



BAD BUNNY'S BATICANO

Bad Bunny's "Baticano": Teaching Moral Panic as Digital Folklore

by Nathian Shae Rodriguez

Why Teach "Baticano" as a Monster Text?

Bad Bunny released "[Baticano](#)" on Halloween (October 31, 2023) as part of his album *Nadie Sabe Lo Que Va a Pasar Mañana*. Directed by Stillz and featuring Steve Buscemi, the black-and-white video stages an overt gothic homage: Bad Bunny performs as both a somnambulist figure and a Nosferatu-like vampire, moving through expressionist set design, cemetery choreography, and devotional imagery. This visual narrative is anchored by ominous, syncretic beats and lyrics that interrogate themes of sin and judgment (Huft 2022), making music a literacy pathway for analyzing how the performer is monsterized. These multimedia layers—word, sound, and image—invite moral interpretation beyond genre play, highlighting domestic violence framed by a portrait of Jesus and a father angrily shutting off a television when two men kiss. Those moments make the video a productive site for discussing how sexuality, religion, family authority, and respectability become flashpoints in public discourse.

By Summer 2026, the official YouTube upload had surpassed 25 million views and displayed more than 22,000 comments. Students recognized the comment section as a familiar cultural space: a public arena where strangers argue not only about what a text "means" but also about what it does—what it authorizes, threatens, or normalizes. "Baticano" operates as a monster text by featuring a literal vampire while simultaneously generating a second monstrosity through discourse—a double play that is key to this module's analysis of moral panic. Online posts and stitched videos label the work "dark," "evil," "Satanic," or "occult," alongside counter-claims that it is "just art," "just Dracula," or simply Halloween performance.

For example, a TikTok account branded as a truth-telling watchdog described the video as “full of occult imagery” and argued that the lyrics position Bad Bunny as an “industry puppet” (The Truth Is 2023). Christian and conservative social media posts amplified a warning-tale logic (“Invite evil into your home...”) and encouraged viewers to boycott. In adjacent threads, other users contested these claims (“it’s just Dracula for Halloween”), defended pluralism (“there is nothing wrong with occult practice”), or negotiated identity (“I’m Christian and his music slaps...not sure if I’ll stop listening”). Rather than treating these arguments as noise around the “real meaning” of the text, I use them as the lesson: The discourse is the folklore.

Course Context

This module was developed for an upper-division undergraduate elective in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at San Diego State University (SDSU), a large public university in Southern California and a Hispanic-serving institution. Enrollment is approximately 50 students and the course has run multiple times since Fall 2025.

As a Hispanic-serving institution, the campus context matters. Students regularly navigate competing narratives about Latinidad, religion, gender expression, and respectability in public culture.

The course explores and deconstructs mediated representations of intersectional Latinx/e identities by analyzing the music, career, and influence of the Puerto Rican artist Bad Bunny. It emphasizes: 1) digital media and audience reception; 2) the global flow of media from South to North; 3) the relationship between Spanish-language/Latinx/e media and U.S. English-language media systems; and 4) the sociopolitics of race, ethnicity, geography, gender, and queerness in lyrical and visual performance.

As a Hispanic-serving institution, the campus context matters. Students regularly navigate competing narratives about Latinidad, religion, gender expression, and respectability in public culture. For many students at this border-proximate institution, this navigation manifests as tension between traditional familismo—which often emphasizes conservative Catholic values and rigid gender roles—and the transgressive, queer-coded expressions of modern Latinx/e artists. In classroom discussions, students frequently describe the category crisis (Anaya 2012; Cohen 1996) of defending Bad Bunny’s artistic merit to older family members who view his occult or gender-bending aesthetics through a lens of moral panic or cultural betrayal. “Baticano” lands pedagogically because it sits at the collision point of religious symbolism, erotically explicit reggaetón confession/boasting, and queer visibility, while also providing a recognizable monster tradition (the vampire) with a long history of fear/desire dynamics.

Bad Bunny as Cultural Anchor

Bad Bunny is a particularly effective cultural anchor for pedagogy because students encounter him as more than a musician: He circulates as a platform-native figure whose performances, fashion, interviews, collaborations, and controversies are already embedded in students’ everyday interpretive habits—hot takes, screenshots, “explainers,” and comment-thread debates. That ubiquity matters for teaching because it allows theory to meet practice in real time: Students can test concepts about representation, framing, and identity negotiation against a living media ecosystem rather than a sealed “text.” This approach aligns with other classroom-based Bad Bunny

pedagogies that describe him as the hook that brings students into the room. Because many students arrive already familiar with his work, that familiarity can increase confidence and allow instructors to move more quickly into complex theories and histories than they otherwise might (Díaz and Rivera-Rideau 2024).

