

UNR Fall, 2010 GEOG 476/676: Geography of Latin America

Saturday 10:00 – 1:45pm Feb 12- April 30 MS 321

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Office hours: Open door policy, if it's
MS 325 C come on in. Or
for an appointment.

Course Description: This course is intended to introduce students to the contemporary and historical geography of Latin America. By taking this course you will develop a broad understanding of the physical, cultural, social, and economic factors that have shaped, and continue to shape, this dynamic world region. The subject matter in this course will be addressed from various geographic perspectives: Human-Environment, Political Economy, Political Ecology, and more. In other words, lectures, readings, and activities will emphasize the social/cultural and physical processes that have shaped the landscape and social fabric of Latin America. In this course, we will cover the physical environment, historical geography, population trends, urban issues, development trends, agricultural systems, environmental concerns, and globalization as it pertains to the region.

Goals/Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, the successful student should:

1. Possess knowledge regarding the countries and sub-regions of Latin America and their cultural traits
2. Explain the physical diversity of the region's landforms, climate, and natural regions
3. Describe the complex and often controversial changing relationships between society and the environment
4. Understand Latin America's pre-Columbian and colonial histories and their contemporary legacies
5. Be familiar with US foreign policy in the region and why it matters

Required Text and Materials:

Blouet/Blouet Latin America and the Caribbean: A Systematic and Regional Survey
Sixth edition ISBN# 0470387734

WebCampus: All grades and course materials will be posted on WebCampus including: the syllabus, assignments, and any additional reading materials.

Grading and Assignments:	Term Paper & Presentation	250
	Products Exercise	100
	Film Critique	50
	2 Map Quizzes	20
	Position Paper	50
	Attendance & In- class work	30
	Total	500 pts

Note: Late assignment will be penalized a percentage of the grade for each day. There will be no make-ups without prior notification of absence.

Grading Scale:

90-100% = A (450 - 500 points)	60-69% = D (300 - 349 points)
80-89% = B (400 - 449 points)	Below 60% = Failing Grade (299 or less)
70-79% = C (350 - 399 points)	

Expectations in the Classroom:

1. Attendance and participation are expected in order to achieve a desirable outcome for your grade in this class. During class, we will cover diverse materials in each session so please be punctual and plan to participate in discussions and activities. Due to the abbreviated duration of this course (only 11 weeks) and the infrequency of class meetings, attendance is of the utmost importance. You are expected to attend each session. Failure to attend classes would be detrimental to your grade. If you are not able to attend class, please notify me prior to your absence. Your attendance and in-class assignments are considered as part of your participation grade.
2. Do **NOT** bring your cell phone into class with the power on. If you are found texting in class, you will be asked to leave and the offense will be reflected in your participation grade. Computers are acceptable as long as they are utilized for note taking and not netsurfing.
3. To avoid the temptation to plagiarize, all writing assignments must be submitted electronically via email in addition to a paper copy submitted in class. Plagiarism is a serious offense and is punishable by expulsion from the university. Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically receive an **F** for the course. **There will be no exceptions!!!**

Note on written assignments:

All papers should be typed in 12 pt font, double spaced, 1 inch margins, proofread, include in-text citations and a bibliography/works cited.

Academic Success Services: Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. **Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.**

Disability Accommodations: The Department of Geography is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical or learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of each semester to discuss

appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments.

Assignments

1. In-class Film Critique Assignment: 50 Points

To gain a sense of place about Latin America, a variety of films will be viewed in class. Choose one of these films and develop a 2 to 4 page critique that correlates to the topics covered in class. The assignment will be due the following week. Note: It would be wise to not wait until the final weeks to get this assignment out of the way. This assignment will hone critical thinking and writing skills.

2. Latin American Products Exercise: 100 Points

Purpose: To better understand the interconnectedness of the US and Latin American markets and economies. In addition, this assignment will strengthen students' field research and methods, critical thinking abilities and writing skills.

Instructions: Focusing on goods available in Reno, Nevada, each student is to conduct a systematic examination of goods produced in Latin America that are available to the general public.

