

Cultural Politics of Cumbia Music and Dance  
ER&M S120 / AMST S220  
M, W at 9 am - 12:15 pm

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Cumbia is one of the most transnational music in the American continent currently representing a sonic renaissance. Varied cumbia sounds and dance styles are found in most countries across the Americas while sharing similar race and colonial genealogies. This class focuses on cumbia music and dance to explore that politics of race, gender, colonialism, and racial capitalism to consider the ways music reflects the cultural politics of a given moment. The cultural production of cumbia allows us to explore power and gender, capitalism and race, as well as migration and subjectivities. Through readings and listening homework (and in-class exercises) we will consider how cumbia reflects political tensions over power as well as a transformative space for race and gender formations as well as the cultural politics of vernaculars.

### Course Objectives

- o Have a holistic view of the wide range of music that the genre cumbia encompasses
- o Develop basic listening skills in regard to this music
- o Understand the sociopolitical dynamics that shape these music practices
- o Think critically about the role that musical soundscapes and dance in political transformations as well as the reproduction of nation-state projects of race and gender

### Course Materials

Reading and audio materials will be provided through Canvas

### Academic Integrity

A central purpose in this class is to be curious, think critically, and support our arguments and questions with sound research. To have an opportunity to learn I believe we must respect each other, the work we engage with, and the learning environment we will inhabit this semester. This work requires trust and honesty among us all. If we do not approach the work with respect and rigor our learning and the ability to produce bold ideas will be impaired. Therefore, I expect all students to understand what plagiarism is and why it is unacceptable. Any student considering plagiarism should recognize the consequences and consider alternatives. Students uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism may request help from me, other faculty or from appropriate University services.

Be aware that the University defines academic integrity as “the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts” (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). The Policy continues: “Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty

includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information, or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction." Ultimately, I want you to trust in yourself and in your own powerful ideas because I certainly have that confidence in you.

Student Accessibility Services

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Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at Yale is committed to promoting equitable access to education and student life for students with disabilities, and to fostering a campus environment of belonging, inclusion, and respect. SAS determines reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities, and works collaboratively with Yale faculty, staff, and students to provide accessible and equitable educational access.

Please see their website and let me know if there is any support that I can provide in helping you connect with these resources at <https://sas.yale.edu/> or you may also call: 203.432.2324

Mental Health Services

Yale University offers tremendous support for our mental health. Please see me if you need support in connecting with these support services. You may call: 203.432.0290 or see the website: <https://yalehealth.yale.edu/directory/departments/mental-health-counseling>

## Schedule

### Week 1 (Week of May 26) Coloniality, Sound, and Migration

Day 1: Syllabus review + introduction to the course

Read:

- “Cumbia Music in Colombia.” In *Cumbia! Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre* (D’Amico Leonardo edited by Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste and Pablo Vila, 29-48. Duke University Press.
- “Cumbia: The Musical Backbone of Latin America” (National Public Radio. Listen: <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1143635185?ft=nprml&f=510312>)

In Class Listening Exercise

- Andrés Landero: “El Nacimiento de la Cumbia”
- Fito Olivares y su Grupo: “Juana La Cubana”

Day 2:

Read:

- “On Music and Colombianness: Toward a Critique of the History of Cumbia” (Héctor Fernandez L’Hoeste)
- “Colombia Roots: The Migration and Evolution of Cumbia” <https://borderlore.org/colombian-roots-the-migration-and-evolution-of-cumbia/>
- “Cumbia: The Musical Backbone of Latin America” <https://www.npr.org/sections/latino/2013/09/30/227834004/cumbia-the-musical-backbone-of-latin-america>

### Week 2 (Week of June 2) Race, Gender, Sexuality, Music

Day 1:

Read:

- “Against Easy Listening: Audiographic Readings and Transnational Sounding” (Josh Kun)
- “Cumbia connects nations and generations through music and dance” <https://news.ucsb.edu/2023/020886/unity-rhythm>
- “Music, blackness and national identity: three moments in Colombian history” (Peter Wade)

Day 2:

Read:

- “A Multicultural Journey to the Beats of Cumbia” <https://tigresounds.com/spotlights/a-multicultural-journey-to-the-beats-of-cumbia/>
- “¿Ay mama, que será lo quiere el negro? Racialized Representations of Women in Sonora Dinamita’s Cumbias”

Listen:

- La Sonora Dinamita: “Oye”
- La Sonora Dinamita: “Se Me Perdió La Cadenita”
- La Sonora Dinamita: “Capullo y Sorullo”

### Week 3 (Week of June 9) Cumbia Moves | Crossing Borders

Day 1

Read:

