

LATINX FUTURISM
FIRST-YEAR WRITING SEMINAR

Instructor: Santiago J. Molina, santiagomolina@northwestern.edu

Seminar: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-4:50pm in University Hall 118

Office Hours: <https://www.wejoinin.com/santiagomolina>

I. SUMMARY AND GOALS

What is Latinx futurism? Most of the imagined futures we are exposed to in the United States have been crafted by white authors. From Isaac Asimov's science fiction novels about robots to high-production value blockbusters. An alternative canon, Afrofuturism and Indigenous futurism, has begun to blaze a path for understanding why the political, racial, and cultural position of those doing the imagining matters. In doing so, these intellectual and creative movements aim to inspire us to think carefully about how we deal with the pressing social issues of our time and have offered a new lens for thinking about the future. This discussion-based seminar takes this as a departure point and works towards including Latinx futurism in this frame. This seminar is an introduction to a way of thinking sociologically about technology, science, and society from the perspective of Latinx and Latin American communities.

In their reading and writing assignments students will explore a broad array of topics, from the origins of postcolonial states, Zapotec science, and borderlands epistemology.

Learning Objectives

Students will contribute to the articulation of Latinx futurism by synthesizing across the topics covered in the class. At the end of this class, students will be able to analyze the underlying implications of the positionality of claims-makers (authors, scientists, and journalists) and interrogate the assumptions of speculative views of the future. As a writing-intensive seminar, this course covers the fundamentals of reading complex texts critically and efficiently and builds students writing abilities through iterative writing assignments.

1. Writing, reading, discussion, and research skills | By the end of this class you will be able to:
 - a. apply an iterative communication process that includes pre-writing, drafting, receiving and giving feedback, revising, reflection, and self-assessment;
 - b. identify, criticize, and apply US American academic expectations for writing;
 - c. find, evaluate, synthesize, and cite arguments made by others;
 - d. formulate persuasive arguments based on careful analysis of evidence;
 - e. use your own voice to construct social and political imaginaries
 - f. read, write, and research in academic settings with more confidence and self-awareness;
 - g. set and evaluate your academic goals;
 - h. assess your own learning.

II. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

While you will be assigned a final grade on an A-F scale, our course will use an un-grading system this term based on engagement and individual growth; course deliverables will be graded on completeness and engagement in the iterative process, with feedback provided by the instructor and your peers. **See the course assessment memo for full details.** This course evaluates assignments on a Complete/Incomplete basis. A complete grade means that you put in a good faith effort and meet all the requirements of the assignment. An incomplete grade means that you did not meet the base requirements for the assignment. The details are spelled out for each assignment below.

<p>a) Participation. You are expected to come to class having done the readings and ready to write. Be prepared to actively discuss, compare, and critique the readings with your peers. Both active <i>listening</i> and <i>contributing</i> are required for participation. Meeting with the instructor for one-on-one office hours during the first three weeks of instruction is required for full participation. 10% of your participation grade will come from leading discussion once throughout the quarter on a day of your choosing.</p>	<p>30%</p>
<p>b) Four response memos. (200-400 words) Here you should aim to accomplish at least two of the following: summarize the argument in one of the readings; reflect on the readings in relation to your own experience; pose and explore clarifying questions; or connect and contrast the readings (from any week) to each other. Along with the Reading Guide, these are meant to help you keep on track with the readings and reinforce course concepts. Response memos must be submitted to Canvas on the following Fridays: <u>1/19, 2/2, 2/16, and 3/1</u></p>	<p>30%</p>
<p>c) Research paper. Over the course of the quarter you will put together and revise four pieces of a long-form research paper (12 pages):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) First you will write a 1 page topic summary, where you will identify an issue pertaining to an aspect Latinx Futurism, corresponding to one or two topics in the quarter (<u>Due Sunday 1/21</u>). b) Then you will write an introduction to your essay where you explain your issue and the corresponding research question (<u>Due Sunday 2/4</u>). c) Then you will write a literature review and methods section (<u>Due Sunday 2/25</u>). d) Finally, you will add an evidence, analysis, and conclusion section to your research paper to from a longer paper (<u>Monday 3/11</u>). 	<p>40%</p>

III. COURSE MECHANICS

Writing. You will write in many forms throughout each week. In addition to formal papers, you will complete shorter writing assignments (e.g. reading summaries, reflections on your learning, discussion board posts, freewrites, journal entries) in class and out of class regularly. You will write using an iterative process that includes pre-writing, drafting, receiving and giving feedback, revising, reflection, and self-assessment.

