**History of Brazil:**

**“Nation Under Construction”**

**LAH 4600, Fall 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Micah Oelze

FIU Office: Modesto Maidique, DM 300A

Email through Blackboard

Class Meetings:

T/R 2:00-3:15 pm

Graham Center, 287A

**Course Description:**

Brazil has long loomed large on the globe for its size and for its cultural production. Brazil is the world’s fifth largest country in landmass and in population (at 211 million), and has the eighth largest economy. The nation’s size brings variety in its ways of life, spoken accents, and cultural production. Brazil seems an inexhaustible fount of cultural traditions. Music serves as a solid example. Boasting a strong recording industry and an endless number of live performances, the nation has provided a soundtrack for the world with its Bossa Nova, Samba, Bloco-Afro, and Tropicalia/MPB music, while providing its own citizens an even broader selection featuring genres such as forró, funk, samba-reggae, sertaneja, and many others. Today, Brazil is on the international radar for another reason: the nation’s current political crisis. With one president impeached last year and another now under investigation (alongside similar indictments and investigations into many of the nation’s congressional representatives), the international audience awaits the outcome of the lengthy investigations. How will Brazil change in the coming decade, and what brought the nation into this situation?

LAH 4600 “Nation Under Construction” is an upper-level history course designed to provide an engaging survey of Brazilian history, one that is as relevant and valuable for history majors as it is for students interested in Brazilian culture, language, music, and urban development. The course will cover colonial foundations all the way through today’s current political crises. Special attention will be paid to the people that have worked to build Brazil as a nation. Some of these were elite writers, politicians, and architects. But many more were everyday citizens who, not content with Brazil as it was, endeavored to change their communities, regions, and state. “Nation Under Construction” will provide students a strong understanding of Brazilian history in its political, social, and cultural forms, and then additionally provide history majors the chance to develop competency with such historical concepts as agency, nation-building, and state-formation.

**Course Objectives:**

This is an upper-level history topics course. As such, the course demands that you read, write, and discuss historic events and processes with careful language and a preference for complexity over facile generalizations.. We will call this a **“scholarly discourse”** and it should be considered the required register for all discussions, whether in-class, during office hours, or via email. Of course, I will be generous and gracious in training those students who do not navigate such discourse with ease (thus making “scholarly discourse” the preliminary learning objective for the course). With this established, there are three remaining objectives in the class.

1. First are heightened **reading skills**. Students will read primary sources, social science scholarship, and cultural production, and learn to understand these statements in relation to how they attest to individual agency, contribute to the construction of collective identities, and forge a national identity.
2. Second, students will become comfortable engaging **foundational debates** in Brazilian culture, history, and politics *and* in the literature of social history as it pertains to Brazil.
3. Third, and most pointedly, students will come to understand **concepts** including *agency, governance, identity,* and *ritual*. As we will spend ample time discussing in class, students are expected to first be able to *define* these concepts, second *anchor* them in historic and contemporary examples, and third *scale* these discussions on the level of the individual, the city, and the nation.

**Learning Outcomes**

Given these objectives, at the end of the course each student should be able to:

**Reading Skills:**

* Analyze a primary source with regard to what it says about the author either as an historical actor or as an historian.
* Provide an interpretation of a cultural product (eg: a short story) that explores the text as an act of agency or a lack thereof.
* Defend an interpretation of a cultural product (eg: a song) as contributing to the construction of a group or national identity, and evaluate the extent to which that construction operates successfully.

**Foundational Debates:**

* Write reading response essays that compare and evaluate a group of scholars’ positions on key issues in Brazilian history.
* Present, verbally, an argument that explains the extent to which those enslaved in Brazil held and exercised agency. Then explain which institutions contributed to or undermined that agency.
* Discuss repertoires of power (eg: ritual, surveillance, patronage) in colonial and contemporary governance and explain how such repertoires have changed over time.

**Concepts:**

* Define any of the key course concepts at any time during class discussions.
* Regularly anchor concepts to concrete examples in Brazilian history and contemporary society. Students will practice discipline here, anchoring these concepts to the specific time and place under discussion during any given week.
* Explain verbally and in reading response papers how a historical term changes in meaning as we move in scale from the individual, to the city, to the nation.
* Craft a final exam essay (or two!) offering a profound engagement with multiple historical texts in order to explore one of the core course concepts. Such an essay will explain how such a concept has been examined in Brazil in different times, places, and on different scales. It will end with a discussion of why the inquiry into that concept remains relevant to Brazilian society today, preferably by connecting to and pointing out contemporary challenges in the region.