This course's use of Bad Bunny as an anchor is intentional: It follows a critical pop culture pedagogy approach that uses mediated examples students already encounter to facilitate critical dialogue, make theory legible, and connect analysis to lived experience (Rodriguez 2020). In my work on intersectional critical communication pedagogy, I similarly argue for classroom practices that foreground relevance through reflection on identity, discussion of lived experience, and the integration of real-world examples in real time, including mediated/pop culture texts (Rodriguez 2022a). In this sense, the “Baticano” module treats students’ feeds as curriculum—functioning as both digital folklore archives and real-time laboratories for practicing evidence-based interpretation, discourse analysis, and ethical engagement.

In this course, folklore pedagogy is foundational to my scaffolding for student learning. This module treats students as participants in vernacular systems of meaning-making rather than observers looking at culture from the outside (Uddin, Alam, and Talukder 2025). Within this framework, Bad Bunny functions as a bridge between academic critique and professional media literacy (Díaz and Rivera-Rideau 2024; Rodriguez 2020; 2022a). I scaffold that work through structured prompts, “checks,” and reusable classroom tools that make interpretation more transparent and actionable (Cruz 2025). Students practice close reading and cultural analysis alongside fieldwork-adjacent skills such as tracing circulation and identifying interpretive communities (DuBois et al. 2018).

“Baticano” in the Larger Bad Bunny Conversation

“Baticano” is also pedagogically useful because it sits inside a broader public conversation about Bad Bunny as a figure who resists traditional boundaries, thereby making these boundaries more visible to students for analysis. Prior audience discourse around Bad Bunny’s gender-bending performances—such as research on “Yo Perreo Sola”—shows how quickly his work becomes a flashpoint for policing machismo, queerness, and respectability in Latinx/e pop contexts (Rodriguez 2022b). Across his career, audiences have debated what his work does to—or for—norms of masculinity, sexuality, and respectability in Latinx/e and U.S. popular culture. Whether praised as expansive and modern or criticized as corrosive and “too much,” he is routinely positioned as a cultural symbol through which people argue about gender expression, desire, religion, and the limits of public visibility.

“Baticano” condenses those tensions into a single text. Its monster aesthetics invite genre play, but its religious imagery and scenes of domestic authority invite moral reading. The lyrics reinforce the visual’s Gothic defiance, with lines like “Si Dios es bueno, por qué el hombre es malo?” (“If God is good, then why is man evil?”), directly mirroring the video’s interrogation of moral hypocrisy. That combination makes it ideal for teaching monsterization as a discourse process, while acknowledging that musicality offers another literacy pathway for exploring these themes: how communities attach moral meaning to bodies, images, and sounds; how they narrate threat; and how they instruct others to respond (Cohen 1996; Huft 2022). This process is evident in what

Norma Mendoza-Denton (1996) calls the “performance of Chola identity,” where specific aesthetic markers like dark eyeliner and lipstick are read by outsiders as signifiers of deviance and threat (50). Just as the Chola mask triggers moral judgment, Bad Bunny’s use of gothic and devotional imagery, syncretic beats, and transgressive lyrics generates a monsterized discourse that attempts to police the boundaries of Latinx/e identity.

Nosferatu as a Shared Monster Vocabulary

Nosferatu functions as a kind of shared monster shorthand and functional icon (Senf 2025): Even when students have not seen the film, the vampire’s visual grammar reads immediately. This portability allows the vampire to function as both spectacle and a carrier of a durable cultural history of boundary anxieties: desire and danger, seduction and threat, contamination and protection (Cohen 1996). Nosferatu is historical and transnational: Its imagery has repeatedly been rewritten across decades, countries, and music genres within both U.S. and Latin American Gothic traditions, demonstrating the enduring influence of Murnau’s adaptation as a visual template for new cultural meanings (Fisiak 2025).

For this lesson, the point is not to master film history or trace the localized origins of the vampire; it is to notice how a familiar monster template helps online publics build competing stories about what the text means and what it does—especially when religion, sexuality, and the family/home are at stake.

