

STUDY GUIDE FOR UNIT 2: TARGETS 1 (JOHNNY ACE, SELENA)

TUNI 250: HONORS ADVANCED TOPICS SIMULATION IN CULTURAL CRITICISM: RATCATCHER FALL 2018

Material from the reading by Gaspar de Alba

1. Know whether or not Aparicio assumes that J-Lo and Selena are **both Latinas**. Know whether or not, to the degree that Latinas can **claim sameness** with Chicanas (rather than the other way around), they are "**sharing**" an identity. Know whether or not, in popular culture studies, there is any difference **between heroes and icons**. Know whether or not, in the "**identity wheel**," neither **movement or stasis** is possible without the outer rim that holds **the spokes and the hub together**. Know whether or not **icons are common folk** who rise to **fame and power**. Know whether or not the author finds it **eerily appropriate** that Selena was born in **Corpus Christi**. Know whether or not the Chicano/Mexicano cultural value of **familia**, at the expense of **education and individual success**, was the **guiding principle** of Selena's image. Know whether or not, **tragic as her slaying was**, it completed the process of **Selena's iconization** that started back in the **garage parties** of "Chicano Hollywood." Know whether or not **Selena's father** is depicted as the **driving force** behind Selena. Know whether or not Chicano/a culture is **not indigenous but immigrant**, not **colonized but foreign**. Know whether or not, with enough **talent and tenacity**, Selena's icon suggests that it is possible to **cross the class, color, and gender lines** and achieve the mythical "American Dream." Know whether or not Selena has been **appropriated** by everything from corporate America to school plays. (Entire article)
2. Know whether or not the only problem the author has with the **obfuscation** of the terms Chicana and Latina is that it places all **in the same category**. Know whether or not, to **Tejanos**, Selena signifies **Pocha power**, the ability of an assimilated Mexican American to return to her cultural roots and **her native language**. Know whether or not, more than a **heroic homegirl**, Selena is now a myth, a saint, a martyr, a legend of **both Chicano/a and mainstream popular culture**. Know whether or not Chicanos/as and Latinas share a **common racial genealogy** of **Africaness** through their music. Know whether or not the author believes that Selena's body is **not a Chicana body**, but a **Latina body**. Know whether or not, although the story of Selena's life helps to **humanize this popular hero** of the barrio, it is the story of her death that has **elevated her to iconic status**. Know whether or not the author **finds perplexing** how much Chicano/a scholarship actually **subscribes** to the **immigrant rhetoric** when talking about Chicano/a culture. Know whether or not the author claims to have found Selena **the day she died**. Know whether or not the Chicana/Latina dyad is a relationship of **both similarities and differences**. Know whether or not, by casting Chicano/a popular culture **in the "residual" light**, some texts **reify hegemonic discourses** about Chicano/as as **quaint, backward foreigners, outsiders, and aliens** who have come to this country to **revitalize** themselves and **achieve the American Dream**. Know whether or not **Acuna** uses the term "**anthropological nativism**" to describe indigenous cultures that **cooperate** in assimilation and acculturation. Know whether or not **Aparicio** poses the question of why the music figures that **metonymically represent** the Mexican majority of U.S. Latinos are **in fact Puerto Rican and Caribbean**. (Entire article)
3. Know whether or not the author believes that **Selena moves like a Chicana**. Know whether or not identity is as much **about memory** as it is about **land or culture**. Know whether or not **Aparicio** assumes that a **Nuyorican from the Bronx** and a **Chicana from south Texas** are two forms of **latinidad**. Know whether or not, when we **claim an identity**, what we are doing is declaring that we

are the **same as others** who go by the **same label**. Know whether or not subculture, by definition, means a culture that is **below or inferior** and implies the presence and **acceptance of a superior, dominant culture**. Know whether or not it is true that, although **Selena's father** lacked a high school diploma, he **knew the music business** and did for his daughter **what he could not do for himself**. Know whether or not the **white-male-dominated** music industry and **the Coca-Cola corporation** gave Selena the international exposure and financial backing to **catapult her career**. Know whether or not, while we could say **Selena** can be **as Latina as J-Lo**, it also works the **other way around**. Know whether or not the term **Latina**, when used as a **signifier for Chicana experience**, privileges the **Chicana subject**. Know whether or not, in the author's "**identity wheel**," the **hub** is the **core subjectivity** of the individual represented by the question "**who/what am I?**" Know whether or not, literally, Selena as a cultural icon **was "man-made."** Know whether or not we know that identity is **as much about difference** as it is **about sameness**. (Entire article)

