julia Young, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War*, ch. 2

1/30 Popular Catholicism in Mexico: The Cristero War II

2/4 The Cristero Migrants: Transnational Mexican Catholicism

**Reading**: *Mexican Exodus*, ch. 7
2/6 Popular Catholicism in Oaxaca I  
Reading: Norget, 1-69

2/11 Popular Catholicism in Oaxaca II  
Reading: Norget, 70-150

2/13 Popular Catholicism in Oaxaca III  
Reading: Norget, 151-183

2/18 Popular Catholicism in Oaxaca IV  
Reading: Norget, 187-270

2/20 Counterpoint: Protestantism I  

2/25 Protestantism II  

2/27 Counterpoint: West African Religion in Cuba  

II. Music
3/3 The Transnational History of “Latin Music” I  
Reading: Garcia, 1-63

3/5 The Transnational History of “Latin Music” II  
Reading: Garcia, 64-116

3/10, 3/12 Spring Break

3/17 The Transnational History of “Latin Music” III  
Reading: Garcia, 117-46

3/19 Women in Latin Music  

3/24 Counterpoint: Rock and Roll in Mexico  
3/26 Class Canceled

3/31 Counterpoint: The Nuevo Cancionero Movement in Argentina I

4/2 The Nuevo Cancionero Movement in Argentina II

III. Sports
4/7 Soccer in Brazil I
Reading: Kittleson, 1-92

4/9 Soccer in Brazil II
Reading: Kittleson, 93-129

4/14 Soccer in Brazil III
Reading: Kittleson, 130-225

4/16 Counterpoint: Women and Soccer

4/21 Women and Soccer II

4/23 Counterpoint: Soccer in Argentina

4/28 Counterpoint: Baseball in the Dominican Republic

4/30 Baseball in the DR II

5/7 Take-Home Final Due
ENROLLMENT INFORMATION
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website, registrar.gmu.edu.)
Last day to add a class: 1/28
Last day to drop a class with no tuition penalty: 2/5
Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. For the purposes of this course, make sure that you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. You may not present anyone else’s words or ideas as if they were yours. If I suspect that you have, I will immediately turn your case over to the Honor Committee.

MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS
Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

DISABILITY SERVICES
Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

WRITING CENTER
For help with your writing, please use the services of the Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; http://writingcenter.gmu.edu; wcenter@gmu.edu

OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES
There are a great many student support resources available on campus. For a complete list of these, see https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowing-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/