

LAS4935-6938/LAH3931/WST4930:
Social Movements and Gender: A View from Latin America
Assistant Professor Meg Weeks (weeksm@ufl.edu), office: 352-273-4708
Office hours (Grinter 378): TBD

Fall 2025
Mondays, 12:50-3:50pm

Course Description: This seminar examines social and cultural movements led by women and LGBTQ activists in twentieth-century Latin America. We will analyze the major moments of social and political change in the region through the prisms of gender, race, and sexuality, asking how these transitions were experienced by women and people of non-normative genders and sexualities, problematizing and disaggregating these categories through rigorous analysis. What does it mean to be a “woman” doing politics? How did women and queer people envision social change in both the domestic sphere and the formal political arena? How did archetypes of gender and sexuality shift during moments of political change and how were they entrenched? How can we think of cultural production as a way in which subaltern subjects think and act politically and how do cultural movements intersect with formal politics? And finally, how do these social and cultural movements map onto historiographical concepts of feminism and LGBTQ activism originating in the Global North? In approaching these questions, we will interrogate notions of “revolutionary masculinity,” looking to how both grassroots politics and political change forged from the top down were expressed in deeply gendered and racialized ways. We will pay close attention to how these processes played out differently for women of different social classes, geographic origins, races, and ethnic identities, while situating our analysis in conversation with studies of the global sexual revolution, the Cold War, and the first, second, and third waves of feminism.

While we will focus primarily on women and queer people as vanguards of progressive change, the course will also consider women as agents of reactionary and conservative politics, examining Catholic activism and pro-regime mobilizations during the Cold War dictatorships of the Southern Cone and civil conflict in Central America. Relatedly, as a counterpoint to the notion of revolutionary masculinity, we will think about the ways in which authoritarian violence, in particular torture and forced disappearances, was justified by ideas about gender, family life, and Christian virtue. On a broader note, we will center our discussions around the question of how gender is treated in the historiography of this period, drawing our attention to archival silences with regard to the perspectives of women and LGBTQ people. In order to remediate these silences, we will look to a wide array of sources (beyond the types of written documents that privilege certain voices over others) to illuminate plural historical perspectives, such as memoirs, visual art, oral histories, music, and other manifestations of folk art and popular culture. Written assignments will ask students to make use of such sources in their historical argumentation.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of the major political changes and social movements in Latin America in the twentieth century
- Critically interrogate categories of gender, race, and sexuality and how they shifted over time and across moments of political change
- Identify feminist methodological innovations and interventions into existing bodies of scholarship

- Develop skills to analyze a diverse range of sources, including material culture, visual sources, music, and cultural production
- Develop research skills through rigorous engagement with both primary and secondary sources
- Develop critical reflection skills by completing frequent short written assignments
- Learn to formulate historical arguments by marshaling and interpreting sources
- Produce original scholarship grounded in extensive research

Course Materials:

- *Before Night Falls* by Reinaldo Arenas
- *The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War* by Gioconda Belli
- *Benedita da Silva: An Afro-Brazilian Woman's Story of Politics and Love* by Benedita da Silva
- *I, Rigoberta Menchú* by Rigoberta Menchú

Note: Students are welcome to read these texts in their original languages where possible.

Assignments:

Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and participation: 20%

Reading responses: 20%

Primary source analysis paper: 20%

Annotated bibliography and paper proposal: 10%

Final Paper: 30%

Attendance and participation in discussion (20%): Please come to class having read the assigned texts and ready to participate in group discussions. If you are unable to read a particular text in a comprehensive manner, try to at least distill its main arguments. If helpful to you, prepare a list of questions in advance of each class so that our discussion will proceed dynamically. I encourage lively, rigorous debate but I ask that you engage with your peers and with me in a respectful manner. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade.

- Attendance and absence policy: If you have to miss class, I ask that you email me to notify me of your absence and make every effort to come to office hours to make up the missed material. Multiple unexcused absences will adversely affect your participation grade. Otherwise, requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
- I ask that you make every effort to arrive on time to class, so we can take full advantage of the limited time we have together as a course. Regular tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade
- I ask that you refrain from texting, chatting, or using your computers for tasks not related to our course during class time. Phones should be kept out of sight for the duration of the class.

