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**BRAZILIAN TV AND CULTURE**  
COMM 481– Fall 2006

**Course Description:**

This course analyzes the dynamic interactions between television and culture in Brazil. We start by looking at some of the available theoretical perspectives on culture and society and then focus on the contributions emerging from the field of cultural studies. Based on these approaches, we look at television as one of the central institutions that mediate the constitution of hegemonic values and meanings in Brazilian society. After a brief introduction to Brazilian culture and its roots, the course identifies the main features of the television industry, of the dominant media company (TV Globo) and of the most popular programs (*telenovelas*). Special emphasis will be given to the role of television in shaping gender, ethnic, class, religious, and political identities in Brazil. The course concludes with a discussion of contemporary issues, including the role of television in the mediation of social inequality and violence in Brazilian society.

**Course Text:**

- Joseph Page, *The Brazilians*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995.  
The book will be available through Tulane Bookstore.

**Required texts:**

Besides the textbook, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

**Blackboard:**

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and grades, and other information. The system can be accessed at: <<http://blackboard.tulane.edu/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

**Attendance:**

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a "WF".

**Evaluation:**

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers parts I and II of the course. A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be chosen by the instructor to be included in the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;

2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 10-12 pages paper. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: It is very important that students complete all the assigned readings before each session and bring the texts and their notes to class. The course will adopt a seminar format, meaning that students are expected to engage with in-class discussion of the readings and themes of the course. You should be able to summarize the main arguments of the reading assignment/s of the day. I will call on students and ask for their summaries and comments on the readings. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation.

4) In-class presentation: Students will be required to form groups with two members, which will be in charge of preparing a 15 minutes long presentation of a designated topic. The list of topics will be decided later.

5) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the "Discussion Board" area of Blackboard. This is where our online discussions will take place. There will be one forum to each part of the course and the discussions will be "threaded", i.e. organized by topics. Students should use the online board to engage with issues related to the readings or class discussions. There are no major restrictions on the postings, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates' arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective "forum" (Part I, II, etc.); 3) add a new "thread" to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to the existing thread. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click "reply" to comment on someone's posting.

You will be expected to post at least one message (an original thread or a comment/response to a classmate's posting) in each of the 12 designated weeks for online discussions (listed below). Every designated week starts at 8:00 am of Monday and ends at midnight of the following Friday. Of the 12 required messages, 4 of them need to be original threads. Whether you post more than these 12 messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 12 minimum posts (four threads and eight messages) with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade.

Designated weeks for online discussions - Week 1: Sep 4-8; Week 2: Sep 11-15; Week 3: Sep 18-22; Week 4: Sep 25-29; Week 5: Oct 2-6; Week 6: Oct 16-20; Week 7: Oct 23-27; Week 8: Oct 30-Nov 3; Week 9: Nov 6-10; Week 10: Nov 13-17; Week 11: Nov. 27-Dec 1; Week 12: Dec 4-8.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	-	30 %
Final Paper	-	30 %
Participation	-	20 %
In-class Presentation	-	5 %
Discussion Board	-	15 %

**Grading scale:**

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

**Academic dishonesty:**

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course on the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: < <http://www.tulane.edu/~lasdean/honor%20code.htm>>

**Course Schedule:**

**Aug 31 – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course**

PART I  
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON CULTURE, MEDIA, AND SOCIETY.

**Sep 5 – Cultural theories**

\* Wendy Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1994, pp. 1-38.

**Sep 7 – Williams' materialist cultural theory**

\* Raymond Williams, "Selections from *Marxism and Literature*," in N. Dirks, G. Eley and S. Ortner (eds.), *Culture/Power/History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 585-608.

**Sep 12 – Cultural hybridism**

\* Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995 ("Entrance," pp. 1-11; chapter 2, pp. 41-65).

**Sep 14 – Media and cultural mediations**

\* Jesús Martín-Barbero, *Communication, Culture and Hegemony*. London: Sage, 1993 (chapter 4, pp. 62-83; and pp. 203-240)

PART II  
INTRODUCTION TO BRAZILIAN TV AND CULTURE:  
FROM HISTORICAL ROOTS TO CONTEMPORARY TELENOVELAS

**Sep 19 – The Portuguese**

\* Page, chapter 1, pp. 35-56.