4. Know whether or not the "identity wheel" is **both a linear and a sequential process**. Know whether or not the author believes that Chicano/a culture is a **minority or subculture**, not an **"alter-Native culture."** Know whether or not the author believes that the **CARA exhibition fails** in its attempt to **be a case study** of Chicano/a **alter-Nativity**. Know whether or not the **residual interpretation** subscribes to the **"subculture" school of cultural analysis**. Know whether or not it has become **politically correct**, not to mention **expedient**, to fit Chicanas under the broader rubric of **latinidad**. Know whether or not the **trouble with affinities** is that they are **not really parallel** because they are not necessarily **equal in referent value**. Know whether or not **J-Lo could ever be a Chicana** unless she is **embodying or enacting a Chicana role**. Know whether or not **icons are three-dimensional, man-made objects** or **two-dimensional images** of those objects, both of which symbolize a culture's most **widely accepted beliefs and values**. Know whether or not, **denied** the progress of her education, a stable home life, and the fellowship of girlhood associations outside the family, Selena was required to do her part **in the family business**. Know whether or not Selena could **speak to Mexican audiences** in **quebradita** and to **Tejano audiences** in **ranchera** and **nortena**. Know whether or not the **two recent anthologies** disavow the **predominant ideology** that Chicano/a popular culture is either an **immigrant culture** or a culture in **need of rebirth**. Know whether or not Chicanos/as share a **history of conquest and colonization, slavery** and **mestizaje** with Latin Americans. Know whether or not the specificities of Chicano/a history in this country are not the same as anybody else's. Know whether or not **Aparicio** shows how the **casting process** of the film "Selena" articulated the **similarities** between the **Bronx Boricua** and the **Tex-Mex singer**. (Entire article)

Material from the reading by Limon

1. Know whether or not, **taken by themselves**, Selena's are **fairly stock romantic tunes**. Know whether or not Selena's assailant was an **avaricious corporate accountant**. Know whether or not one of the perspectives the author uses to approach the question of Selena's status is the **ongoing social inequality** between Mexicans and Anglos in the United States. Know whether or not the author, after learning of Selena's death, **listened to her music** and found it **engaging enough** but not so much, by itself, as to make him **into an adoring fan**. Know whether or not **Yolanda Saldivar** was **executed** for the murder of Selena. Know whether or not the image of a young heroic fighting man, but sometimes also a woman, shot to death in the prime of their youth has **great resonance** with Greater Mexican community. Know whether or not there have been **only two or three non-Mexicans** who have inspired the composition of **corridos**. Know whether or not the author argues that Selena's status has at its heart the **articulated conjunction** of female sexuality, music and dancing. Know whether or not Selena **graduated from the University of Texas** at Austin. Know whether or not **Yolanda Salivar** eventually became Selena's **personal adviser and business consultant**. Know whether or not the **heroic image of Selena** continues to be grafted onto another **popular image of Greater Mexico**, that of the **renowned folk healer**. Know whether or not the case of Selena seems of a **different cultural order** from either the **hero or the folk healer**. Selena looked **out of place** during her concert in the **"monumental" Astrodome**. Know whether or not **"chingaaa!"** is an expression of appreciation originating in the **Catholic church**. Know whether or

not the author, in the 1960s, decided to do **anthropological fieldwork** in **Los Angeles**. (p. 090-096)