**Prerequisites**:

There are no prerequisites required for this course. All are welcome.  
   
**Textbooks**:

There are three textbooks required for this course. All of them can be purchased online or at the FIU bookstore. Any edition can purchased. I recommend getting whatever is the most affordable. In addition, there will be a variety of shorter readings in PDF format. All of these PDFs will be available on Blackboard.

Sandra. Lauderdale Graham. *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio De Janeiro.* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

Peter Beattie, editor. *The Human Tradition in Modern Brazil.* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2004).

João Biehl. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment.* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

**Accessibility and Accommodation:**

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable.

If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190. You can also visit Blackboard’s Commitment Accessibility webpage for more information. For additional assistance please contact FIU's Disability Resource Center.

Two additional notes based on my experience: 1. Even if you have spoken with the DRC in past semesters, it is important to contact them anew each semester to assure they know which courses you are taking and to make sure they have contacted me as the professor. 2. The DRC tells me what general accomodations you need (extra time on an assignment, flexible deadlines, a quiet space for an exam) but they respect your privacy and do not give me additional details. So if you feel you need something additional from me that the DRC may not be able to provide themselves (eg: closed captioning for a video or a transcription of lyrics from a song I assign) then reach out to me proactively and explain your requests. I will be happy to help.

**Class Rules:**

1. **Electronic Devices:** Do not text or play facebook during class. If you need to make a phone call, step out of class. Laptop computers can be used for taking notes, but should not become a distraction. Breaking this policy means I ask you to leave class.
2. **Do not eat in class.** I find it distracting. Drinks, especially coffee, are welcome.
3. **Late Policy:** Writing assignments are due on Turnitin via Blackboard by 11:59 pm on the date indicated. ***No late assignments accepted.***
4. **Academic Honesty:** In addition to the fact that FIU has strict rules and policies regarding academic misconduct (http://undergrad.fiu.edu/academic-integrity/misconducts.html), I believe that History as a discipline is best when considered an ethical pursuit. We work with the past to learn how to live well in the present. As such, I will hold our classroom to a high standard of academic honesty. For me as your professor, this means I must teach you about citations, quotations, and how historians recognize other scholars for their ideas. On your part, this means doing honest research and crediting those that helped you along the way. Academic dishonesty will be officially reported and likely result in failure of the course.

**Writing Resources: Tutoring**

FIU’s history department has an incredible tutoring program just for students taking history courses. Tutoring appointments are with graduate students or graduates of the history program. You take a draft of your paper to an appointment, and spend 50 minutes working with a tutor to improve your writing. Working with a tutor usually results in a grade improvement of at least 10%. I encourage you to take your work for this (or any other history class) to the tutors to get a second pair of eyes on your work. In addition, you are always welcome to stop by my office hours with a copy of a work in your hands to get my encouragement and criticism.

To make an appointment, visit **https://history.fiu.edu/tutoring**. This website also contains valuable instructions for organizing an historical essay and editing your writing. I wrote those instructions, so they are absolutely valid and pertinent for our class.

**Assignments & Assessments:**

*Participation* (25%):

This is an upper-level history course, which means you are not taking the course as a part of your mandatory/obligatory liberal arts curriculum. So I will treat you as co-scholars, and I hope you will each be as committed as is possible in your given case. Attendance will make up 10% of your grade, and then participation in discussion will be the other 15%. By participation, I mean that you actively engage your colleagues and the material. Speak like a scholar, and be daring in your ideas! Our class is small enough that I hope you will not be too timid to share your ideas with the group, and I will work hard to foster a positive, encouraging environment. If I feel that not enough of the group is participating, I will institute weekly reading quizzes, at which point your grades on the quizzes will compose the 15% participation grade. I will keep track of your points every week, so that you can ask for my feedback on your participation at any point during the semester during my office hours.

*Reading Response Essays* (50%):

Weeks 1 and 2 are an introduction to the course: you just show up and take really careful notes. Weeks 3-15 feature important discussions every Thursday. Starting with week 3, I will split the class into two “teams.” Team 1 will be called “Mangueira,” team 2 called “Portela.” I will label each week as a Mangueira or Portela week. If it is your group’s week, you are responsible to submit a critical reading response (**12 pt font, Times New Roman, Double-Spaced, 800-1,000 words,** meaning it is at least 3 full pages, and maxes out at 4 pages). By the end of Week 15, each group will have had six essays. I will drop the lowest essay grade. If needed, you can take advantage of this policy and choose to simply skip an essay on a week where you have a family emergency or heavy stress. Or you can submit all six and let me toss the lowest grade, boosting your final grade in the course.

