



LANGUAGE *and* CULTURE RESOURCE CENTER

College of Arts & Sciences

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

ETSU Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

The LCRC and the Multicultural Center will co-host a series of events at ETSU celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, a period that ranges from Sept. 15 through Oct. 15 each year in the United States. Before telling you more about those events, I would like to offer some context. This celebration commemorates the heritage, histories and cultures of people coming from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central, and South America and their contributions to the US. The word “Hispanic” has a controversial history with two different etymologies. Back in Rome, they used to call the whole Iberian Peninsula “Hispania.” Anyone from that region would be called by Romans “Hispanus.” Hence, if we look at it from that perspective, even the Portuguese, who would very likely disagree before hearing the whole explanation, are “Hispanic.” Not everyone knows about this piece of history, and “Hispanic” is understood, mostly in the US, as meaning “coming from a country where Spanish is spoken.” That happens because during his presidency Richard Nixon created this term (Yes! The word “Hispano” did not exist, it wasn’t used at all, in Hispanic Countries before that) to use it for Census purposes to identify people of “Hispanic Heritage.”

For the second time in History, first the Romans now the Americans, a whole complex and rich culture was labelled by someone from outside of it. Spanish, originally Castilian, the language adopted by Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon when unifying Spain and that was imposed by them on the regions they conquered, is not the only language spoken in the so-called Hispanic countries. Even in Spain, there are other official languages, such as Euskara, also called Basque, Gallician, Valencian, and Catalan, that are still spoken, taught, and studied to this day. That is, they resisted the imposition of the Catholic Kings, as Isabel and Ferdinand were called.

In Latin America, the history goes on. There you will find native speakers of Portuguese, French, Quechua, Kichwa, Guarani, Spanish, even called Castilian in some places, and many others. So, what should we call you, Felipe? Latinx is currently the better term. First, it shows a rejection of both the Roman and the American attempt to label our culture. Second, it is inclusive and respectful towards all genders and sexual identities. But yes, we still want to celebrate the Hispanic Heritage Month, because,

among other things, it gives an opportunity to discuss the term and fight for a more inclusive society absent of labels and linguistic prejudice. Linguistic prejudice, such as the one the Southern accent suffers in the US, are not absent from Latin American countries. There are many examples that I choose not to repeat here, but if you are Appalachian you will not have trouble imagining how it feels to be made fun of because of the way you speak. And that is why defining an entire culture by only one language is not only inaccurate, but unfair.

Why is Hispanic Heritage Month celebrated between September 15 and October 15? Because this time coincides with the commemoration of many countries in Latin America with their independence from Spain. Or close to it, like the Brazilian independence that is celebrated on September 7th. That even includes Mexican Independence, which falls on September 15th and not on May 5th. Shocking, I know. Nothing would be more convenient at this time than to reject a terminology that is characterized by colonialism, the Castilian language of the kings, and to embrace one that was created by Latinx people themselves.

So, you don't like Spain, you might be wondering? I love it with all my heart. I embrace its culture as my own. Because, by end of the day, it is a big part of it. I personally don't mind being called Hispanic, but I choose to use Latinx instead when referring to myself and others that share my origin due to all reasons explained here. It's a conscious choice of what my identity is. Without further ado the LCRC events will be (Get on Zoom by clicking on titles, get information about guests clicking on the other hyperlinks):

- **September 15th, 5pm** – **Salsa & Salsas**: dancing lesson with BJ Goliday; Cooking lesson with [Brazilian Chef Felipe Pimentel](#) focusing on traditional and Latinx inspired salsas.
- **September 30th, 2pm** – **Zumba con Paella**: Chef [Trinidad Vicente](#) will teach us how to prepare a paella, and while we wait for it to be ready Sandra Germain-Talford will teach a Zumba class.
- **October 15th, 5pm** – **Guest Speaker**: “Machado de Assis, the Warlock of Cosme-Velho: Race and Identity in Brazil” – On this event we will host [Dr. Paulo Dutra](#), Assistant Professor of Portuguese at University of New Mexico. His book *Abliterrações* is a semifinalist of the prestigious literary prize [Oceanos](#). He has a [live podcast](#) on youtube every Tuesday. This talk will be co-sponsored by the Africana Studies program.
- **October 30th, 6pm** – **Día de los Muertos** (Day of the dead) exhibition at Tipton Galleries with [Vanessa Gonzalez](#) and [Nick Peña](#).

For more info, or questions: email lcrc@etsu.edu or call (423) 439-8342.