Reading responses (20%): Over the course of the semester, students must write **six** one-page response papers in dialogue with the assigned readings for the week. These papers should prepare

you for our weekly discussions and should not merely summarize the readings but rather place them in conversation with one another and with readings from previous weeks. Be sure to engage with the texts themselves in a rigorous manner, but your writing can remain fairly informal. You may choose when to write your response papers (you can alternate weeks to evenly distribute the workload over the semester or focus on the six units that interest you most; it is up to you), but please keep track of how many you have written. Papers will be due at 10am on the Monday morning before class. At the end of the semester, each missing paper will incur a penalty of 3% off your total grade. **Please do not exceed one page, double-spaced for each paper.**

Primary source analysis paper (20%): Mid-way through the semester, students will be asked to write a short paper (4-5 pages) that engages with one or more **primary sources**. A primary source is defined as a first-hand account of an event or topic, generally authored or recorded by someone who directly experienced it. Secondary sources, on the other hand, are documents created by someone, often a scholar, who was not present for a particular event but who analyzes or interprets it. Examples of primary sources include: letters/correspondence, historical documentation, contemporaneous press coverage, memoirs/autobiographies, oral testimonies/interviews, diaries, historical film footage, speeches, etc. Each week, we will complement our assigned readings of secondary sources with analysis of primary sources in class. This paper will continue the analytical work we start in class and is intended to prepare you to analyze primary sources at the service of furthering an historical argument in your final research paper. In this paper, you do not have to formulate a historical argument, but you should address a number of questions relating to the source(s), including but not limited to: authorship, mediation, language/style, intended audience/effect, influences, political context, and aesthetics (in the case of visual art, photographs, music, performance, protest signage, etc). Considering primary sources through multidimensional analysis is the bread and butter of the work that historians do to make sense of the past. While I am not requiring you to come up with a specific argument in this short paper (think of it more as an exercise to practice source analysis that you will then develop in your final paper), it should set you up to venture some broader conclusions about the nature and impact of your source. For this assignment, I will provide a folder on Canvas with sources that pertain to the topics we cover in the course.

Annotated bibliography (5%) and paper proposal (5%): These assignments are designed to help you advance your final research papers well before the end of the semester. A template for the annotated bibliography will be distributed in class. Paper proposal should be **2-3 pages** and include your main research questions, hypothesized findings, source materials (both primary and secondary), and engagement with the existing literature on your topic.

Final Paper (30%): Each student will be expected to produce a final research paper of 12-15 pages for undergraduates and 15-20 pages for graduate students that articulates a particular historical argument by using evidence from primary sources. The topic must touch on the themes of the course and engage the methodological concerns discussed in class.

Note: This course will count towards the minor/certificate in Latin American Studies. For more information about enrollment in the **undergraduate** programs offered by the Center for Latin American Studies, contact the undergraduate coordinator Luis Felipe Gómez Lomelí. If you are a **graduate student**, contact the graduate coordinator, Clate Korsant at ckorsant@latam.ufl.edu.

Extension policy: I will grant extensions of up to three days if requested in writing. If extenuating circumstances require a lengthier extension, please contact me and we can work out an alternate submission date.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC): <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>. I ask that students share their accommodation letter with me and reach out to discuss access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals at the end of the semester. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>.

Library Use: UF has a worldclass library, and I strongly encourage you to make good use of it. The Latin American and Caribbean Collection at Smathers Library has extensive secondary sources in addition to many fascinating collections of primary documents, ready to be analyzed for our final research paper. I suggest you reach out to LACC chief librarian Margarita Vargas-Betancourt (mvargasb@ufl.edu) or one of the other excellent librarians to learn more about the collection and see what possibilities exist for accessing sources either on campus or online. For more information: <https://lacc.uflib.ufl.edu/> or stop by the third floor of Smathers Library. Remember to plan ahead! Start thinking about your research topic in October.

UF Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. For more information: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

ChatGPT and Plagiarism Policy:

The use of ChatGPT or other AI programs is not appropriate for written contributions to this course. These assignments are meant to foster creative, critical, and synthetic thinking through evaluation and integration of course materials, personal experiences, discussion, and reflection. TURN IT IN program will be used to confirm that written work is original.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

A	100 pts to	93 pts
A-	<93 pts to	90 pts
B+	<90 pts to	87 pts
B	<87 pts to	83 pts
B-	<83 pts to	80 pts
C+	<80 pts to	77 pts
C	<77 pts to	73 pts

C-	<73 pts to	70 pts
D+	<70 pts to	67 pts
D	<67 pts to	63 pts
D-	<63 pts to	60 pts
F	<60 pts to	0 pts

Please consult the UF website for further information on grades and grading policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Rubric for final paper

