

Influencers, Cumbia and Superfoods: Consumption and Social Change in Latin America

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Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30 am-11:30am (and with an appointment)

Class Meeting Times and Location:

Period 6 (Thursday): 12:50-1:40
Period 5-6 (Tuesday): 11:45 – 1:40pm
Leigh Hall 207

NOTES:

- Graduate Seminar open to advanced undergraduate students
- This course fulfills the requisites for international studies.
- Completing this seminar will meet the writing requirements for UFL students.
- This course fulfills the requisites for students seeking a minor in Latin American Studies

Course Description

Latin America is interconnected with the rest of the world through its culture and the exchange of goods and services. Globalization has integrated consumption patterns in the region with international trends, while also preserving identity formation processes that shape its social dynamics. This course explores consumption patterns in Latin America and among Latinx communities in the U.S., examining how these practices relate to cultural processes and navigate tensions arising from social inequalities, politics, and environmental challenges. Key consumption sectors such as technology, culture, leisure, music, fashion, food, housing, and transportation will be analyzed. Through case studies and creative methodologies—including netnography, video, cartography, and other visual tools—we will critically assess the social, cultural, environmental, political, and economic implications of consumption in these contexts.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will evaluate how Latin American and Latinx consumption patterns are shaped by globalization while maintaining distinct cultural identities.
2. Students will examine the political, social, and environmental conflicts and tensions that arise from consumption practices in Latin America and among Latinx communities in the U.S.
3. Students will engage with innovative and digital methodologies, such as netnography (as well as self-ethnography), video analysis, and cartography, to explore consumption patterns in various sectors.
4. Students will critically assess economic sectors such as culture, leisure, fashion, food, technology, housing, and transportation, understanding their broader socio-economic implications.

Students' understanding of these objectives will be assessed through a combination of written assignments, case study analyses, creative research projects utilizing visual and digital tools, and class discussions. Participation in hands-on exercises and group projects will also be key components of the evaluation process.

Description of Assignments

Assignments
Forum Participation on Readings (20%) Students will engage in weekly online discussions by posting brief critical reflections (around 500 words) on the readings and responding to at least one classmate. These discussions will enhance analytical thinking and peer exchange.
Netnography Project (in phases – iterative): Digital Ethnography of Consumer Trends (40% with phases) Students will conduct a netnographic study on a specific consumption trend in Latin America or Latinx communities in the U.S. The project involves online observation, data collection, and a written analysis connecting findings to course themes. It aims at analyzing consumer dynamics in online communities . Each student will select a digital platform (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook Groups, or online forums) and identify a specific consumer trend or behavior within a virtual community (of Latin America's community, or Latinxs in the U.S.). Using participant observation techniques , students will track discussions, interactions, and shared content over a period of one to two weeks , focusing on how users express preferences, make purchasing decisions, and engage with brands or cultural products.
Phase 1 (10%)

Each student chooses one (or two) platforms and digital communities (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook Groups). The goal is to compare communities across at least two sectors (superfoods/nutrition; technology; cultural consumption (music, etc.); fashion; other). Write a short text (1 page) with:

- i) Description of the two communities (who participates? What unites them?).
- ii) Description of the sector or topic to be followed (e.g., sustainable fashion consumption, natural cosmetics, Latin music, agricultural products).
- iii) Description based on preliminary observation of the characteristics of that platform.

Phase 2 (10%)

Two weeks of netnographic observation. Students conduct observations in communities for two weeks. They take notes on what is said; who interacts and how; what aesthetics are used, etc. They submit a brief report (3 pages) with (all de-identified):

- Summary of observation notes.
- Two screenshots to support observations.
- First impressions of consumption dynamics and cultural patterns.
- Reflection on ethical dilemmas.

Phase 3 (10%)

Netnographic observation for one month. Students conduct observation for one month in the communities. They take field notes (narratives, interactions, aesthetics, etc.). They submit a brief report (3 pages) with (all anonymized):

- Summary of observation notes.
- Two or three screenshots that support observations.
- Based on concepts covered in the course, analyze some of the identified trends (e.g., habitus, identities, discipline/agency, digital capitalism, etc.).
- Reflection on ethical dilemmas.

