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FROM *WEST SIDE STORY* TO HIP-HOP: STUDIES IN LATINO/A PERFORMANCE

SPAN 552 - 01 / 3 credit hours
Tuesday 4.20 - 6.50 p.m.

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Instructor: Dr. Karen Secrist

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Office hours: T 12.30 - 1.30 p.m.; W 2.30 - 3.30 p.m. (or by appointment)



• course description •

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar explores the intersection between the rapidly evolving field of performance studies and contemporary forms of cultural production for, by and about Latinos/as in the United States. Through the analysis of everyday performative practices together with music, theater, film, television, spoken-word poetry, performance art and activist interventions, performance is engaged as a mode of critical inquiry, a means of subjection, an outlet for creative expression and a forum for political activism. We will pay particular attention to hegemonic representations of Latinidad as well as the alternative forms of self-representations that Latino/a artists propose from the margins. By bringing performative theories of identity and identification into conversation with themes in Latino Studies, we will think through the construction of Latino/a identities as they shape—and are shaped by—particular national, ethnic, racial, class, sexual and gendered identities. *Conducted in Spanish.*
Prerequisite: Undergraduate major in Spanish or the equivalent.

• required texts • (available in University bookstore)

- Bial, Henry, ed. *The Performance Studies Reader*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2007. (PSR)
 - Gómez-Peña, Guillermo. *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems, and Loqueras for the End of the Century*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2001.
 - Leguizamo, John. *The Works of John Leguizamo*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008. (JL)
 - Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. *Boricua Pop: Puerto Ricans and the Latinization of American Culture*. New York: NYU Press, 2004. (BP)
 - Taylor, Diana, and Marcela A. Fuentes, ed. *Estudios avanzados de performance*. New York: NYU Press, 2011. (EAP)
- *All other readings will be made available through the library's online reserve system.*
 - *Films can be viewed in the Language Resource Center (LRC) (Morrissey 3200).*

• **topical outline** •

- Setting the stage—key terms & critical concepts
- Latinos/as go Hollywood
- Latinos/as on Broadway
- Bodies, movement & gesture—staging Latino masculinity and Latina excess
- Affect & kinship—performing *la familia*
- Colonialism, consumption & the ethnographic gaze
- Speech acts & other performatives
- Rap & hip-hop—putting language to a beat
- Going viral—AIDS & activism
- Temporality, ephemerality & liveness
- Patrolling the rhetorical & affective borderlands
- Navigating physical & psychic spaces
- Remapping circuits of Latinidad—transnationalism & globalization

• **learning objectives** •

Over the course of the semester, students will refine skills in critical thinking; oral and written expression; and techniques of close textual, visual, sonic and performance analysis. Students will also develop a critical vocabulary for describing and interpreting diverse genres of performance. By the end of the semester, students will be able to respond thoughtfully to the following questions:

- What is performance? What is performativity? What is performance studies?
- How can performance studies theory be applied to Latino/a performance practice and vice versa?
- How and when does performance become a progressive site for cultural production?
- What does performance “do” that differentiates it from other artistic practices?

• **course requirements and grading** •

participation	8%
blogs (6)	12%
abstracts/annotated bibliographies (2)	10%
essays (2)	40%
oral presentation	5%
midterm exam	10%
final exam	15%

93-100	A	4.0
90-92	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
83-86	B	3.0
80-82	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
73-76	C	2.0
70-72	C-	1.7
65-69	D	1.0
0-64	F	0.0
6 absences	AF	

- **participation** •

Participation includes punctuality, regular attendance, evidence of careful class preparation, active participation in discussion and consistent critical engagement with course material. Please bring hard copies of all assigned readings to class—failure to do so will result in a participation grade deduction. Students are also expected to follow basic rules of etiquette and decency, including refraining from cell phone, laptop and tablet use in the classroom.

- **attendance** •

Absences will be excused only in exceptional cases. Written justification/documentation must be presented to the instructor on the day that the student returns to class in order to be excused. Emails are appreciated, but do not excuse an absence. In the case of *any* absence, unexcused or excused, students are responsible for completing all work missed during class and all work due for the following class. After the first absence of the semester, each additional absence will cause a student's final grade to drop a letter grade (A to A-, etc.). After three (3) absences, the student will be assigned an AF in the class. Every two times that a student is tardy (1-15 minutes late) or leaves early will be designated as one unexcused absence. Arrival more than 15 minutes after class has begun or leaving 15 minutes early will also be counted as an unexcused absence for that day.

- **blogs** •

Throughout the semester, each student will post six (6) blogs in response to questions and topics that connect classroom discussions, readings and performance viewings to current political and social issues that impact contemporary understandings of Latino/a identity. Postings should contain a minimum of 300 words. Students are also expected to comment upon at least two (2) of their classmates' postings. Questions will be distributed by the instructor one week prior to the submission due dates. All entries **MUST** be submitted by 10 p.m.; late postings will not be accepted.

- **abstracts/annotated bibliographies** •

Prior to the submission of each essay, students will turn in an abstract and annotated bibliography. The abstract should contain a preliminary title and working thesis (200-300 words); the annotated bibliography must include a minimum of three (3) relevant scholarly sources (not on the course reading list). All abstracts/annotated bibliographies must follow MLA formatting guidelines.

- **essays** •

Essays will be 8-10 page thesis-driven analyses based upon course material. All essays must follow MLA guidelines and be carefully edited. *Late work will not be accepted.*

- **oral presentation** •

Throughout the semester, each student will give an 18-20 minute presentation that connects the week's topic to a contemporary performance *not* included in the course syllabus. Topics will be developed in consultation with the instructor.

- **exams** •

There will be a midterm and final exam in this course. Both will be take-home and will be comprised of short answer and essay questions on the assigned texts and topics discussed in class. Instructions will be distributed a week prior to exam due dates.

- **academic integrity/ethical behavior** •

The University is a community of learning, and its effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. As members of this community, students share with faculty and administrators the responsibility to maintain this environment. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty in submitting an assignment, test, research report, or any other documentation required to validate the student's learning. In a case of clear indication of such dishonesty, the faculty member or administrator has the responsibility to apply sanctions to protect the environment of integrity. Although not all forms of academic dishonesty are given here, the instances listed below should be seen as actions that violate academic integrity: soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any work submitted; copying from another student; submitting materials authored by or editorially revised by another person but represented as the student's own work; copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing/recognizing that source; taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student and/or falsifying or fabricating research data. Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with sanctions. In a case of dishonesty within a course, the instructor may assign an appropriate grade and/or recommend further sanctions to the Dean, Associate Dean, or Center Director of the particular school/college/center, who is then responsible for the final decision and notification of all associated parties. The final decision of the Dean, Associate Dean or Center Director may be appealed as described in "Procedures for Academic Appeals." Ethical behavior is also expected of students and faculty in the academic setting and extending into professional life. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and will be sanctioned.

- **disability services** •

Saint Louis University is committed to providing equal educational access for all of its students by ensuring that students with documented clinical or medical disabilities receive reasonable accommodations that support effective participation in all aspects of the educational experience. At Disability Services, students, faculty and staff are welcome to obtain information regarding services available, procedures, documentation, and best practices. In general, students with documented clinical or medical disabilities who anticipate needs for accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at the earliest opportunity and must do so in order for the university to officially consider and recognize the need for reasonable accommodations. All inquiries about the availability of reasonable university-related accommodations are kept confidential, and should be addressed to: disability_services@slu.edu, 314-977-3484, Fax: 314-977-3486, Busch Student Center, Suite 331 (part of Student Success Center) 20 North Grand Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63103.