/100

	Great	Good	Average	Poor	Absent
	19-20	16-18	9-15	2-8	0-1
Analysis	The thesis is original. Compelling ideas throughout.	The thesis is interesting. At least one original perspective in one of the points.	The essay is focused on a single thesis or idea.	The thesis is split or unclear; the paper wanders off-topic.	No thesis or focus. Or seems AI-generated.
Evidence	27-30	23-26	15-22	11-14	0-10
	A variety of support for every claim, and it is strong, concrete, and appropriate.	Supporting evidence for all claims, but it is not as strong or complete in some areas.	Supporting evidence for most of the claims, but some evidence may be unrelated or vague.	Some evidence, but in key places evidence is vague or missing.	Almost no detailed evidence to support the thesis.
Organization	19-20	16-18	13-15	7-12	0-6
	Each paragraph is focused and in the proper order. Introduction and conclusion are complementary. Excellent transitions. In the main, content and not vocabulary, achieves the transition.	Each part of the paper is engaging, but better transitions, more/fewer paragraphs, stronger conclusion are needed.	Clear introduction, body, and conclusion, but some paragraphs may need to be focused or moved.	Some organization, but the paper is “jumpy” without a clear introduction and conclusion. Paragraphs are not focused or out of order.	Little or no organization.
Language	10	8-9	6-7	4-5	0-3

	Creative word choice and sentence structure enhance the meaning and focus of the paper. Special attention to precise verbs. Avoids cliché.	The language is clear with complex sentence structure but contains minor grammatical errors.	Writing is clear, but sentence structures are simple or repetitive; or repeated grammatical errors.	Grammatical mistakes slightly interfere with the meaning of the paper. Basic and imprecise verbs. Or excessively informal expression.	Frequent and serious grammatical mistakes make the meaning unclear.
Style/Voice	9-10	8-9	6-7	4-5	0-3
	A keen sense of the intended audience. The author's voice and the writing convey passion.	The paper addresses the audience appropriately and is engaging with a strong sense of voice.	Essay addresses the audience appropriately with some examples of creative expression.	Writing is general with little sense of the audience or communication of the writer's voice or passion.	Writing is general with no sense of either the writer or audience. Robotic.
Citations	10	9	7-8	4-6	0-3
	All evidence is well cited in appropriate format.	All evidence is cited, but with minor format errors.	Good citations but not enough of them.	Some citations but either incomplete or inappropriate.	Almost entirely without citations. Or AI-generated content.

IMPORTANT: If I notice that a student's writing is in need of improvement prior to the final assignment, I may refer them to the UF Writing Studio. This is not meant as a punishment, and it is not a requirement, just a recommendation. On-campus resources are available so that we can all continue to improve our skills; there is no shame in needing a little extra help. Working with the Writing Studio will allow you to workshop drafts, improve sentence structure, clarify grammatical issues, and get a handle on organization. I strongly suggest availing yourself of this FREE resource to get your writing in top shape!

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Course Schedule:

PART I - INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD OF GENDER HISTORY/THEORY AND

METHODS: In the first week, we will familiarize ourselves with gender as a category of historical analysis, discuss feminist methodologies, and consider the general project of revisionist history.

Note If possible, read the assigned texts in the order in which they appear on the syllabus. Doing so may facilitate greater understanding of the material.

August 25, Week 1: Course Introduction + Gender and History

- Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review*, p. 1053-1075
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Chapter 1, p. 1-30

- Kathryn M. Smith. "Female Voice and Feminist Text: Testimonio as a Form of Resistance in Latin America," *Florida Atlantic Comparative Studies Journal*, p. 22-38

PART II - COUNTRY CASE STUDIES: In this portion of the course, we will examine countries that experienced significant political conflicts during what historian Gilbert Joseph calls "Latin America's long Cold War." Specifically, we will look at how women and LGBTQ people participated in these conflicts and how their perspectives can serve to complicate conventional historiographies. Each week, we will examine primary sources in class.

September 1: Labor Day, no class

September 8, Week 2: Mexico (1910-1940) – Women at the Vanguard of a Social Revolution

- For historical background on Latin America in the 20th century: Tanya Harmer, "The Cold War in Latin America," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, p. 133-148
- Carlos Monsiváis, "When Gender Can't Be Seen amid the Symbols: Women and the Mexican Revolution," and Mary Kay Vaughn, "Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the Modern Woman: Gender in the Long Mexican Revolution," in *Sex and Revolution: gender, politics and power in modern Mexico*, p. 1-32
- Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, Introduction and Chapter 1; p. 1-59
- Elena Poniatowska, *Las Soldaderas: women of the Mexican Revolution*, review selected photographs

September 15, Week 3: Cuba (1959-1975) – Feminism, Queerness, Art, and the Limits of Revolutionary Socialism

- Michelle Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution: Women and Gender Policy in Cuba: 1952-1962*, Introduction; p. 1-18
- Reinaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls: A Memoir*
- Film: *Fresa y Chocolate*, directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qrz37EyJ1oE>) DVD on reserve at the library

September 22, Week 4: Brazil (1960-1990) – Political Resistance, Counterculture, and Legacies of Slavery under Authoritarianism

- James N. Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*, Chapter 6, p. 242-278
- Benedita da Silva, *Benedita da Silva: An Afro-Brazilian Woman's Story of Politics and Love*
- Daphne Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak: Contemporary Life Stories*, "Marta," "Conceição," and "Madalena," p. 197-212, 248-269; optional: "Célia," p. 231-247 (book is on reserve at the library)

September 29, Week 5: Chile (1965-1990) – Patriarchy Retreats?

- Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973*, Introduction, Chapter 6; p. 1-18, 210-246
- Florencia E. Mallon, "Barbudos, Warriors, and Rotos: The MIR, Masculinity, and Power in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965-74," in *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*; p. 179-215

- Heidi Tinsman, "Reviving Feminist Materialism: Gender and Neoliberalism in Pinochet's Chile," p. 145-188

October 8, Week 6: Argentina (1970-1990) – Maternal Activism and Gendered Violence

- Isabella Cosse, "Infidelities: Morality, Revolution, and Sexuality in Left-Wing Guerrilla Organizations in 1960s and 1970s Argentina," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*; p. 415-450
- Valeria Manzano, "Sex, Gender, and the Making of the 'Enemy Within' in Cold War Argentina," *Journal of Latin American Studies*; p. 1-29
- Jennifer Adair, "The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo: From Dictatorship to Democracy," *Routledge History of Human Rights*; p. 375-391
- **Primary source analysis paper due Thursday, October 10**

October 13, Week 7: Guatemala (1960-1996) – Women as Gendered and Racialized Subjects

- Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*
- Betsy Konefal, *For Every Indio Who Falls: A History of Maya Activism in Guatemala*, Introduction and Chapter 4; p. 1-10; p. 83-110
- Arturo Arias, "Letters from Guatemala: Indigenous Women on Civil War," p. 1874-1877

October 20, Week 8: El Salvador and Nicaragua (1970-1992) – Women at War and in Politics

- Jocelyn Viterna, *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*, Chapter 1 and Conclusion; p. 1-13; 203-220
- Gioconda Belli, *The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War*
- *La Mujer en la Revolución Sandinista*, documentary (no subtitles available but the closed captioning in English is decent):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdYyPZktQR8&t=1256s>

October 27, Week 9:

- **Visit to the Latin American and Caribbean Collection at Smathers Library**

PART III – LABOR AND AFFINITY-BASED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: In the final portion of the class, we will look to how certain social movements coalesced around issues of labor, identity, sexuality, and religion and how these affinities informed their claims pertaining to gender, politics, and public life.

November 3, Week 10: Conservative and Religious Women – Wives and Mothers as Guardians of Tradition

- Margaret Power, "Who but a Woman? The Transnational Diffusion of Anti-Communism among Conservative Women in Brazil, Chile and the United States during the Cold War," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, p. 93-119
- Margaret Power, "Defending Dictatorship: Conservative Women in Pinochet's Chile and the 1988 Plebiscite," in *Radical Women in Latin America: left and right*, p. 299-324
- Karen Kampwith, "Women in the Armed Struggles in Nicaragua: Sandinistas and Contras Compared," in *Radical Women in Latin America: left and right*, p. 79-109
- **Research proposal for final paper due November 6 (2-3 pages)**

November 10: Domestic Workers – “Women’s Work” and Legacies of Colonial Violence

- Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, "Shifting Solidarities: The Politics of Household Workers in Cold War Chile," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, p. 129-162
- Joaze Bernardino-Costa, "Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative: The Decolonized Thought of Brazil's Domestic Workers' Unions," *Latin American Perspectives*, p. 33-45
- Adelinda Díaz Uriarte, "The Autobiography of a Fighter" in *Muchachas No More*, ed. Elsa M. Chaney and Mary Garcia Castro, p. 389-406

November 17, Week 11: Sex Workers – Labor, Deviance and Defiance

- Mizilikazi Koné, "Transnational Sex Worker Organizing in Latin America: RedTraSex, Labour, and Human Rights," *Social and Economic Studies*; p. 87-108
- *Global sex workers: rights, resistance, and redefinition*, edited by Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema: Amalia Lucía Cabezas, "Discourses of Prostitution;" The Association of Autonomous Women Workers, Ecuador, "22nd June;" "A world of people: sex workers in Mexico;" p. 79-86, p. 172-177, 197-199
- Excerpts of *Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore: The Story of a Woman who Decided to be a Puta* by Gabriela Leite, translated by Meg Weeks
- *A Kiss for Gabriela*, a documentary by Laura Murray:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqgwDysJjY0>

December 1, Week 12: LGBTQ Activists – Rights, Assimilation, and (Non-)Normativity in Post-Cold War Democracies

- Cymene Howe, *Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua*, Introduction; p. 1-22
- Stephen Brown, "'Con Discriminación y Represión No Hay Democracia': The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Argentina," in *The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America*, ed. Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, p. 86-101
- Moises Lino e Silva, *Minoritarian Liberalism: A Travesti Life in a Brazilian Favela*, Introduction; p. 1-24

Final paper due December 9