Reading. Reading in this course requires you not only to read for content but also to dissect the ways that writers make arguments, support arguments, and engage in academic conversations with other writers.

Discussion: Conversations about academic arguments are the core of the Weinberg College Seminar. We will engage in regular discussions during class meetings and on Canvas. Sometimes discussion will focus on readings, sometimes on your writing, sometimes on examples the instructor provides, sometimes on your questions, and sometimes on your observations of futurism in the wild. Students will be assigned to lead class discussions periodically.

Academic Integrity. Much of your learning in this class will come from the contributions and ideas of your classmates through discussion; in this respect, collaboration is encouraged. However, remember to give credit where credit is due, and know that in your papers and tests it is *your own* ideas we need to hear about. Note that plagiarism is not limited to stealing an entire paper. Using quotes without properly citing them or using ideas without acknowledging their source also constitute plagiarism. Any form of cheating and plagiarism will lead to zero on the assignment and to disciplinary action.

Natural Language Models and Generative AI. The Sociology Department is committed to ensuring that students abide by Northwestern University policies on [Academic Integrity](#) while also embracing new technologies when appropriate to help students learn and achieve. ***For sociology classes, using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT or similar programs) for preliminary work or submitted assignments is prohibited unless explicitly stated in the guidelines for a specific assignment.*** (If AI is used in keeping with an assignment's guidelines, how AI was used should be clearly acknowledged). Any form of cheating, including improper use of content generated by artificial intelligence, constitutes a violation of Northwestern's academic integrity policy. Turnitin, which is already in use at Northwestern, is expanding its system to include artificial intelligence detection. Northwestern's policy on academic integrity includes these two statements regarding the use of generative AI:

1. **Cheating:** Allowing another person or resource (including, but not limited to, generative artificial intelligence) to do one's work and submitting that work under one's own name without proper attribution
2. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence to create content that is submitted as one's own.

Cell Phone Policy. Cell phones should be turned off or in airplane mode. No checking messages or receiving calls during section, except in cases of extreme personal urgency. Please let me know at the beginning of section if you think this situation might apply to you.

Structure and Plan. This syllabus, schedule, and modalities of instruction (in-person, via Zoom, etc.) are subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances. Announcements of changes will be posted on Canvas and emailed to students.

Content Warning. The readings and discussion in this course deal with deep personal and historical social issues that may contain material that is startling, upsetting, and/or difficult to process. This includes medical violence, oppression, settler-colonialism, stereotypes, systemic racism, and white supremacy. Engaging with this content openly and directly requires honest, transparent, and just community agreements below. Please contact me or come to office hours to talk about specific issues that might arise.

Community Agreements the Course.

1. Be respectful of others.
2. Do not interrupt another student while they are speaking. (Persistent interrupting can lead to percent loss in your participation grade)

3. We may be discussing controversial social issues in this class. In debate, listen to the other person's argument, and respond to their points. Try to understand where the other person is coming from, even if you fundamentally disagree with their position.
4. Do not make personal attacks or make fun of anyone's argument.
5. Do not dominate discussion; let others speak.
6. Our goal is to include everyone in discussion. So, if you reference an outside author, please take time to explain to the other students what the author's argument is, and how it's relevant to the current readings and discussion. If you do bring outside material you should know it well enough to explain it to us. This way, we can *teach* each other, rather than exclude each other. To make discussions as participatory as possible (and welcoming to students coming from multiple disciplines), I discourage “namedropping” and “-ism-dropping.”
7. These same rules apply to me, and I intend to work by them. If I do interrupt someone or break these rules, call me out on it. Please. I hope to learn from our conversations just as much as you do.
8. Any other suggestions and feedback about how the seminar is run, in-seminar activities, preferences and questions are welcomed.