Phase 4 (10%)

Based on previous submissions, and making additional observations over one or two weeks, generate a research report on the digital communities investigated. Based on the materials (images, field notes, records of interactions and narratives, etc.), submit a 4-page report with analysis, expanding on the writing with concepts from the course bibliography and the analyses discussed in class. Include a short reflection on ethical dilemmas. The report should reflect on **the role of digital communities in shaping consumption patterns**, ethical considerations in online research, and the implications for marketing, social influence, or cultural identity.

Presentations and participation (20%)

Each student must present their progress in netnography to the class twice during the semester, generating dialogue and discussion that connects with each week's topics. They are also expected to participate actively during sessions and in classroom activities.

Final Written Report (20%)

An individual written report synthesizing course learnings. Students will critically analyze a consumption-related topic of their choice, incorporating course concepts, case studies, and creative methodologies.

Sessions' Activities and Methodologies

Each week we will have two sessions, and the activities for each session will include the following:

Period 6 (Thursday): 12:50-1:40: Dialogue and discussion of concepts and cases departing from the assigned reading.

Period 5-6 (Tuesday): 11:45 – 1:40pm: Dialogue and discussion of concepts and cases departing from the assigned reading. Practical exercise for studying examples or cases related to students' works, and other cases selected by the instructor.

Grading Scale:

A 94 – 100%	C 74 – 76%
A- 90 – 93%	C- 70 – 73%
B+ 87 – 89%	D+ 67 – 69%
B 84 – 86%	D 64 – 66%
B- 80 – 83%	D- 60 – 63%
C+ 77 – 79%	E <60

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Detailed schedule of sessions, readings, and assignments (Some dates or sessions may be subject to change.)

Session Date	Topic	Reading & Materials & In-Class Activities
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(Thu: Aug 21)	Introduction to the course	
(Tue: Aug 26)	Conceptualizing Consumption in the Social Sciences	<p>Paterson, M. (2023). Consumption and everyday life. Routledge. (pages TBD)</p> <p>Bourdieu, P. (2018). Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste. In Inequality. Routledge. (pages TBD)</p>
(Thu: Aug 28)	Consumption in Latin America	<p>Trentmann, F., & Otero-Cleves, A. M. (2017). Presentation. Paths, detours, and connections: consumption and its contribution to Latin American History. <i>Historia crítica</i>, (65), 13-28.</p> <p>Sinclair, J., & Pertierra, A. C. (Eds.). (2012). Consumer Culture in Latin America. Springer. (pages TBD)</p>
(Tue: Sep 2) Holiday	Labor Day – no class	
(Thu: Sep 4)	Consumption in Latin America: refeudalization; housework	<p>Kaltmeier, O., & Steinitz, M. (2023). The Refeudalization of Society: Social Inequality and Political Culture in Latin America. In Refeudalization and the Crisis of Civilization (pp. 122-142). Routledge.</p> <p>Francois, M. E. (2008). The Products of Consumption: Housework in Latin American Political Economies and Cultures. <i>History Compass</i>, 6(1), 207-242.</p>
(Tue: Sep 9)	Superfoods and diets: Food Consumption and Socio-Environmental Justice	<p>Morris, C., & Sammells, C. A. (2021). From Indigenous Food to "Healthy" US Dining. The Cultural Politics of Food, Taste, and Identity: A Global Perspective.</p> <p>Assignment submission - Phase 1 of netnography</p>
(Thu: Sep 11)	Superfoods and diets: Food Consumption and Socio-Environmental Justice	<p>Bifaretti, A., Pavan, E., & Grigioni, G. (2023). Consumer attitudes and concerns about beef consumption in Argentina and other south American countries. <i>Agriculture</i>, 13(3), 560.</p> <p>Peña-Lévano, L., Adams, C., & Burney, S. (2020). Latin America's Superfood Economy. <i>Choices</i>, 35(4), 1-6.</p>
(Tue: Sep 16)	Cumbia, salsa & reggaeton, : Music, Consumer	<p>McCleary, K. (2016). FERNANDEZ L'HOESTE AND PABLO VILA,(EDS). Cumbia! Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre. <i>Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe</i>, 27(1), 94-97.</p>

