

**(PALAS 443) Tango: Gender, Nation & Identity  
(Special Topic on Cultural Studies)**

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Universidad de Belgrano  
Program in Argentine and Latin American Studies  
Course Syllabus 2013

**Course information**

T – TH 1:00- 2:30 PM // Room: 10-4.  
Instruction in English

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**Course description**

When tango was born in Buenos Aires, in the second half of the 19th century, Argentina was undergoing profound changes. With the arrival of millions of immigrants, the shape of the city and its society began an intense process of modernization. A product from the bordello and a “threat” to national identity, tango came to be a global success in only twenty years. Acclaimed in Paris and New York, tango became a symbol for Argentina and its new ways of thinking about sexuality, gender and class relations. This course treats tango as a cultural artifact that condenses many of the key debates about the relationships between popular culture and society. Through the study of tango lyrics, plays, films, novels and other cultural productions, this course proposes a critical analysis of theoretical problems such as national identity, gender studies and the consumption of culture in a global era. The course combines lectures with seminar-style classes encouraging discussion and participation. Students will also have to visit different places in the city of Buenos Aires that are clearly linked to the history of tango.

**Course requirements**

Following UB policies, students need a minimum of 75% of attendance to be in good standing for the final exam. Sliding the ID card is the only way to track attendance. Students are expected to do close readings, participate in class, and do two oral presentations in pairs or in groups of three. During the semester, students will write two short (2-3 pages) papers. The requirements also include a final paper. In addition to this, each student will be expected to make a significant contribution to the classroom dialogue.

Any student caught plagiarizing will be given a “no credit” for all courses taken in the semester.

As part of the course requirements, the students will have to visit a specific places related to the history of tango (to be announced during the course, according to the calendar).

### Grading Policy

Participation	10 %
Oral Presentation (2)	20 %
Final Exam	40 %
Short Essay (2) (3 pages)	30 %

For a better understanding of the comparable table for grading: check the conversion table for the numerical scale (in orientation kit packet).

### Week 1

Tuesday, July 30

Course presentation. The multiple faces of tango. The origins of tango

1. Collier, Simon. "The Birth of Tango", in Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (eds.) *The Argentina Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
2. Mónica Gloria Hoss de le Comte. *The tango*. Buenos Aires: Maizal Ediciones, 2004.  
Selection of tangos (course packet).

Thursday, July 31

Introducing tango (2). The analysis of culture and the study of identity

1. Collier, Simon. "The Birth of Tango", in Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (eds.) *The Argentina Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
2. Mónica Gloria Hoss de le Comte. *The tango*. Buenos Aires: Maizal Ediciones, 2004.

### Week 2

Tuesday, August 6

Popular culture, high culture and mass culture

3. Raymond Williams. "The analysis of culture", in Storey, John (ed.). *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. A reader*. London: Pearson Longman, 2009: 33- 40.  
Selection of tangos and clips.

Thursday, August 8

Analyzing popular music

4. Simon Frith. "Towards an aesthetic of popular music."

**Oral presentations will be assigned.**

### Week 3.

Tuesday, August 13

The Modern city and the success of tango

4. Manuel Gálvez. *Nacha Regules* (selection of the novel).

Intellectuals on tango.

Thursday, August 15

*Nationalism, imagined communities and tango as national icon. Criollismo and the tradition of the gauchos.*

7. Benedict Anderson. *Imagined communities*. (Introduction): 1-7.

8. Gauchesca literature and tango. Selection of *Martin Fierro* (1872) by José Hernández.

#### **Week 4**

Tuesday, August 20

Visit of a tango musician.

Thursday, August 22

*The narratives plot of classic tango: perspective, spaces and characters in tango lyrics.*

Selection of tangos.

Oral presentations on tango figures (TBA).

#### **Week 5**

Tuesday, August 27

*Borges and the interpretation of tango (1)*

9. Jorge Luis Borges, "A History of the Tango", in *Evaristo Carriego*. New York: Dutton, 1984.

Oral presentation on Borges.

Thursday, August 29

10. Borges, Jorge Luis. "Man on pink corner", in *Collected Fictions*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1998.

Oral presentation.

#### **Week 6**

Tuesday, September 3

*Tango and Cinema. First tangos in Cinema*

Selection of images of tango in Cinema.

*Tango!* (L. M. Barth, 1932).

Thursday, September 5

*Prostitution, milonguitas and whiny ruffians.*

11. Donna Guy. "On the road to Buenos Aires". In *Sex and danger in Buenos Aires*. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995: 1- 35.

Selection of tangos.

#### **Short paper #1**

## **Week 7**

Tuesday, September 10

*Carlos Gardel and the golden-age of tango*

13. Simon Collier. "Gardel and his encounter with tango"

14. ----. "Carlos Gardel and the Cinema".

Thursday, September 12

*Tango and Cinema (2)*

Screening in class: *Cuesta abajo* ("The Downfall"), with Carlos Gardel (1934, directed by Louis Gasnier).

## **Week 8**

Tuesday, September 17

*Tango and Gender Relations (cont.) // Tango and cinema*

Clips of Tita Merello. Excerpts of Films.

**Student Presentation:** Azucena Maizani / Ada Falcón.

Thursday, September 19

*Stars, mass culture and society*

15. Richard Dyer. "Heavenly bodies: Film stars and society". In Robert Stam and Toby Miller. *Film and Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 603-617

## **Week 9**

Tuesday, September 24

*Tango and gender relations*

16. Donna Guy. "Tango, gender and politics". In *Sex and danger in Buenos Aires*. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995: 141- 175.

Thursday, September 26

17. Marta Savigliano. "Tango as a spectacle of sex, race and class". In *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995: 30- 72.

## **Week 10**

Tuesday, October 1

*Tango, gender relations and peronism*

18. Sylvia Molloy. "Memories of tango".

Thursday, October 3

*Tango and peronism in Literature*

18. Julio Cortázar. "The Gates of Heaven", in *Blow-up and other stories*. Pantheon, 1985: 97- 113.

### **Week 11**

Tuesday, October 8

*Gender, mass culture and the novel (1)*

Puig, Manuel. *Heartbreak tango*. Vintage Books, 1981.

Thursday, October 10

Puig, Manuel. *Heartbreak tango*. Vintage Books, 1981.

### **Short paper #2**

### **Week 12**

Tuesday, October 15

*Gender, mass culture and the novel*

Puig, Manuel. *Heartbreak tango*. Vintage Books, 1981.

Thursday, October 17

*Gender, mass culture and the novel*

Puig, Manuel. *Heartbreak tango*. Vintage Books, 1981.

### **Week 13**

Tuesday, October 22

Screening: *Café de los Maestros* in class.

Thursday, October 24

*Astor Piazzolla and the end of classical tango/ Tango today: the consumption of tango*

Rafael Filipelli and Federico Monjeau, "How Sweet as Long as It Lasted". *ReVista. Harvard Review of Latin America*, Fall 2007.

Morgan Luker. "Tango renovación: On the uses of music history in Post-Crisis Argentina", *Revista de Música Latinoamericana*; Spring 2007; 28, 1; Research Library.

Student presentations on new musicians and orchestras.

### **Week 14**

Tuesday, October 29

Student presentations on new musicians and orchestras.

**Deadline for the final paper.**

Thursday, October 31.

Excursion to a tango show.

### **Week 15**

Tuesday, November 5

### **FINAL EXAM**

Thursday, November 7

"Final Grade Sheet and signature of Hoja de situación (**attendance is mandatory**)".