Text Snapshot: What “Baticano” Puts into Play

- The video uses a black-and-white gothic/expressionist visual style; cemetery choreography; resurrection/awakening motif.
- Bad Bunny performs as a somnambulist/vampire figure, invoking Nosferatu-like iconography.
- Religious imagery appears alongside scenes of harm and control (domestic violence framed by a Jesus portrait; moral authority staged in the home).
- A father angrily turns off a TV when two men kiss, foregrounding the policing of queer visibility.
- Lyrics repeatedly invoke confession and forgiveness (“God forgive me...”) while also rejecting moral monopoly (“no one has the right to judge in the name of Christ”).
- Online responses split between genre/context framing (“Halloween Dracula”) and threat framing (“occult,” “portal,” “industry puppet”), creating a live archive for analyzing monsterization as digital folklore (Ellis 2004).

One productive extension of this intertextual reading is to connect the video’s queer-visibility moment (the father covering a child’s eyes when two men kiss) to a longer vampire tradition associated with encoded queer meanings, positioning the vampire as an outsider figure (Fisiak 2025). This lens shows how monster talk can function as proxy language for policing sexual norms in the home; popular queer-horror stories likewise frame Nosferatu—often noting Murnau’s sexuality—as an allegory of anxieties about modernity, including homosexuality (McConnell 2024). In class, I prompt students to trace the visual parallels between the father’s policing in the video and historical moral panics surrounding queer-coded horror (McConnell 2024). Students identified how the vampire functions as a “border-crosser” not just between life and death but also

between accepted and deviant sexualities, and they note how the domestic setting stages violence under religious iconography in a way that primes moral-panic readings (Fisiak 2025, 140).

Monsters, Meaning-Making, and “Monsterization”

Folklore can be understood as a repository of collective beliefs and traditions, offering a lens for examining how cultural narratives shape identity, prejudice, and power (Uddin, Alam, and Talukder 2025). Monsters are one especially vivid site where those beliefs and traditions get narrated, argued over, and taught—often through stories that make cultural boundaries visible. This ambivalence is part of the vampire’s durability as a teaching monster: Even when the figure is framed as objectively horrifying, audiences remain drawn to its power, a paradox that reveals how desire and danger can travel together in monster discourse (Senf 2025).

Monster theory’s usefulness for teaching is its insistence that monsters are not primarily biological or supernatural facts; they are readable cultural bodies. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)” offers portable propositions for classroom application, including: the monster as an embodiment of a cultural moment; the monster’s recurring return “in slightly different clothing”; the monster as a category crisis; and the monster as a border guard that warns against transgressive movement (Cohen 1996). In this sense, calling something “demonic” or “Satanic” is not only an insult; it is a map of the speaker’s anxieties and a technique for policing the possible. Judith Halberstam (1995) frames monstrosity as historically conditioned meaning-making. This is evident in Chicano literary traditions, such as Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima* (2012), which uses monstrous folklore to challenge religious orthodoxy (105). Placing “Baticano” in this lineage reveals how the video functions as a vernacular tool for defining the limits of faith and belonging. This multi-valence (Ponce Castañeda 2026) allows students to analyze how identical aesthetic cues can trigger wildly incompatible, competing narratives.

To operationalize monsterization as a communicative process, I borrow from framing pedagogy. Justin Huft argues that monsters help students see how societies communicate fears—moral decay, uncertainty about the future, anxiety about outgroups, and spiritual unknowns—and how frames are amplified, transformed, and extended through cultural storytelling (Huft 2022). I adapt this approach to a platform discourse context: Rather than reading monsters only in horror plots, students analyze the rhetorical infrastructure of monster talk in stitched videos, warning posts, and comment threads.

Because the module treats comment threads as vernacular texts, it also draws on work that demonstrates how “monster” language can shift from stigma to affiliation. In their study of Lady Gaga’s “Little Monsters,” Click, Lee, and Holladay show how social media can intensify fan identification and community meaning-making (2013). “Baticano” discourse reveals a different, parallel dynamic: “Monster” becomes a label used to stigmatize (“demon,” “puppet,” “portal”) even as other users neutralize the label through genre framing or invert it through pluralist claims.

Why a Gothic Music Video Is a Particularly Effective Monster Text

Because “Baticano” is an explicit homage to Gothic cinema, it allows students to practice intertextual reading: how a contemporary music video borrows, remixes, and reanimates earlier monster traditions. To make this productive, students first examine the visual grammar of

Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) by watching a short video analysis, [How Nosferatu Laid the Groundwork for Gothic Cinema](#) (One Hundred Years of Cinema 2016). This allows them to identify how specific motifs—such as the somnambulist's stiff gait or the use of expressionist shadows—are recycled in the video to signal monstrosity. In class discussions, students successfully connect these traditional narrative cues to the video's contemporary setting, noting how the vampire's intrusion into the normative home updates the historical anxiety of the outsider-invader for a modern audience.