Disabled Students Program and Special Accommodations. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Email Policy. If you email me during the week, I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours, except on weekends or administrative holidays.

Late Assignments Policy. Except under unusual circumstances, late assignments will be marked down. Late final papers may not even be accepted at all, if they arrive too late for me to grade them. If you know *ahead of time* that there is going to be a problem with the assignment dates, you should let me know ahead of time, but *no* retroactive excuses will be accepted. Please compare deadlines for assignments from this course with those of your other classes to anticipate significant conflict, for example if you have an exam the same day your midterm is due. I will arrange to accept late assignments in cases of medical or personal emergency. If you have a separate scheduling conflict with assignments from another class, important events, etc. you should request an extension as soon as possible [at least 7 days prior to assignment due date].

Social Media and Copyright. This syllabus and all PowerPoint presentations for this course are copyright 2024 by Santiago Molina. Please do not post any materials related to the course on the internet without the permission of the instructor. This includes sites such as “Course Hero.” Students are also prohibited from selling (or being paid for taking) notes during this course to or by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of Santiago Molina. No audio or video recordings of class are permitted without the instructor’s permission/consent.

Health, Wellbeing and Mental Health. This is just a class. Please prioritize your wellbeing. This means, at a very baseline, sleeping and eating are more important than keeping up with the class. Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and wellbeing at the NUhelp website (<https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/>) and on the NUhelp app (<https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/get-help/nuhelp-app-features.html>). Please make use and explore the wealth of support available to you through

<https://www.northwestern.edu/wellness/>. The course will abide by Northwestern's current public health and safety guidelines as they change. If you show any COVID-19 symptoms please stay home, get tested, and be mindful of your community. Please email me and I will do my best to accommodate by providing slides and lecture notes. Masks are not required, but encouraged during class.

Structure and Plan. This syllabus, schedule, and modalities of instruction (in-person, via Zoom, etc.) are subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances. Announcements of changes will be posted on Canvas and emailed to students. Students will be responsible for abiding by the changes.

IV. SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Thursday 1/4. **Introduction to the class: What is Latinx Futurism?**

Read the course syllabus.

Week 1. Reading and the Fundamentals of Standpoint Epistemology.

Tuesday 1/9.

Anzaldúa, G. (1987) "Chapter 5. How to Tame a Wild Tongue," and "Chapter 7. La Conciencia de la Mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness," pp.75-86 and pp. 99-113 in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th Edition. Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, CA.

Martinez, T. A. (2002). The double-consciousness of Du Bois & the "mestiza consciousness" of Anzaldúa. *Race, Gender & Class*, 158-176.

Thursday 1/11.

Ramírez, C. (2008). Afrofuturism/Chicanafuturism: fictive kin. *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 33(1), 185-194.

Chaar López, I. (2022). Latina/o/e technoscience: Labor, race, and gender in cybernetics and computing. *Social Studies of Science*, 52(6), 829-852.

Week 2. Hacking Latinx

Tuesday 1/16.

Beltrán, H. (2023). "Introduction" and "Chapter 1. Thinking with the System in Mexico," p.1-54 in *Code Work: Hacking across the US/México Techno-Borderlands*. Princeton University Press

Thursday 1/18.

Beltrán, H. (2023). "Chapter 4. Abuelitas as Infrastructure," p.90-111 in *Code Work: Hacking across the US/México Techno-Borderlands*. Princeton University Press

Week 3. Colonial and Postcolonial Imaginaries

Tuesday 1/23.

Jose Vasconcelos (1997 [1925]) "Mestizaje" pages 405-421 in *The Cosmic Race* (trans. Didier T. Jaen). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

García-Deister, Vivette (2014) "Laboratory Life of the Mexican Mestizo," in *Mestizo genomics: race mixture, nation, and science in Latin America*, Wade, P., Beltrán, C. L., Restrepo, E., & Santos, R. V. (Eds.). Duke University Press.

