NARRATIVES OF THE DRUG WARS IN LATIN AMERICA

T,F 12:30 p.m.—1:50 p.m.
Office: Shiffman 113
Office hours: T,F: 2-3 p.m.
jarellan@brandeis.edu

Literature, art, music, and cinema that engage with regional subcultures of drug trafficking have become one of the most visible tendencies within Latin American cultural production in recent decades. This growing body of work includes the *narco-corrido* or drug ballad of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the genre of the *novela sicaresca* (novels featuring young assassins or *sicarios* hired by drug cartels) in Colombia, and the *narcoliteratura* or drug literature of Northwestern Mexico. From arthouse films to popular soap operas, contemporary Latin American visual media similarly wrestles with the subcultural practices and complex social networks that develop around the local and transnational narcotics trade, and with the impact of the “drug wars” across Latin America.

In this course, we will place important manifestations of this contemporary artistic tendency in the context of the long history of the pursuit and commerce of mood-altering substance in the Americas. In the first few weeks of the course, we will juxtapose colonial texts describing the European “discovery” of coca, peyote, tobacco, and chocolate in the New World to recent representations of the drug trade. Subsequent modules will look at specific narratives, fiction and documentary films, and musical forms that focus on the drug wars and narco culture in specific countries, such as Mexico, Colombia, and the United States.

Course Materials:

**Readings (available at the bookstore):**
- Fernando Vallejo, *La virgen de los sicarios*
- Yuri Herrera, *Trabajos del reino*
- Élmer Mendoza, *Balas de plata*

* All other course materials will be available on LATTE.

Course requirements:

1) Class participation and attendance (15% of final grade)
2) Weekly responses on LATTE. (10%)
3) Oral position paper presentation/Devil’s advocate presentation. An individual presentation outlining a position/argument developed in relation to a primary source discussed in class. (20%)
4) Midterm exam (15%)
5) One short position paper, derived from one of your LATTE posts (4-5 pages; 15%)
6) A final term paper (8-10 pages; 20%)
Grading scale:

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>98-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>78-79</td>
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<td>59 and below</td>
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Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

**Tentative Course Program**

**F 28/08**  
Introduction and Overview

**I: Tobacco, Coca, and Chocolate in the New World**

**T 09/01**  
Gerardo Naranjo, Dir., *Miss Bala* (film)  
Steven Topik et al., “Introduction,” *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy*

**F 09/04**  
Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*  
(excerpt on tobacco in the New World)  
Laura Nater, “Colonial Tobacco: Key Commodity of the Spanish Empire, 1500-1800”  
P: Nellie

**T 09/08**  
Francisco de Hernández, “Del cacao y de la coca,” *Historia de las plantas de la Nueva España*  
Paul Gootenberg, “Cocaine in Chains: The Rise and Demise of a Global Commodity”  
P: Ledia

**F 09/11**  
Henry Stubbe, *The Indian Nectar, Or A Discourse Concerning Chocolate*  
Vik Muniz, TED Talk (15 min)  
Diego Rivera, Cacao Mural  
P: Rachel
II: Sicarios and Narco Culture in South America

F 09/18
Fernando Vallejo, La virgen de los sicarios
P: Kyla

T 09/22
La virgen de los sicarios
P: Julia

F 09/25
La virgen de los sicarios
Jessica

F 10/02
Emilio Maillé, Dir., Rosario Tijeras
P: Becca

T 10/06
Cristian Alarcón, Si me querés, quereme transa (excerpt)
P: Regina

F 10/09
Si me querés, quereme transa
P: Angélica

T 10/13
Cristian Alarcón, Si me querés, quereme transa
Herman Herlinghaus, Narcoepics (excerpt)
P: Ledia

F 10/16
Midterm Exam (in class)

III: Narcorridos and narcoliteratura in Northern Mexico

T 10/20
Los Tigres del Norte, “La reina del sur”; “La bala”
Saul Schwartz, Dir., Narco Cultura (film)
P: Ernie

F 10/23
Yuri Herrera, Trabajos del reino
P: Emily
T 10/27
Trabajos del reino
P: James

F 10/30
Trabajos del reino
P: Ceara

T 11/03
Luis Estrada, Dir., El infierno
P: Kristen

F 11/06
Élmer Mendoza, Balas de plata (11-79)
P: Brendan

T 11/10
Balas de plata (81-136)
P: Caitlin

F 11/13
Balas de plata (137-191)
P: Karina

T 11/17
Balas de plata (191-254 (fín))
Position paper due

IV: Colonial Commodity Chains, Narco Culture, and Contemporary Media

F 11/20
Natalia Almeida, Dir., El velador
Gabriela Pólit Dueñas, Narrating Narcos: Culiacán and Medellín (excerpt)
Visita de Brian Fried tbd (Kay Fellow, Political Science)

T 12/01
Danny Gavidia, El señor de los cielos (TV show; first episode)
Vince Gilligan, Breaking Bad, “The Ballad of Walter White”
P: Tori

F 12/04
José de Acosta, Historia natural y moral de las Indias (excerpt)
Oliver Stone, Dir., Savages
T 12/08
Rick Famuwiya, Dir., Dope (o doc. The House I Live In)
Conclusions and Review