2. Know whether or not Selena is memorialized in **more street murals** than either **Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata**. Know whether or not one of the **components** of Plascencia's "Selena morality play" is the **dominance of males**. Know whether or not the author compares **Plascencia's approach to Selena** as similar to **Adorno commenting on jazz**. Know whether or not Patoski's treatment of Selena is **theoretical in an extended sense**. Know whether or not the author applauds both **Patoski and Plascencia** for their willingness to acknowledge the **centrality**, in Selena's performance, of her **womanly sexuality**. Know whether or not, if **Castillo** thinks of **folk saints**, Patoski imagines Selena as a **cult-goddess of purity**. Know whether or not the author feels that Plascencia sees Selena, in all of her **performative self**, as a **conduit** or **unwitting agent** for the **reproduction of capitalist values** which he clearly thinks **inimical to this community's interest**. Know whether or not the author thinks that Patoski **fails to provide ample detail** on the **sexual factor in Selena's image**. Know whether or not Patoski **explains the qualitative difference** between traditional images and Selena's construction as an **icon of music, dance and sexuality**. Know whether or not Plascencia's approach implicitly calls for yet **another reading** of "**false consciousness**" among the **passive untutored masses** as they get "taken in" by Selena as an agent, perhaps unwitting, of the **capitalist hegemony**. (p. 096-098)
3. Know whether or not Selena **fully expressed** her bodily sexuality as **no other such singer-dancer** had ever **quite done before** for a mass audience. Know whether or not Selena's father was an **aspiring singer** with an American-style **rhythm and blues group**. Know whether or not the tradition of **conjunto and orquesta** music was eventually **completely abandoned** by Selena. Know whether or not Selena draws on **but radically revises** a tradition of **popular, sexualized female singers** but also dancers of Greater Mexico. Know whether or not it is certain that Selena's style is substantially derived from the **very American popular culture** in which she grew up. (p. 098-100)
4. Know whether or not Selena's **brazen sexuality** on stage is **bracketed**, rendered **acceptable and sanctioned** by her well-noted **activities off-stage**. Know whether or not Selena's **display of her sheer sexuality** provides a sanctioned realm of **culturally deeply needed freedom** for the people of Greater Mexico. Know whether or not, **performatively, sexually and politically**, Selena and Madonna are **very similar**. Know whether or not the greater Mexican community finds its **greatest resonance with Selena** and the resolution of **certain key issues**. Know whether or not Selena drew on the **already sexualized tradition** of the Greater Mexican **night-club chanteuses**. Know whether or not, for **Williams**, the cultural stuff of the **counter-hegemonic** seems to reside decisively outside the **influence of capitalist culture**. Know whether or not the **woman-centered formulation** might help us to recognize the late-capitalist, Western pop-cultural Selena as Mexican woman playing yet **another "serious game" with gender**, negotiating and dancing her way through this **contested site** without lapsing **into either side**. Know whether or not, regarding the **serious game** that Selena plays with **capitalism and her people**, though not as an **autonomous agent**, it is no small matter that she **plays the game as woman**. Know whether or not **Bell** warns that a **myopic focus on resistance** can easily reveal **zones of complicity** and, for that matter, **sui generis creativity**. Know whether or not there is **no end to the debate** over the politics of **expressive cultural data**. Know whether or not, in the **mostly male wasteland of organized institutional policies**, Selena, already **richly and energetically connected** to her community on other more **sexual, expressive native terms**, in effect, becomes the **only remaining public cultural possibility** of freedom and **triumph with integrity**. Know whether or not, as **Lena Guerrero's political collapse** was taking place in Selena's Texas world, she had **some way to go** before becoming a **national star**. Know whether or not, with Selena having filled at least **part of the political void** in the most effective manner, her sudden death **could not but inspire** such an outpouring of **grief and loss**. Know whether or not the **charismatic Ramsey Muniz** was caught and convicted for his last and final time for drug-dealing and sentenced **to life without parole**. Know whether or not **Lena Guerrero** was elected the **first Mexican-descent mayor** of San Antonio since the mid-19th century. (p. 100-107)

5. Know whether or not, in addition to **Selena's general accomplishments** as an American pop star are evident, her **particular achievement** on behalf of the Greater Mexican community has received **considerable analytical notice**. Know whether or not Selena is in keeping with a **long tradition of expressive resistance** in music, dance, and related forms of expression. Know whether or not the **space of sexuality** has been largely occupied by **poststructuralist** and **predominantly gay-lesbian accounts**. Know whether or not all **initiatives and contributions** involved in the counter-hegemonic deserve **close analytical attention**. Know whether or not **sexuality scholarship** on Greater Mexico represents a particular **area of repression** in the community. (p.107-108)

