SYLLABUS – SPRING 2026

LAS4935 Section WTUG & LAS6938 Section WTG1
MUH4930 Section WTUG & MUH6935 Section WTG

Music and the Construction of Brazilian Identity

(Música e a Construção da Identidade Brasileira)

Monday, 9th – 11th Period (4:05 PM– 7:05 PM) at Room # 376 (Latin American Studies)
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Contact Information: Center for Latin American Studies – 319 Grinter Hall, # 305
Tel. 352-273-4728. Office Hours: MWF 7th period (1:55 – 2:45 PM) and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In Brazil, music is not simply an art form—it is a way of life, resonating through streets, homes, and celebrations, and weaving together a complex web of stories, hopes, and identities. This course explores music as both a cultural expression and a social force, revealing how Brazilians interpret, challenge, and imagine their world. Through historical and contemporary perspectives, we will examine the role of music in shaping social movements, regional identities, and collective memory. Our study will move across Brazil's diverse landscapes—from the Afro-Brazilian rhythms of Bahia to the urban grooves of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro—considering how music articulates themes of race, class, ethnicity, and nationhood. We will also look outward, situating Brazilian music within transnational exchanges that have influenced global sounds and cultural politics. By connecting musical traditions to historical events and aesthetic innovations, students will gain insight into how Brazil's musical creativity continues to shape both local and global conversations about identity, belonging, and resistance.

OBJECTIVES AND COURSE STRUCTURE

Class sessions will integrate lectures, demonstrations, and multimedia presentations with dynamic group discussions focused on class assignments, emerging scholarship, assigned readings, and listening examples. The accompanying course "schedule of topics" and handouts will provide an updated schedule, essential readings, and audio materials to guide weekly preparation. Students will collaborate in small groups to analyze texts, engage critically with diverse interpretations, and situate musical practices within broader social, cultural, and political contexts. Active participation is a central component of the learning process. Your insights, questions, and reflections will help build a shared understanding of how music continues to shape Brazil's social and cultural landscapes. Please arrive prepared to watch and listen attentively, debate constructively, and participate thoughtfully—the vitality of our collective inquiry depends on your voice as an integral part of the process.

COURSE GOALS

1. Enhance your ability to write assignments creatively and to prepare them for discussion of more complex musicological issues, practices, and engagement with course materials.
2. Complete weekly assignments to demonstrate proficiency and individual understanding of the course's key themes.
3. Develop a deeper appreciation for Brazilian music-its rhythms, meanings, and power to express social and cultural realities.

4. Explore the history of Brazil and discover how its musical traditions have evolved alongside national and regional transformations.
5. Broaden your understanding of Brazilian society and its diverse social, cultural, and regional expressions.
6. Examine how Brazil's social, economic, and political changes have shaped and expanded the concept of *brasileirismo,* or what it means to be Brazilian.
7. Discover the richness of Brazilian music by studying its different repertoires and the ways it bridges indigenous, folk, popular, and classical traditions.
8. Identify and distinguish musical genres, styles, and key songwriters, and connect them to the regions and communities that gave them life.
9. Recognize the global impact of Brazilian music and its unique ability to move between local traditions and international influences.
10. Reflect on Brazil's political and social history through its music, understanding how songs can document, resist, and inspire change.
11. Form your own perspective on how music and culture intertwine to shape Brazil's national and regional identities.

TEXTS FOR THE COURSE (Required)

BOOK (1) Robert Levine & John Crocitti. 1999. *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, and Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press.

BOOK (2) Sean Strout. 2008. *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira*. Ashgate Publishing Limited: Hampshire, England.

BOOK (3) Idelber Avelar & Christopher Dunn. 2011. *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Recommended Purchases

Chris McGowan & Ricardo Pessanha. 2009. *The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova, and the Popular Music of Brazil.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Christopher Dunn & Charles Perrone*. 2001. Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This seminar is designed to prepare advanced undergraduate and graduate students to critically engage with their reading experiences by formulating and articulating structured ideas and hypotheses that explain, predict, or interpret the development of Brazilian society through its regional, social, and historical musical practices. The course is organized thematically, drawing on a selection of core topics from the textbook and assigned scholarly readings. For each topic (see ***Schedule of Topics***), students will receive a list of required and recommended readings. Active participation is a central component of the course. Each student is expected to come to class prepared to contribute substantively to discussions of the assigned materials. Students will assume responsibility for leading selected talks, while the instructor will facilitate and manage the timing of presentations and debates. The objective is to foster an open, research-oriented dialogue informed by each participant's analysis of the week's readings. In addition to reading-centered discussions, the course provides methodological guidance for organizing and conducting research.