	Cultures, and Identities	
(Thu: Sep 18)	Cumbia, salsa & reggaeton, : Music, Consumer Cultures, and Identities	<p>Samponaro, P. (2009). “Oye mi canto”(“Listen to My Song”): The history and politics of reggaetón. <i>Popular Music and Society</i>, 32(4), 489-506.</p> <p>Alabarces, P., & Silba, M. L. (2015). “Cumbia, Nena”: Cumbia Scene, Gender, and Class in Argentina. In <i>Made in Latin America</i> (pp. 79-88). Routledge.</p>
(Tue: Sep 23)	Fashion, Consumer Cultures, and Identities	<p>Dewey, M., & Nahoum, A. V. (2025). Low-Cost Fashion: The Political Economy of Garment Production and Distribution in Latin America. <i>Elements in Politics and Society in Latin America</i>.</p> <p>Assignment submission - Phase 2 of netnography</p>
(Thu: Sep 25)	Fashion, Consumer Cultures, and Identities	Melendez-Escalante, T., & Marra-Alvarez, M. (Eds.). (2024). <i>Latin American and Latinx Fashion Design Today-¡ Moda Hoy!</i> . Bloomsbury Publishing. (Pages TBD)
(Tue: Sep 30)	Influencers and social media: Digital Production & Consumption and the Platform Economy	Fletcher, K. A. P., & Emmanuel-Stephen, C. M. (2018). Social Media Engagement: Reshaping the Consumption Patterns of Generation Y Caribbean and Latin American Consumers. <i>Media Influence: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice</i> , 494-514.
(Thu: Oct 2)	Influencers and social media: Digital Production & Consumption and the Platform Economy	Arriagada, A., & Craig, D. (2025). Living my Latin American influencer dream: How racism and nationality shape Latin American influencers within the US. <i>International Journal of Cultural Studies</i> , 28(1), 168-184.
(Tue: Oct 7)	Mafia, Illicit Economies, and Consumers	Jaffe, R. (2012). The popular culture of illegality: crime and the politics of aesthetics in urban Jamaica. <i>Anthropological Quarterly</i> , 85(1), 79-102.
(Thu: Oct 9)	Mafia, Illicit Economies, and Consumers	Cabañas, M. A. (2014). Imagined narcoscapes: Narcoculture and the politics of representation. <i>Latin American Perspectives</i> , 41(2), 3-17.

		Veblen, T. (2005). Conspicuous consumption. Penguin UK. (Pages TBD)
(Tue: Oct 14)	Telenovelas consumption in Latin America and the US	Barrera, V., & Bielby, D. D. (2001). Places, faces, and other familiar things: The cultural experience of telenovela viewing among Latinos in the United States. The Journal of Popular Culture, 34(4), 1-18. Assignment submission - Phase 3 of netnography
— (Thu: Oct 17) Holiday	No class – Homecoming	
— (Fri: Oct 18) Holiday	Homecoming events	
(Tue: Oct 21)	Telenovelas consumption in Latin America and the US	La Pastina, A., Rego, C. M., & Straubhaar, J. D. (2003). The centrality of telenovelas in Latin America's everyday life: Past tendencies, current knowledge, and future research. Global Media Journal, 2(2), 1-15.
(Thu: Oct 23)	Street vendors, Markets, and Alternative Consumption	Crossa, V. (2009). Resisting the entrepreneurial city: street vendors' struggle in Mexico City's historic center. International journal of urban and regional research, 33(1), 43-63. Influencers and informal economies - Feminization of digitl work; precarization; searching for support in social networks. Case studies (TBD)
(Tue: Oct 28)	Commodities and the Ethics of Consumption	Crane, D. (2010). Environmental change and the future of consumption: Implications for consumer identity. Anuario filosófico, 353-353.
(Thu: Oct 30)	Commodities and the Ethics of Consumption	Gallagher, K. P., & Porzecanski, R. (2009). China and the Latin America commodities boom: a critical assessment. PERI Working Papers, 164.
(Tue: Nov 4)	Transport Systems, Mobility, and Citizenship	Viola, E., & Basso, L. (2015). Earth stewardship, climate change, and low carbon consciousness: reflections from Brazil and South America. Earth Stewardship: Linking Ecology and Ethics in Theory and Practice, 367-382.
(Thu: Nov 6)	Transport Systems, Mobility, and Citizenship	van Laake, T., & Moscoso, M. Getting active: the promotion of walking and cycling in Latin America. Sustainable Urban Transport in Latin America.