Drago Momcilovic argues that gothic-themed music videos complicate one-to-one models of adaptation and may “undermine, counter, or exceed” a song's lyrical sentiments through spectacle and intermedial reference (Momcilovic 2023, 2-3). That insight helps students reconcile the gap between the video's stylized horror world and the competing claims made about it online: The video can be simultaneously a genre performance and a trigger for moral panic. This analysis relies on the previously discussed “amalgam of word, sound, and image” where the track's intertextuality of ominous beats and transgressive lyrics work in tandem with the visual narrative and “initiate innovative readings of familiar motifs” as older Gothic conventions are remixed for contemporary audiences (Dobrogoszcz, Handley, and Fisiak 2024, 17).

Teaching Module: From *Nosferatu* to “Not in My House”

Learning Goals

- Identify monster aesthetics and genre cues in a music video (gothic lighting, expressionist staging, vampiric iconography).
- Explain monsterization as boundary-policing discourse (faith, sexuality, family, respectability).
- Code vernacular evidence styles in online claims-making (symbol-hunting, scripture, vibe/affect, translation, contextual receipts).
- Compare competing interpretive frames without adjudicating belief claims as true/false.
- Practice ethical analysis of public discourse involving religion, sexual explicitness, and queer visibility.

Materials

- YouTube videos: One Hundred Years of Cinema's *How Nosferatu Laid the Groundwork for Gothic Cinema* and Bad Bunny's “Baticano.”
- De-identified excerpt packet of public posts/comments (TikTok/Facebook/YouTube discourse).
- Coding worksheet (Frame type, Monsterization mechanism, Evidence style, Object of protection, Call to action).
- Exit ticket prompt or short reflection: “What does the monster help people say?”
- Optional creative extension handout: “The Baticano” folklore field guide entry.
- Optional extension reading: McConnell's (2024) short public-facing history of queer horror cinema.

Procedure (75-90 minutes)

1. Warm-up (5 min): Students quickwrite a definition of “monster” and name one boundary a monster crosses.
2. Mini-lecture (8-10 min): Introduce a minimal toolkit—monster as cultural body; category crisis; border police; fear/desire (Cohen 1996). Students watch the *Nosferatu* short video analysis to establish the visual grammar of the genre.
3. Guided screening (10-12 min): Students watch “Baticano” music video and respond to prompts focused on aesthetics, religion, domestic/public boundaries, and lyrical themes of hypocrisy/confession (Huft 2022).
4. Four-station close reading (20 min): Students rotate through stations (Aesthetic/Genre; Religion/Confession; Domestic/Family; Sexuality/Visibility) with a printed sheet of the song’s lyrics to facilitate “word-sound-image” analysis.
5. Digital folklore lab (20 min): In pairs, students code 8-10 de-identified excerpts using the codebook.
6. Synthesis discussion + exit ticket (10-15 min): Students map competing frames to evidence styles and propose what social work each monster story performs.

Reproducible Classroom Materials (Student-Facing)

The items below can be copied directly into a student handout or LMS page. The excerpt set is a sample; instructors can swap in additional de-identified comments from YouTube, TikTok, or other platform discourse that students are already encountering in their feeds.

Student Handout 1. Viewing Checks + Exit Ticket

Before viewing (2 minutes):

- What do you expect from a Halloween-released gothic music video? Name two conventions you anticipate seeing.
- When people call a video “dark” or “evil,” what kinds of evidence do they usually point to (images, lyrics, vibes, symbols, context)?

During viewing: Answer any two viewing checks.

- VC1: Identify two visual choices that cue “gothic/monster” (lighting, shadow, posture, setting, camera angle, movement).
- VC2: Where does religion appear (explicitly or implicitly)? What kind of moral authority is being staged?
- VC3: Identify one “category crisis” moment (sacred/profane, private/public, childhood/adulthood, queer/straight). What boundary is being policed or tested?
- After viewing (3 minutes):
 - What does the video make easy to interpret as “dangerous,” and why?
 - What does the video make available as “genre performance,” and why?

Exit ticket (two sentences):

In this discourse, the monster helps people say _____.

A counter-reading reframes the monster as _____.