Thursday 1/25.

Luis, D. J. (2021). Galleon Anxiety: How Afro-Mexican Women Shaped Colonial Spirituality in Acapulco. *The Americas*, 78(3), 389-413.

Week 4. States and Statecraft as Futurism

Tuesday 1/30.

Centeno, M. A. (1997). Blood and Debt: War and taxation in nineteenth-century Latin America. *American Journal of sociology*, 102(6), 1565-1605.

Medina, Eden (2014) "Project Cybersyn: Chile's Radical Experiment in Cybernetic Socialism" (Available online: <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/project-cybersyn-chiles-radical-experiment-in-cybernetic-socialism/>)

Thursday 2/1.

Research paper preparation and discussion.

Week 5. Politics and Movements

Tuesday 2/6.

Rodríguez-Muñiz, M. (2021) "Chapter 2: Strength in Numbers," pp. 56-79 in *Figures of the Future: Latino Civil Rights and the Politics of Demographic Change*. Princeton University Press.

Mora, G. C. (2014). *Making Hispanics: How activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*. University of Chicago Press.

Thursday 2/8.

Bahng, A. (2018). "Introduction. On Speculation: Fiction, Finance, and Futurity" and "Homeland Futurity: Speculations at the Border," pp. 1-24 and pp. 51-78 in *Migrant futures: Decolonizing speculation in financial times*. Duke University Press.

Rosa, F. R. (2021) "Internet interconnection infrastructure: lessons from the global South." *Internet Policy Review* 10(4).DOI: 10.14763/2021.4.1583

Week 6. Indigenous and Latinx Technoscience

Tuesday 2/13.

Duncan, Sophie (2007) "Zapatistas Reimagine Science as Tool of Resistance," in *Free Rads*, (Available online: <https://freerads.org/2017/04/04/zapatistas-reimagine-science-as-tool-of-resistance/>)

González, R. J. (2001). *Zapotec science: farming and food in the Northern Sierra of Oaxaca*. University of Texas Press.

Thursday 2/15.

Archive fever and library visit (TBD).

Week 7. Environmental Futurism

Tuesday 2/13.

De la Cadena, M. (2015). "Story 2. Mariano Engages 'the Land Struggle'," pp. 59-90 in *Earth beings: Ecologies of practice across Andean worlds*. Duke University Press.

Thursday 2/15.

Ferdinand, M. (2021). "Prologue: A Colonial and Environmental Double Fracture: The Caribbean at the Heart of the Modern Tempest," and "Paradise or Hell in the Nature Preserves (Puerto Rico)," pp.1-22 and 99-106 in *Decolonial ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean world*. John Wiley & Sons.

Week 8. Hacking the Border

Tuesday 2/20.

Schaeffer, F. A. (2022). "Chapter 3. Automated Border Control: Criminalizing the "Hidden Intent" of Migrant/Native Embodiment," pp. 91-103 in *Unsettled borders: the militarized science of surveillance on sacred Indigenous land*. Duke University Press. [Caz]

Esparza, Rafa (2022) How Rafa Esparza Transformed Himself into a Lowrider Cyborg for Art Basel Miami, *LA Times* (Available Online: <https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/image/story/2022-11-29/rafa-esparza-becomes-a-lowrider-cyborg-for-art-basel-miami>)

Thursday 2/22.

Left open for additional readings and/or paper preparation.

Week 9. Queer Futurism

Tuesday 2/27.

Muñoz, J. E. (2009). "Introduction: Feeling Utopia" and "Chapter 1: Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism," pp.1-33 in *Cruising Utopia*, New York University Press.

Thursday 2/29.

Left open for peer review.

Week 10. Magical Realism vs. Latinx Futurism

Tuesday 3/5.

Villareal, Vanessa Angélica (Does Every Latine Story Have to be About Magical Realism? *Harper's Bazaar*)

Tuesday 3/7. WCAS Reading Period Begins