		Developing these questions (Self-ethnography of mobilities): What major transportation systems am I familiar with, and which have been used by my family and previous generations? What patterns of mobility and modes of transportation do I use in my daily life?
(Tue: Nov 11) Holiday	Veterans Day – no class	
(Thu: Nov 13)	Malls, streets, spatialities of consumption	Kaltmeier, O. (2016). Urban Landscapes of Mall- ticultural: (Retro-) Coloniality, Consumption, and Identity Politics: The Case of the San Luis Shopping Center in Quito. In Selling EthniCity (pp. 95-115). Routledge. Assignment submission - Phase 4 of netnography
(Tue: Nov 18)	Malls, streets, spatialities of consumption	González, S. (2020). Contested marketplaces: Retail spaces at the global urban margins. Progress in Human Geography, 44(5), 877- 897.
(Thu: Nov 20)	Presentation of Netnographies	Each student presents the work developed during the semester
(Tue: Nov 25) Holiday	Thanksgiving Break (Nov 24– 28)	
(Thu: Nov 27) Holiday	Thanksgiving Break (Nov 24– 28)	
(Tue: Dec 2)	Presentation of Netnographies	Each student presents the work developed during the semester
Dec.2 & Dec. 4	No classes – reading/study days	
Final Exams: Dec 8–12	Final exams week	

Other (complementary) References:

Almeida, F. (2014). Thorstein Veblen and Albert Bandura: a modern psychological reading of the conspicuous consumer. Journal of Economic Issues, 48(1), 109-122.

Stearns, P. N. (2006). Consumerism in world history: The global transformation of desire. Routledge.

Academic Integrity and Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Maintaining academic integrity is a core value of the University of Florida community. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the UF Student Honor Code, available at <https://dso.ufl.edu/>. By submitting any coursework, students affirm the following pledge, whether explicitly stated or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in completing this assignment."

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students requiring accommodations should contact the UF Disability Resource Center (DRC), which provides accommodation letters to facilitate necessary adjustments. These letters must be presented when requesting accommodations, and all information will remain confidential. Please notify me as early as possible to ensure timely support. The DRC can be reached at **352-392-8565** or through their website.

Course Evaluations

Students are encouraged to provide constructive and respectful feedback on the course by completing evaluations online through GatorEvals. Instructions on professional and respectful feedback can be found at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Evaluation notifications will be sent via email, and students can access the evaluation portal through Canvas.

UF Computing Help Desk

For assistance with technical issues related to Canvas and e-Learning, students can contact the UF Computing Help Desk at **352-392-HELP (4357)**, **option 2**, or via email at **helpdesk@ufl.edu**. The Help Desk operates 24/7, except during holidays and scheduled breaks.

Student Support and Resources

E-Learning Technical Support

For technical assistance with e-Learning platforms, contact the support team at **352-392-4357 (option 2)** or via email at **Learning-support@ufl.edu**.

Career Connections Center

Located in Reitz Union Suite 1300, the Career Connections Center provides career counseling and professional development services. Contact them at **352-392-1601** for guidance on career planning and job opportunities.

Library Support

The UF Libraries offer extensive research resources and assistance in locating academic materials. For help navigating the library system or finding research sources, visit the UF Libraries website.

Teaching Center

For academic support, including study skills development and tutoring services, the Teaching Center is available at Broward Hall. To reach them, call **352-392-2010** or schedule an appointment at **352-392-6420**.

U Matter, We Care

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, support is available through the **U Matter, We Care** initiative. Contact them at umatter@ufl.edu, call **352-392-1575**, or visit their website for resources and assistance.

Counseling and Wellness Center

The Counseling and Wellness Center offers free mental health services to all UF students, including crisis intervention, consultations, and therapy. For more information or immediate assistance, call **352-392-1575**.

Student Health Care Center

For 24/7 medical guidance and assistance, contact the **Student Health Care Center** at **352-392-1161** or visit their website for available services.

University Police Department

For campus safety concerns, visit the **UF Police Department** website or call **352-392-1111**. In case of an emergency, dial **9-1-1**.

UF Health Shands Emergency Room & Trauma Center

For urgent medical care, visit the **UF Health Shands Emergency Room** at **1515 SW Archer Road** or call **352-733-0111**.