Material from the reading by Salem

1. Know whether or not the death of Johnny Ace and the **crossover success** of his posthumous hit "Pledging My Love" was a **harbinger** of the change that was about to **revolutionize popular music in America**. Know whether or not Johnny Ace's **output** is over **one hundred recorded sides**. Know whether or not Johnny Ace **died a rhythm and blues star** but was **resurrected** as a **rock and roll legend**. Know whether or not it is true that, while the Alexanders may have been **poor**, they certainly **did not live in poverty**. Know whether or not, in high school, John Alexander did not want to **play**, he wanted to **study music**. Know whether or not John Alexander was **honorably discharged** from the Navy. Know whether or not one reason for **B. B. King's fluctuating lineup** of backup musicians may have been that King was so **musically crude** at that time that others were **embarrassed to play with him**. **Mattis** believed that Don Robey was a **black man** who didn't **understand his people's music**. Know whether or not **Don Robey** was in the **rhythm and blues business** before it was called "**Rhythm & Blues**." Know whether or not **independent R&B hits** in the 1950s lacked the **distribution system** of the major labels that permitted the simultaneous **national rollout of a pop record**. (Entire article)
2. Know whether or not, **six months after James Dean** died in an auto accident, Johnny Ace died in a **game of Russian roulette**. Know whether or not Ace's experience as a **singer/songwriter** signed to a **black-owned, independent R&B label** provides insight into the **exploitation** of black artists of the period. Know whether or not **Leslie Alexander** raised not only **moral and religious objections** to rhythm and blues music, but **class objections** as well. Know whether or not, at the end of World War II, **Memphis** was a flourishing center of **blues activity**, second only to **Chicago**. Know whether or not Johnny Ace put down **his first vocal track** with a group **backing B. B. King**. Know whether or not Don Robey may have been the **first black entrepreneur** to emerge in the music business after World War II. Know whether or not Don Robey **bought Ace new clothes** and **exploited** him nationally, carefully cultivating the **polished, uptown image** that **Berry Gordy** would emulate at Motown. Know whether or not it is true that **very few** of Ace's R&B hits are **ballads**. Know whether or not the **extraordinary** success of "**My Song**" coming from an unknown artist on an unknown label illustrates the **closed nature** of the **R&B market**. Know whether or not "**Angel**" was **certified as a hit** by the trade publications. Know whether or not, of the **eight certified Ace hits**, older black Americans are most likely to recall "**Cross My Heart**." Know whether or not, when Ace played his **hometown (Memphis)** in 1953, he seems **not to have notified** his wife and family. (Entire article)
3. Know whether or not the Johnny Otis band was a **good band**, but **did not have the respect** of professional musicians. Know whether or not, according to "**Big Mama**" **Thornton**, Ace "**snapped**" his pistol at several people **before discharging it into himself**. Know whether or not the fact that Ace was a legend was **partly due** to the **expertise of Don Robey**, who took care to manage the death of his most commercially popular artist in a way that would **impact favorably** on the sales of **Duke Records**. Know whether or not contemporary accounts from the **black press** record the **shipment** of Ace's body by rail from Houston to Memphis for a funeral **on January 2, 1955**. Know whether or not "**Pledging My Love**" had **disappointing sales**. Know whether or not the stories on Ace in the black newspapers **mourned his passing**, while **romanticizing and glamorizing** his death. Know whether or not the **article in Ebony** was more notable **for its accuracy than its**

moralizing. Know whether or not any artist's death ever produced **more recorded eulogies** than those **for Johnny Ace.** Know whether or not most white radio stations played the **Teresa Brewer cover** of "Pledging My Love." Know whether or not, during the mid-1950s the **covering of R&B hits by white pop singers** was often seen as a **ruthless and racist business practice.** Know whether or not, to the **chagrin** of the music industry, **white teens** were obviously associating the performance of "Pledging My Love" with **the personality of Johnny Ace.** Know whether or not **Don Robey was white.** (Entire article)

4. Know whether or not there was any reason for **Billboard** to attempt to **resuscitate the career** of Johnny Ace, especially when the Ace market was so **flat and limited.** Know whether or not, in the early **fall of 1956,** the only Memphis musician to **appear consistently** on the charts was Johnny Ace. Know whether or not the **re-recording** of "Pledging My Love" with the **Jordanaires** met with **approval from Johnny Otis.** Know whether or not, with his management of **Bobby Bland and Junior Walker,** Don Robey, in the 1960s, attained the **same kind of crossover success** he had with Johnny Ace. Know whether or not, eventually, the Alexander family **successfully sued** Don Robey to recover money **owed to Johnny Ace.** Know whether or not Johnny Ace's **"Memorial Album II"** was **panned** by Bob Kirsch in "Rolling Stone." Know whether or not, by 1979, Johnny Ace was **so forgotten a figure** that **Sheldon Harris** did not see fit to include him in his giant biographical **dictionary of blues singers,** "Blues Who's Who." Know whether or not, in the 1980s, Ace became a **romantic figure** for a new breed of post-Watergate **conspiracy theorists.** Know whether or not one theory was that someone **slipped a bullet into Ace's gun** while he was on stage and then **suckered him** into pointing it at his own head. Know whether or not, according to **Kirsch,** the rock revival was actually a **reactivation of rock's second wave,** but that **Johnny Ace was the first.** Know whether or not, after **losing a costly lawsuit** against **Chess Records,** Robey **sold his entire music business** to ABC/Dunhill. Know whether or not the **posthumous re-engineered "Pledging My Love"** was a great **success.** Know whether or not one **rumor** was that an **assassin** hired by the owner of Duke Records squeezed through a bathroom window, grabbed Ace from behind, **stuck a gun** in his mouth, **blew his brains out,** and calmly walked, even though he **was known to everyone.** Know whether or not, **unlike jazz** in the post-World War I era, rhythm and blues in the post-World War II era was **appropriated by a generation of young white Americans.** Know whether or not Johnny Ace stands as the **protomartyr of rock and roll,** the first of many figures who **lived fast and died young.** Know whether or not Ace's musical career was **distorted** in the decade of the 1980s by **extensive revisionism,** clearly aimed at the huge market represented by **R&B record collectors.** (Entire article)