- “From Cumbia Colombiana to Cosmopolatina: Roots, Race, and Mestizaje.” Deborah Pacini Hernández in *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music*, 106-141. Temple University Press.
- “Transnational Trajectories of Colombian Cumbia” (Lea Ramsdell)

Day 2

Read:

- “Rigo Tovar, Cumbia, and the Transnational Gruperero Book” (Alejandro Madrid)
- “Of Rhythms and Borders” (Ana Lopez)
- “Mexico’s Cholombianos and Cumbia Dancing”  
<https://www.dancepolicy.com/stream/cholombianos>

Listen:

- Luis Carlos Meyer: “Micaela”
- Carmen Rivero y su Conjunto: “Cumbia Cumbiamba”
- Rigo Tovar: “Mi Matamoros Querido”

**Screen:** *I’m No Longer Here* (Dir: Fernando Frias)

### Week 4 (Week of June 16) Cumbia and el otro Mexico

Day 1

Read:

- Madrid, Alejandro L. 2013. “Rigo Tovar and the Transnational Gruperero Boom.” In *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*, edited by L’Hoeste, Héctor Fernández, and Pablo Vila, 105-118. Duke University Press.
- Paredez, Deborah. 2009. “Becoming Latina, Becoming Selena.” In *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory*, 126-154. Duke University Press.

Day 2

Read:

- Olvera Gudiño, Alejandro L. 2013. “Cumbia in Mexico’s Northeastern Region.” In *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*, edited by L’Hoeste, Héctor Fernández, and Pablo Vila, 87-104. Duke University Press.

Required Listen:

- Beto Villa y Los Populares de Nueva Rosita: “Cabellos Largos”
- Ramón Ayala: “Pero Yo no la Conozco”

*Listen:*

- Los Bukis: “La Cumbia Michoacana”
- Bronco: “Cumbia Triste”
- Selena: “Baila Esta Cumbia”; (studio version)

## **Week 5 (Week of June 23) Cumbia Sonideras and Rebajadas**

*Day 1*

*Read:*

- “Communicating the Collective Imagination: The Sociospatial World of the Mexican Sonidero in Puebla, New York, and New Jersey.” Cathy Ragland In *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*, edited by L’Hoeste, Héctor Fernández, and Pablo Vila, 119-137. Duke University Press.
- “Allá in the Mix: Mexican Sonideros and the Musical Politics of Migrancy” (Josh Kun)
- “Dissonant Deejays of Cumbia Sonidero: Cultivating Queer Vibes and Mujerista Mentorship”

*Day 2*

*Read:*

- “Politics in Motion” in *Everynight Life*, Celeste Fraser Delgado
- “Cumbia sin reglas” <https://youtu.be/SgiXoym3QfY?si=4HjCHzkml-uxu0YU>
- “From Vinyl to USB The Evolution of Mexico City’s sonideros” <https://english.elpais.com/culture/2023-08-05/from-vinyl-to-usb-the-evolution-of-mexico-citys-sonideros.html>

*Listen:*

NPR Podcast. Kumbia Queers: Cumbia Is More Punk Than Punk

*Listen:*

- Kumbia Queers: “La Isla con Chikas”
- Super Grupo Colombia: “Cumbia Embajadora”
- Carlos Vives feat. Shakira: “La Bicicleta”
- Andrés Landero: “Mara del Carmen” (rebajada)
- Celso Piña: “La Piragua” (rebajada)
- Sonido Condor: “La Cumbia del Piropo” (sonidera)
- Sonido Sonoramico: “Medley” (sonidera)

**Evaluation/Assignments:**

Attendance and Participation	15
Movie Essay ( <i>I'm No Longer Here</i> )	15
Final Project: Playlist + Paper	30
Weekly Writing Assignments (4X 10 points)	40

*Attendance and Participation*

Due to the condensed schedule of a summer course attendance and participation is key. Therefore, attendance will be taken daily. You will be allowed only one excused absence before the lower of your overall class score.

*Movie Essay:*

You will be provided with a question to frame your critical reflection of the movie *I'm No Longer Here*. Guidelines will be given out in class.

*Weekly Writing Assignments*

The assignment will be in the form of a response to a question I will pose regarding the theme/readings for the upcoming week.

- ◇ Responses will require you to address a minimum number of readings and close readings of a cultural text (e.g. song, film, novel)
  - Your responses should be 500-700 words in length.
  - Written assignments must be typed, double-spaced: 1-inch margins. 12 pt. fonts. Reader friendly font e.g. Times, YaleNew. Upload to the "Assignments" portal via Canvas.

*Final Project*

Your final project will require you to create a cumbia playlist based on your chosen theme e.g. dance and race, sound and migration, gender and temporality. You will be required to address this chosen theme by drawing on at least five concepts or arguments based in readings from the class and supporting this reflection through the songs on your list.