

## PHIL 24M: LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY AND METAPHILOSOPHY



“Destrucción del viejo orden”/“Destruction of the Old Order” (1926) by José Clemente Orozco

**Spring 2021 | Wednesdays 11:30am-12:50pm (virtual)**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 4:00-5:00pm and by appointment (virtual)

Units: 2 | Grading: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Exception

### **Course overview:**

Some of the richest discussions in Latin American philosophy over the past century have been self-consciously about Latin American philosophy. This tutorial will provide a survey of those meta-philosophical issues. From the outset, we face significant questions of categorization: What does it mean to be Latin American? And what counts as philosophy? There are also descriptive questions: What are some features of Latin American philosophy--and are these distinctive from other fields of philosophy? Are there any particular unifying themes throughout Latin American philosophy? Finally, we must consider evaluative and normative questions: What are some markers of good and bad philosophy, and how do these apply in the case of Latin American philosophy? How is one to practice Latin American philosophy going forward--not just in abstraction, but also in research, teaching, and so forth?

**N.B.** Knowledge of the Spanish or Portuguese languages is not a pre-requisite. All readings will be available in English, and class discussions will be conducted in English. I have marked a few of the readings as available in both English and Spanish. In those cases, students are free to read either version so long as they come to class prepared to discuss in English!

## **Texts:**

All readings will be available on the Canvas site. A handful of the readings are drawn from the anthology below, which has a nice selection of other readings in addition but is not required for the course:

Recommended: *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*. Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno, eds. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

## **Online philosophy resources:**

[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

[Jim Pryor's advice on reading philosophy](#)

## **Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the course, students will:

- i. be able to articulate the concerns animating Latin American metaphilosophy;
- ii. have a broad familiarity of first-order topics within Latin American philosophy, serving as a jumping-off point for further study;
- iii. be able to think critically about conceptions of ethnic categories;
- iv. have a more holistic understanding of what philosophical work consists in;
- v. be able to take a stance on what are the markers of good philosophy, and why;
- vi. have improved their abilities to understand, explicate, and engage philosophical arguments, both written and verbal.

## **Grading:**

This class is graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. In order to receive credit, students must read all of the assigned readings and participate in all class meetings.

Students must also submit a reading response on Canvas by midnight the day before class for 8 out of 10 weeks. Reading responses should be 400-600 words and consist of:

- a. a summary of an argumentative thread in the readings, in the student's own words, followed by
- b. at least one substantive question or challenge related to the readings.

Students are expected to abide by all Stanford University Policies, including the [Honor Code](#).

## **Course expectations:**

Class will be conducted synchronously on Zoom (linked in the Zoom tab on Canvas) in a seminar format, which means that active participation is essential. I will begin each class with a little stage-

setting, but the majority of class will consist of discussion among all of us. Please keep in mind the following guidelines for discussion (adopted from Ned Markosian):

Philosophical discussions (whether in class, after a talk, or in informal settings) can vary along a number of different dimensions. One of these is a spectrum that ranges from (a) a competitive, zero-sum game that involves scoring points and trying to appear smart, on one end, to (b) a cooperative and fun activity aimed at discovering and solving interesting philosophical problems, on the other end. In general, the closer a discussion is to the cooperative end of this spectrum, the better it will be – better because it produces better philosophy, and better also because it is more enjoyable for everyone involved. Here are some rules designed to keep us on the right end of this spectrum.

1. Don't be mean.
2. Never interrupt. If you have a great point, it will still be a great point when it is your turn to speak.
3. Don't bogart the discussion. Some people are more shy than you. Many of them have excellent things to say. It pays to listen.
4. Think in terms of abstract ideas that, once expressed, are on their own, rather than ideas that belong to a particular person.
5. Think of your job as trying to develop those ideas, making them clearer, stronger, better.
6. Try to build on points that have been made by others, whenever possible.
7. Try to make connections between the point currently under consideration and previous points.
8. Every once in a while during the discussion, someone should offer a big-picture comment (even if it is just a question). "So it seems to me that we were discussing X and Y. Did we ever come to any conclusion about whether Y is consistent with X?"
9. If you notice someone breaking one of the first two rules, speak up right away, even if – especially if – you are not the victim.

### **Students with Documented Disabilities:**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty. Unless the student has a temporary disability, Accommodation letters are issued for the entire academic year. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 650-723-1066, URL: <https://oae.stanford.edu/>).

## **Schedule (readings that are not linked here will be posted on Canvas):**

Background: Diana Inez Perez, "[Analytic Philosophy in Latin America](#)" (esp. sections 1 and 3)

What does it mean for philosophy to be Latin American?

Week 1: Introduction

Jorge Gracia, "Ethnic Labels and Philosophy: The Case of Latin American Philosophy"

Week 2: Complications in group identity

Linda Martín Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic: The Politics of Ethnic Names"

*Optional:* Susana Nuccetelli and Roderick Stewart, "Ethnic-Group Terms"

Week 3: Further issues of group identity

María Lugones, "Purity, Impurity, and Separation"

Walter D. Mignolo, "Philosophy and the Colonial Difference"

Week 4: Gatekeeping, indigenous philosophy, and other non-traditional forms of philosophy

Miguel León-Portilla, "The Birth of Philosophy Among the Nahuas"

Alejandro Santana, "Did the Aztecs Do Philosophy?"

*Optional:* Borges, "The Circular Ruins" / "Las ruinas circulares"

What are some characteristics of "a Latin American philosophy"?

Week 5: Early-stage philosophy of liberation

Leopoldo Zea, "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America"

Gabriel García Márquez, "[The Solitude of Latin America](#)" / "[La Soledad de América Latina](#)"

([Original video in Spanish](#))

Week 6: Later-stage philosophy of liberation

Manuel Vargas, "Eurocentrism and the Philosophy of Liberation"

Week 7: Decolonialism – part 1

Grant Silva, "Why the Struggle Against Coloniality Is Paramount to Latin American Philosophy"

Week 8: Decolonialism – part 2

Gregory Pappas, "The Limitations and Dangers of Decolonial Philosophies"

How is one to practice Latin American philosophy?

Week 9: Past mistakes?

Carlos Pereda, "Latin American Philosophy: Some Vices"

Week 10: Future directions

Manuel Vargas, “*Real* Philosophy, Metaphilosophy, and Metametaphilosophy”

*Optional:* [this interview of Vargas](#) and [this satirical piece by him](#)