Geography of Latin America (GEOG 322) • Fall 2006

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Required Texts

All readings are available through my website. You will be given a password at the beginning of class to access the readings.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to contemporary themes in Latin American society from a geographic perspective. Latin America is in the midst of fundamental economic, social, environmental, and political change affecting the daily activities of its approximately 500 million inhabitants. To better understand the major issues confronting the region we will employ an interdisciplinary approach to inquiry focusing on the interconnections between the environment, economics, culture, history, and politics and how these processes manifest themselves spatially. We will address key issues through several media including: readings, films, and slides.

We will study the development patterns and issues for the region as a whole and the distinct features of select places throughout Latin America. Course themes emerge from the striking contrasts found in the region: the modern mega-cities and the expansive shantytowns, the increasing presence of multinational corporations and the growing informal economy, street children, the cocaine economy, indigenous cultural traditions and modern “death squads”, and the threat to pristine rainforests.

Course Format

This course is structured to be discussion oriented. Therefore, students are expected to attend class prepared, i.e. completed the readings assigned for that day, and participate in class discussions.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1
September 5: Course Introduction and Overview Map Exercise
September 7: No Class: Map Exercise (Due Sept. 12)

WEEK 2
September 12: Film: “Life and Debt”
September 14: Ch. 1 Eras or Errors: An Historical and Geographical Overview of Latin America’s Economic and Political Development
WEEK 3
September 19: Ch. 1-cont’d and Ch. 2 Neoliberal Exports:
September 21: Ch. 2-cont’d

WEEK 4
September 26: Ch. 3 Urban and Metropolitan Growth in Latin America: A Review of Trends
September 28: Ch. 4 The Icon Race: The Struggle to Create New Symbols for Latin American Cities

WEEK 5
October 3: Debate #1
October 5: Ch. 5 Gendered Spaces of Latin America

WEEK 6
October 10: Ch. 6 NGOs and Ongoing Changes in Latin American Society
October 12: Ch. 7 The Spatialities of Latin American Social Movements

WEEK 7
October 17: Debate #2
October 19: Ch. 8 Urban Environmental Politics in Latin America

WEEK 8
October 24: Film “The Take”
October 26: Midterm Exam

WEEK 9
October 31: Debate #3
November 2: Ch. 9 US-Mexico Borderlands

WEEK 10
November 7: Ch. 10 Latinos in the US
November 9: Debate #4

WEEK 11
November 14: Ch. 11 Spaces of Tourism
November 16: Ch. 12 Sustainable Development and Ecotourism

WEEK 12
November 21: Debate #5
November 23: Thanksgiving
WEEK 13
November 28: Ch. 13 Drug Geographies
November 30: Film “Coca Mama”

WEEK 14
December 5: Ch. 14 Cinematic Spaces of Geography and Cinema in Latin America; Debate #5
December 7: Film/discussion

WEEK 15:
December 12: TBA
December 14: TBA
**Evaluation**
Students will be evaluated by a variety of evaluation tools, including exams, writing assignments, map quizzes, on-line exercises, etc. Students will be evaluated on their ability to demonstrate basic knowledge/comprehension of the subject matter as well as the ability to apply critical thinking skills to the subject matter, by evaluating issues, applying knowledge acquired, synthesizing multiple points/ideas, issues and knowledge. Listed below are the intended learning outcomes for this course and the evaluation and assessment tools used in the class to determine your success.

**Intended Outcomes**
In accordance with best teaching practices, intended outcomes for this course are made transparent to students at the beginning of the semester. These outcomes represent the knowledge and skill set that you will be expected to demonstrate your competence with during the semester. Assessment and evaluation tools used during this time are designed to determine your success in acquiring these knowledge and skill sets.

**Goal A: Building a Knowledge Base**
Students in this course will identify and define key terms and concepts central to the humanized landscape of Latin America/
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Frequent online quizzes, Essay exam Questions, Term Paper/Debate exercise. Students will also create and interpret a map to assess regional differences in development levels based on several key development indicators.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Map Exercise
Students will be able to recognize, list and describe key ideas, facts and spatial conditions in the following broad topics: ethnicity, politics, economics, demographics and culture.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Online Quizzes, Essay Exam Questions

**Goal B: Acquiring Knowledge**
Students will develop skills for acquiring new knowledge.
Students will recall information presented to them textually, cartographically and through numeric or graphic communication.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Online Quizzes, Essay Exam Questions, Term paper.

**Goal C: Problem Solving Skills**
Students will demonstrate their problem solving skills.
Students will analyze non-textual messages in the landscape and from maps, graphics, etc.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Online Quizzes, Essay Exam Questions.
Students will apply abstract concepts, such as Dependency Theory and Neoliberalism to real-world locations in Latin America.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Weekly Online Quizzes, Essay Exam Questions
Students will evaluate, compare and contrast opposing views on subject debated within and beyond the academy.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: In class role play exercises
Students will explain selected interactions between and among culture, economics, politics, natural resources and ethnicity.
Assessment/Evaluation tool: Online Quizzes, Essay Exam Questions, Debates, Term Paper

**Goal D: Communicating Knowledge**
Students in this course will be able to communicate ideas by using words, numbers, maps and other graphic devices.
Students will effectively communicate ideas and opinions using textual communication. 
**Assessment/Evaluation tool:** Term paper and Debates.

Students will construct one or more legible maps.
**Assessment/Evaluation tool:** Map exercise

Students will effectively communicate facts, ideas and statistics using maps and graphic devices.
**Assessment/Evaluation tool:** Map exercise

**Evaluation**

1. Quizzes (5 points each; 50 points total). There will be 10 online quizzes during the semester. Questions will be derived from the readings scheduled for that day.

2. Map Exercise (10 points). There will be an in-class map exercise during the first class meeting. Details provided then.

3. Group project (30 points; 20 written and 10 oral). The class will be divided into small groups and be assigned to support/debate one side of a controversial issue in Latin America. Each group is required to submit a written report and then debate/discuss the issue with another group in the class. The number of issues debated and size of the groups will be determined by enrollment. More details given on the first day of class.

4. Class participation and attendance (10 points). Students are expected to attend and prepared (i.e. complete the assigned readings) to participate in class.

5. Two Exams (30 points each; 60 total).