Emphasis will be placed on developing analytical frameworks, identifying and interpreting relevant sources, and producing scholarly writing that advances new insights or theoretical approaches. Students are required to submit a weekly reading report of 350–450 words in preparation for their oral discussion of the assigned readings. A final research paper, accompanied by an oral presentation, will serve as the capstone project for the term. Both a printed and an electronic version of the final paper must be submitted by the specified deadline.

TOPICS & HOMEWORK

The topics and assigned readings for the semester are outlined in your Schedule of Topics. Please review the assignments carefully and prepare a discussion on your assigned topic before class. Remember to bring a hard copy of all reading materials, including your textbook and any additional articles or book chapters.

ADDITIONAL READINGS and GENERAL INFORMATION

Additional topics will be selected from readings in Portuguese (for Portuguese speakers) and in English. To expand the resources available with the required texts or to broaden your research interests, other textbooks and journal articles will be listed alongside the Schedule of Topics. Extra readings can also be found online at the AFA Library http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/afa/ (music) or the George A. Smathers Library – Latin American Collection http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/lac/ Additionally, JSTOR is an excellent source of articles and will greatly assist with your final research paper. Keep in mind that accessing JSTOR from outside campus requires Gatorlink VPN software, available at Network Services https://net-services.ufl.edu/

GRADING

Grades will be based on your class participation, written work, homework assignments, and oral presentations within the following percentages:

Attendance, participation, and presentation in class discussions related to class reading assignments	20%
Homework assignments	25%
Written Midterm Exam	15%
Oral research presentation (power point)	10%
Research project report	30%

PRELIMINARY DUE DATES

Reading and Homework Assignments	Every class meeting
Written Midterm Exam	Monday, **March 30**
Final Creative Project (Oral research presentation)	Monday, **April 13 and 20**
Final Creative Project (electronic and hard copy) **(No Final Exam)**	Last day of Classes Wednesday, **April 22**

An Oral Research Presentation is a PowerPoint project presentation (.ppt) intended to discuss the topic of your chosen research for this course. The presentation should reflect your ability to propose new ideas, concepts, and/or theories related to your topic.

Final term project is a (**Creative Project**) research paper: 10-14 pages [4000 level] and 15-18 pages [6000 level], font size: Times New Roman 12 / Space: 1,5 space) on a music or philosophy-related topic of your choice and previously discussed with the instructor, due on the last day of class (Wednesday, April 22**)**. Only partial credit is awarded if the research paper is not in by the last day of class.

The grade scale for this course is as follows: **"A"--93-100 "A-"--90-93 "B+"--87-89 "B"--83-86 "B-"--80-82 "C+"--77-79 "C"--73-76 "C-"--70-72 "D"--65-69 "E"--64 or below**. The midterm exam will feature short answers, an essay, and identification components.

GENERAL POLICIES

Attendance is required. Please arrive punctually for class. Sessions will be conducted as seminars, and active participation in critically discussing the topics is essential. Assignments contribute to your grade; if you're not prepared—meaning you've not completed the readings—the class will lack diverse perspectives. Feel free to challenge ideas from the readings and class discussions. You are allowed a maximum of two unexcused absences per semester. Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your course total by six points. Officially excused absences are (1) medical reasons with a signed doctor's note, (2) unexpected family emergencies with a signed note from a parent or guardian, (3) religious holiday conflicts, or (4) an official University of Florida conflict with a signed statement from the faculty sponsor and prior approval from the instructor. For conflicts of type (3) or (4), you must inform the instructor at least one week before the absence. Perfect attendance will earn you an extra three points. Late arrivals of five or more minutes are considered absences unless justified.

(STUDENT HONOR CODE AND STUDENT CONDUCT CODE) at https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/ (The Dean of Students Office). Cheating on exams and using someone else's ideas in a written paper without properly citing the source (plagiarism) are serious matters. Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing is subject to an automatic **E** for the course and further disciplinary action by the Student Honor Court. Be original and creative in your writing and exposing your ideas.

For students with disabilities—to request classroom accommodations, contact the Assistant Dean of Students/Director of the Disability Resources Program at P202 Peabody Hall or call 392-1261 (V), 392-3008 (TDD). Enjoy your semester and this new course experience!