1. Select a product line (e.g. women's clothing, men's clothing, fruits and vegetables, flowers, home decor, furniture, electronics, pharmaceuticals, etc.).
2. Visit two distinct store types to gather data i.e. big box and local/small business
3. Identify the countries that produce the goods by the "Made in/Produced in" label.
4. After collecting your data, analyze the results looking for a geographic trend. Where in LA do the majority of the items come from? Why? What is the comparative quality and pricing of those items between countries? Are LA countries producing high or low quality items? Do you see regional specialization (e.g. Mexico, Central America, Caribbean, Andean, Amazonian, etc)? Are these products included in one or more regional trade blocks/agreements? If so, which ones and what other countries are cosignatories? Does the store manager/owner have any further information? A database spreadsheet may be of use here.
5. Write a 2 to 4 page paper of your findings. Your paper should be well organized (introduction, discussion of methods, results, and conclusion). Be sure to include a statement of purpose / object of the study in your introduction.
 - Create a map of your findings. You may choose to include the presence of any natural resources used in the production of these goods.

Locations you might consider (but are not limited to):

Grocery stores; Gift stores; Hobby shops; Clothing stores; Target, Wal-Mart, and K-Mart, Best Buy, Radio Shack

Have fun, be creative, careful and enjoy!

3. Position Papers: 50 Points

Purpose To explore in greater depth an issue or idea introduced in the lecture. During the semester you will be responsible for writing 1 position paper. The paper is due at the beginning of class and should cover an issue or topic from lecture the previous week.

How to Write a Position Paper:

1. Choose a topic or idea of interest from the previous week. I advise you to choose either a term or a topic from the previous week and expand on it. For example, we will be discussing core themes such as: Neoliberalism, colonialism, globalization, and the environment. A possible paper topic could be the commonalities and differences between colonialism and globalization.
2. Find at least 3 resources other than your text to gain further knowledge of the topic.
3. Take a clear position in your writing. For example: "In this paper I argue that ecotourism in Latin America is one of the few industries that can successfully bridge the demands of economic growth with sustainable resource use." Your position is the thesis statement and should be included in the first paragraph. The following paragraphs should support the thesis statement, each beginning with a clear topic sentence. Any significant conclusions drawn in the paper should be included in the first paragraph; this helps the audience know where the paper is headed.
4. Support your assertions with both logic and information. Be sure to tell your reader why you are saying what you are saying. Always ask the question of yourself, why is this important? Then answer that question in your essay.

4. Term Paper and presentation (476 8-10 pages/ 676 15+ pages): 250 points

You will choose a contemporary Latin America topic/issue that relates to one or more class themes. It can focus on issues from one Country (or a region or city in that country) or your topic can focus on the region at large. Currently, there is much afoot in Latin America— political changes (from the right to left in nearly every country in the region); the shift from neoliberal economic structures to populism; energy production; U.S. Latin American relations; Latin America and China; Urban Renewal; 'Sustainable Development'; Tourism and Latin America; Drug Trafficking; Health Care; Immigration and in-migration; U.S. Mexico Border Issues; the Environment; Social Movements; Agricultural Production; Free Trade Agreements; Race and Gender Issues etc. Check Newspapers online to perhaps find a topic that intrigues you (www.nytimes.com or <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>), or talk to me about a topic. You will gradually work on the term paper throughout the semester.

Instructions:

1. Your first task is to choose a topic and then meet with me by **Feb 26th. 25 points.**
2. **March 26th**, Annotated Bibliography due. **50 points.** For instructions on how to prepare an annotated Bibliography, please refer to:
3. You need to include: 5 peer review journal (or book) sources, 3 websites, and required Maps. I also encourage you to include information from popular media as well; however, this is an academic assignment, so you must obtain the majority of your information from peer review, academic journal and books.
4. **April 9th**, annotated outline of your research paper due. **50 points.**
5. **April 23rd** Term papers are due. **75 points.**
6. You will give a 20 minute power-point presentation on your term-long research on **April 30th. 50 Points.** The presentation must include maps and visuals.

Syllabus and Assignment Schedule (Subject to change!)

Wk 1 (Feb 12): Introduction Chapters 1& 2

Wk 2 (Feb 19) Chapters 3&4

Wk 3 (Feb 26) Chapters 5 &6
Map quiz 1/ Term paper topic due

Wk 4 (March 5) Chapter 7&8

Wk 5 (March 12) Chapter 9
Map quiz 2

Wk 6 (March 19): Spring Break
NO CLASS

Wk 7 (March 26): Chapter 10
Annotated bibliography due

Wk 8 (April 2): Chapter 11
LA products assignment due

Wk 9 (April 9): Chapter 12
Annotated outline of paper due

Wk 10 (April 16): Chapter 13

Wk 11 (April 23): Wild Card Week
Term paper due

Wk 12 (April 30): Final week
Presentations

Don't forget your position paper and film critique!!!