

HIS 380
From Samba to Salsa: Latin American History Through Music

Satisfies: SBS+

Thematic Concentrations: "Arts, Ideas & Culture,"
"Empires, Violence & Global Connections," "Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities"

Tuesday/Thursday: 11:00am-12:20pm

Instructor: Nicolas Allen

This class surveys modern Latin American political and social history through the lens of popular music. Whether it was polka in the liberal 19th century, samba in the populist 1930s, rock in the radical 1960s, or salsa in our globalized present, popular music has always provided a soundtrack –and an interpretive key– to modern Latin American society. How did Latin America’s racialized underclasses assert their claim to the nation? How did elites accommodate (or resist) those pressures from below? More broadly, what role did popular music serve in those struggles and what was the power of music in Latin American societies? Progressing chronologically through the 20th century, we will build an understanding of the key historical trends in modern Latin America while analyzing primary and secondary sources, as well as weekly listening assignments. Coursework will include regular discussion posts, a mid-term exam, and a final independent research paper.