Student Handout 2. Coding Lab: Codebook + Sample Excerpts

Codebook (choose at least one from each category):

- Frame: FP (faith-protection), MP (moral panic), CS (conspiracy-symbol hunting), AE (genre/context), ID (identity negotiation), HU (humor/irony).
- Evidence: SF (symbol reading), SR (scripture), VB (vibe/affect), TR (translation/lyrics), TX (context/receipts), TS (testimony/certainty).
- Protects: FM (family/home), CH (children), FA (faith), CU (culture/respectability), SE (self/identity).
- Action: PR (pray), AV (avoid/boycott), WR (warn/share), PU (punish), LT (learn more), NX (none).

Sample excerpts (de-identified): Code each excerpt, then name one pattern you see.

- 1) “Invite evil into your home—don’t be surprised when it shows up.”
- 2) “He’s just playing Dracula for a Halloween-themed music video—nothing more, nothing less.”
- 3) “I used to like him until I heard the lyrics about Baticano. He’s telling us exactly who he serves.”
- 4) “I’m Christian and his music slaps... not sure if I’m going to stop listening.”
- 5) “It is okay if everybody isn’t Christian or Muslim. There is nothing wrong with occult practice.”

Assessment

- Coding accuracy: Students justify their codes with a phrase from the excerpt.
- “Monsterization Case File” (2-3 pages): Summarize the video’s monster logic + coded dataset + two patterns + reflection.
- Optional creative extension: Write a folklore field guide entry (“Baticano”), plus a short reflection naming codes used.

Pedagogical Bridges: Keeping Eyes on The Text, Keeping Care in The Room

Three teaching moves help this module stay analytic rather than turning into a debate about belief. First, I keep students’ eyes on the text (both the visual narrative and the lyrical narrative) before moving into interpretation. I use Visual Thinking Strategies-style prompts to move students from reaction to observation (Gastón-Greenberg 2025, 80-2). By pairing specific visual timestamps with lyrical excerpts, students practice a multimodal literacy that treats the music and the imagery as a single, syncretic text (Huft 2022).

Second, I structure discussion using before/during/after reading moves and “reading checks”—adapted here as viewing checks and coding checks—to chunk the labor of interpretation and to make space for think–pair–share before whole-class discussion (Cruz 2025, 39-40). Third, because the discourse touches religion, sexual explicitness, and queer visibility, I build an opt-out path and avoid requiring personal disclosure. This aligns with guidance offered for teaching sensitive materials: Speak generally, do not mandate personal experiences, and foreground respectful discussion expectations (Hartmann 2022, 116).

Artifacts and Evidence: What Students Produce

To document learning without creating heavy grading labor, I collect three low-burden artifacts: 1) completed coding worksheets; 2) two-sentence exit tickets; and 3) a short case file that includes a coded appendix. This sequence mirrors a basic folklore pedagogy principle: Because folklore functions as a repository of collective beliefs and traditions, students are never “outside” culture—they are already participants in vernacular systems of meaning-making (Dundes 1980; Uddin, Alam, and Talukder 2025).

In practice, students often bring prior knowledge of Catholicism, Pentecostalism, brujería/witchcraft discourse, and conspiracy cultures. Rather than flattening those differences, the module treats them as interpretive resources and asks: What counts as proof here? Who is authorized to interpret? What kind of safety is being promised?

In a different context, DuBois and colleagues describe the impact of field-based documentation tools on this recognition, as students realize that culture “occurs all around them” and that they can use everyday settings as sites of analysis (DuBois et al. 2018, 14-6). In my course, the “field site” is the platform discourse itself. Crucially, this discourse does not merely react to the video; it actively participates in the meaning-making process, as online participants employ the vampire’s themes of contamination and plague to frame the very act of viewing as a ritual exposure with spiritual consequences (Leferman 2025).

Table 1. Recurring “Legend Ingredients” in Monsterization Discourse (Template)

Legend Ingredient	What It Does (social function)	Example Phrasing (De-Identified)
Contagion/Entry	Frames media as a gateway that can “bring” danger into the home; intensifies urgency (Cohen 1996).	“Invite evil into your home...”
Plague/Contamination	Turns the monster into a carrier of moral/physical infection; makes “exposure” feel consequential; intensifies urgency and avoidance (Leferman 2025)	“plague,” “infecting,” “contagion,” “don’t invite it in”
Portal/Threshold	Turns viewing into a ritual act with consequences; encourages avoidance or counter-rituals (Ellis 2004).	“opening of a portal...”
“Think of the children”	Centers moral protection; authorizes censorship and boycott (Cohen 1996).	“That’s what we’re teaching our children.”
Symbol as Proof	Treats visual resemblance as evidence; builds authority through decoding (Ellis 2004).	“Why does he look like...?”
Genre Alibi	Reframes fear claims as misreadings by invoking context (Halloween, Dracula).	“just Dracula for a Halloween themed video.”
Identity Negotiation	Shows lived complexity; reveals how belief and pleasure coexist.	“I’m Christian and his music slaps...”