All of these assignments will be submitted through the Turnitin link on Blackboard, in the corresponding week’s folder. They must be submitted **before midnight the day before class** (eg Wednesday evening). This is because I want you to rest well before class. Sleeping after having written allows your brain to further process the information.

I will grade heavily on engagement with concepts and engagement with texts. That said, I will expect college writing mechanics (proper spelling, grammar, and syntax), and will dock 15% if you have repeated or glaring errors. So proofread.

To receive an “A” grade, essays must include an introductory paragraph providing context (eg: what is the topic of the week and what texts did you read?) and some sort of general argument. Since these are reading response essays, you do not need a groundbreaking thesis for each essay. But I would like a clear statement of the general point or two you will set forth in the essay.

This will be followed that demonstrate scholarly engagement with the text: topic sentences, insightful points, evaluations, short quotes that capture key phrases, and citations. You can cite the texts in be Chicago Style, like this.[[1]](#footnote-1) Or you can use MLA format, like this (Biehl, 78). But use something! The essays are designed to allow you to demonstrate your critical engagement with the assigned primary and secondary sources. They will also prepare you for the in-class discussion. Essay prompts will be available on Blackboard.

In sum: Six essays, I drop the lowest, leaving you with 5 essays worth 10% each.

*Final Exam* (25%):

On the final week of class you will write an essay that demonstrates profound engagement with one of the course’s four central themes: agency, the city, citizenship, and identity. I have not yet decided if the essay will be take home or in-class (with a blue book). I will let you know. But I will give you a rough idea of the questions, and will do so right here:

1. Provide a definition of agency, and explain how the concept helps illuminate or complicate standard aspects of the study of Brazilian history. Reference at least two different cases and explain the contributions set forth by at least three scholars (eg Karash; Lauderdale Graham; Jose Reis; Gouvêa; Biehl, etc).
2. Provide a definition of citizenship and explain its relationship with urban space. How does the built environment (the *urbs*) allow or exlude the people (civitas) from accessing state privilege? Please use two different historic cases and explain the insight provided by at least three scholars (Lauderdale Graham; Meade; Holston, Dunn, or Caldeira).
3. How would you define identity? Point to at least two cases in Brazilian history where elite writers, politicians, artists, or everyday citizens have contributed to the construction of national identity. Explain how and why they have done this. Analyze these cases with the insight provided by at least two historians (Dunn; Avelar, etc). Make sure to engage at least two primary sources (either the artwork from throughout the course, any of the albums throughout the course, or the literature by DaCunha and Aranha, etc).

Here is the grading scale for the course:

| **LETTER** | **RANGE (%)** | **LETTER** | **RANGE (%)** | **LETTER** | **RANGE (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | 93 or above | B | 83 - 86 | C | 70 - 77 |
| A- | 90 – 92 | B- | 80 - 82 | D | 60 - 69 |
| B+ | 88 - 89 | C+ | 78 - 79 | F | 59 or less |

**Weekly Schedule:**

We meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In most cases (all but two, I believe), I will give a lecture on Tuesdays. Thursdays will be reserved for group discussion. Weekly papers are due, submitted electronically, on Turnitin (link via week’s folder in Blackboard) the night before the given discussion (which is usually Wednesday before midnight).

**Note:** I am always looking for engaging readings and fascinating primary sources. As a result, this section of the syllabus may be slightly altered on occassion to best fit our needs. Any such changes will be made at least one whole week in advance. Stay tuned on Blackboard for each week’s digitalized PDFs.

**Week 1: Introductions**

Tuesday, Aug 22: Syllabus, Names, Expectations, Course Themes

Thursday, Aug 24: Lecture: “Contemporary Brazil”

*Reading*:

* Bartholomae: “Ways of Reading"
* Levine “How Brazil Works”
* DaMatta “Is Brazil Hopelessly Corrupt?”

**Week 2: Key Concepts**

Tuesday, Aug 29: Lecture: “Contemporary Brazil, Part 2”

Thursday, Aug 31: Discussion of Course Concepts

*Reading*: Ashcroft “Key Concepts”

**Week 3:  Conquest and Early Colonial**

Tuesday, Sept 5: Lecture: “Early Colonial Brazil” and “Reading Art”

Thursday: Sept 7. Brazilian Independence Day. *No Class.*

**Week 4: Colonial Economics and Slavery**

Tuesday, Sept 12: Mini-Lecture, “Fascinating Economics” and Discussion:

*Reading*:

* Baker “Resounding City”
* Metcalf “In-Betweens” in Beatties, ed, *Human Tradition*

Thursday, Sept 14: Mini-Lecture “Slavery” and Discussion:

*Reading:*  *Human tradition,* “Zumbí.”

