This course explores the heterogeneous makeup of culture in Latin America, with a focus on the established discussion about “indigenous” and “foreign” (European, African and North American) elements throughout the region. By drawing mostly on literature, but also on film, opera, and painting, the course investigates the issue of cultural hybridity as well as other questions that surround the textual construction and perception of Latin America. What do literature and the other arts say about Latin America? How do Latin Americans represent themselves, and how do others represent Latin America? How is Latin American literature, or literature about Latin America, read by Latin Americans and others? To what extent may one regard Latin American cultures as part of the Western tradition? What happens when cultural productions from Latin America are viewed as part of the “global experience”? What are the effects of variously underscoring or disregarding the concept of Latin America when speaking about the region’s cultural productions?

We will examine these and other questions from a comparative perspective, looking at works from the seventeenth to the early twenty-first century produced in Europe and the United States as well as in various parts of Latin America—the old viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, plus the modern nations of Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. We will read texts by such authors as Borges, Carpentier, Darío, Echeverría, García Márquez, Martí, Melville, Menchú, Neruda, Shakespeare, Sor Juana, and Woolf. We will also study an opera by Rameau, Mexican casta paintings, and films by Camus and Gutiérrez Alea.

General Education: This is a Category II Global Cultures and Traditions Course.

COLT L/M/CT Track: This is a Literature Concentration Course.

Global Cultures: This course is an option for the Global Cultures Track of the COLT Minor.