Instructor Reflection: Managing Heat, Care, and Complexity

Teaching with “Baticano” requires a pedagogy of care because the discourse touches religion, sexual explicitness, and queer visibility—topics that can quickly become personal. Three facilitation moves have been crucial. First, I name the analytic stance explicitly: We are studying how meanings are made, not deciding which metaphysical claims are correct. This reframes disagreement as data and reduces pressure on religious or nonreligious students to defend identity positions.

Second, I de-identify public posts and avoid directing traffic to creators. Students work with excerpts rather than usernames, and we do not click through to harass, mock, or engage with individual posters. This keeps the focus on discourse patterns rather than individuals.

Third, I build an opt-out pathway. Students who do not want to engage spiritual-warfare language can code only genre/aesthetic explanations and meta-comments, then complete the same frame→evidence→action analysis. Hartmann’s 2022 guidance for teaching sensitive materials also applies here: Speak generally and do not require students to share personal experiences (116). In practice, students often bring prior knowledge of Catholicism, Pentecostalism, brujería/witchcraft discourse, and conspiracy cultures. Rather than flattening those differences, the module treats them as interpretive resources and asks: What counts as proof here? Who is authorized to interpret? What kind of safety is being promised?

Classroom Connections: Discussion Questions and Adaptations

- 1) Genre and meaning: What does gothic style do here? What meanings become possible because the video invokes classic horror?
- 2) Evidence and authority: What counts as proof in different comments (symbols, scripture, “vibes,” dates/context, translation)?
- 3) Borders and protection: What is each frame trying to protect (children, family, faith, cultural order)?
- 4) Visibility and censorship: What does the “turning off the TV” scene suggest about queer visibility in the family/home?
- 5) Hypocrisy and moral economy: How does the domestic violence scene complicate claims that this is “about protecting the family?”
- 6) Monsters return: If this discourse returns whenever there is a big performance moment, what does the return tell us about cultural anxiety?

Adaptations

- 6-12: Use shorter clips, emphasize “how do we know?” evidence styles, and avoid explicit lyrical content.
- Community workshops/libraries: Focus on digital folklore as community storytelling; discuss how warning narratives travel.
- Media literacy units: Pair with a second “moral panic” artifact and compare evidence styles across communities.

Final Thoughts

“Baticano” is useful for monster pedagogy because it leverages the playful and shadowed duality of Bad Bunny’s public persona—a Latinx/e cultural icon who simultaneously occupies the role of global pop superstar and monsterized folk devil. This tension teaches two lessons simultaneously: (1) monsters as aesthetic tradition (Gothic cinema remixed into music video form), and (2) monsters as discourse (how publics narrate danger, teach norms, and police boundaries through vernacular storytelling). More broadly, bringing current pop culture topics into the classroom stimulates student engagement and provides tools for thinking critically about the world around them—especially when instructors supply the historical and political context that audiences may otherwise miss (Díaz and Rivera-Rideau 2024; Rodriguez 2020; 2022a). This was evident in my students’ ability to move beyond “cancel culture” reactions to instead analyze how specific TikTok warnings functioned as modern “legend tripping”—a practice of testing the boundaries of rumored supernatural threats (Ellis 2004).

Momcilovic’s (2023) argument that Gothic music videos often exceed or unsettle lyrical meaning helps students understand why a single text sustains competing readings, while Huft’s (2022) framing-based approach reveals how fear is organized through narrative. In an HSI context, these lessons are not abstract; they manifest in students’ own lives. During discussions, students often shared how they negotiated these “monster stories” with their families, using the module’s toolkit to explain the video’s genre alibis to parents who viewed the work as a literal spiritual threat.

This module uses platform discourse as an archive of vernacular teaching. Treating monsterization as digital folklore offers a way to talk about difficult subjects through a figure that resists easy classification. By examining Bad Bunny as a “boundary figure,” students leave the module better able to identify how evidence is constructed, and how communities teach each other what to prohibit and what to desire—often in the name of protection.

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