

SPA 539: Race, Affect, Modernity in Latin America

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Wednesdays 4:30-7pm, 1145 POT

Course description:

In 2019, a Brazilian film imagines that an international group has rented out a small backlands town wherein to practice free-range necrotourism: as they roam the village at their leisure, these affluent all-white Euro/Anglo visitors are connected to a digital English-language hub that authorizes and tracks their kills of the locals, who run the full and famously diverse Brazilian skin-color gamut and are all fair game. In 2022, a 19yo white male real-world gamer takes the lives of ten Black victims in Buffalo, NY, a geographical area to which he had traveled with weapons, exactly like his fictional counterparts, because of its predominantly Black population.

The judge of the racially-motivated 19yo killer condemned him thus: “There is no place for you or your ignorant, hateful and evil ideologies in a civilized society.” Yet, our most recent 600 years of history show exactly the opposite to be true.

This course will seek to trace how the “we” of modern Western civilization emerges progressively as a category of belonging based on a love of good self that is predicated upon a hatred of evil other writ large, and one in which the Americas form part of a 600-year globalized West. From its inception to the cultural present, the Western “we” homologizes itself with the human condition by violently excluding those whose characteristics of race, religion, nationality, social class, language, gender, sexuality, and religion do not qualify them for belonging to humanity.

Cultural Theory (among others):

Aníbal Quijano, Howard Zinn, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Achille Mbembe, Ibram X. Kendi, William Pettigrew, Nick Draper, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Walter D. Mignolo

Literature/Film:

José María Arguedas, Jorge Icaza, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Alfonso Cuarón, Claudia Llosa, Jorge Bustamante, Liliana Colanzi, Rita Indiana, Kleber Mendonça Filho, Alonso Ruizpalacios