*Viewing:* *Historias Mestiças*, “Slave Routes"

*Listening*:

* Clara Nunes, “Canto das Tres Raças”
* Edson Gomes, “Zumbi dos Palmares”
* Beth Carvalho, “Cem Anos de Liberdade”
* Natiruts, “Palmares"

**Week 5: Colonial Politics, from Baroque to Broke**

Tuesday, Sept 19: Lecture, “Capitalism and Reform” & “Baroque Expression”

Thursday, Sept 21: Discussion and Potential Guest Lecturer

*Read*ing: Nazzari, “José Antonio da Silva” from *Human Tradition*

                Excerpt from *Xica da Silva* monograph

**Week 6: Monarchy: Cultural Missions and Insurrections.**

Tuesday, Sept 26: Lecture “The Court of Dom João VI”

Thursday, Sept 28: Discussion on Social Movements and Social Control

*Reading*:

* + - Kraay, “Daniel Gomes de Freitas” in *Human Tradition*
    - João Jose Reis, *Divining Slavery*
    - Stein, “Paraiba Plantation”

**Week 7:** **Nineteenth Century: Patronage to Abolition**

Tuesday, Oct 3: Patronage and Abolition Movements

Thursday, Oct 5: Discussion: “House and Street”

*Reading*:

* Roberto DaMatta, “Casa and Rua”
* Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street*

*Viewing*:

* Patricia Gouvêa work at maepreta.com

**Week 8: Citizenship in the City and in the Country**

Tuesday, Oct 10: Urban Reforms

Thursday, Oct 12: Discussion on Citizenship

*Reading*:

* Chris Dunn, “Intro on Citizenship”
* Meade “Vaccine Revolt”
* Diacon, “Rondón” in *Human Tradition*

**Week 9: National Psychology**

Tuesday, Oct 17: Lecture: “National Psychology”

Thursday, Oct 19: Discussion

*Reading*:

* + - Graça Aranha, *Canaã*, excerpts
    - Da Cunha, *Os Sertoes,* excerpts
    - Dain Borges, “Mirror of Progress” (On DaCunha)

**Week 10: Vargas Era**

Tuesday, Oct 24: Lecture: “Vargas: Social Democrat or Authoritarian?”

Thursday, Oct 26: Discussion: Nation-Building in the Estado Novo

*Reading*:

* Levine, *Brazil Reader*“Vargas” and “Factory Rules”
* McCann, “Geraldo Pereira,” in *Human Tradition*
* Dávila, “Norma Fraga,” in *Human Tradition*

**Week 11: Utopias and Dystopias: Architecture and Race Relations**

Tuesday, Oct 31: Lecture, “Building Brasília”

Thursday, Nov 2: Discussion: “Architectures of Music and Race”

*Reading*:

* Wisnik, “Doomed to Modernity”
* Holston, “Spirit of Brasília”
* Abdias do Nascimento excerpt
* Levine Reader: “What Color are you” with Varejão, “Tinta Polvo”

*Listening*:

* Vinicius and Baden Powell, *Afro-sambas*

**Week 12: Military Regime and the Economic "Miracle"**

Tuesday, Nov 7: Lecture: “Military Dictatorship” and “Bending Beyond Art”

Thursday, Nov 9: Discussion “Protest Music”

*Listening*:

* + Elis Regina & Joao Bosco (Bebado e Equilibrista and Como Nossos Pais)
  + Chico Buarque, *Construção*
  + Tropicalia, *Panis et Circenses*
  + Beth Carvalho, *Pra Seu Governo*

*Reading:*

* Chris Dunn, “Tropicalia”

**Week 13: Return to Democracy**

Tuesday, Nov 14: “Student Movements and Return to Democracy”

Thursday, Nov 16: Discussion: Spaces of Democracy?

Reading:

* Caldeira, *City of Walls*, intro and ch 7.

Viewing:

* Visit: <https://www.11bienaldearquitetura.org.br/>

**Week 14: Social Issues in Neoliberal Brazil:**

Tuesday, Nov 21: Discussion of Biehlt, *Vita,* Intro and Part 1 (1-66).

Thursday, Nov 23: Thanksgiving Holiday. No Class.

**Week 15: Social Issues, Continued**

Tuesday, Nov28: Finish up conversation on Biehlt, *Vita*:

102-107;  179-186; 192-198;  274-277; 297-309.

Thursday, Nov 30: Course Review, Prep for Exam

**Week 16:** Final Exam.

1. João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)