

# Latin American Studies

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## Course Description:

A primary objective of this course is to provide thematic lenses through which to view and understand Latin America. Using an interdisciplinary approach the course will examine the geography, history, culture, politics, economy, and environment of Latin America. Emphasizing a geographic perspective, our inquiry will make extensive use of readings, maps, film and video, literature, and music. We will begin with a look at the human and physical geography of contemporary Latin America. Subsequent units will touch on music and popular culture, globalization, women, the environment, tourism, the drug trade, regional conflicts, migration, etc. Each unit will involve an analysis of a variety of materials. In-class activities will reinforce enduring understandings, rather than discrete historical facts. Project assignments are designed to be of interest to the students and are intended as a means for students to demonstrate their understanding of course material. Geographic skills and reasoning will be emphasized.

## Course Goals:

- Provide students with a basic understanding of historical and contemporary Latin America.
- Identify cultural and social institutions in Latin America and understand their character and their relation to the citizenry.
- Expose students to the multicultural heritage of the Iberoamerican world concentrating on specific popular forms of cultural expression.
- Provide an understanding for the geographic manifestation of political, cultural, economic, and historical phenomena in Latin America.
- Provide structured opportunities for students to make personal connections with the material being studied.
- Promote geographic skills and reasoning.
- To encourage students to “think about thinking” and to apply the following intellectual standards: clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic.
- To encourage students to apply self-regulated thinking by planning appropriately, identifying and using necessary resources, responding to feedback, evaluating the effectiveness of one’s actions.

## Overarching “essential questions”:

- How does a group of people construct meaning and create identity?
- How is cultural meaning contested?
- What drives and informs cultural production (or the production of meaning)?
- Why here and not there?
- How does geography shape and influence patterns of settlement and land use?

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- What kinds of forces link two or more places to one another?
- How do stories (histories) and geography shape one's perspective and one's choices?

### **Required Texts:**

*Faces of Latin America* 2nd ed. By Duncan Green. London: Latin American Bureau, 1997.

### **Additional readings will be provided in class, including from the following sources:**

*Latin America: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. By Julio Lopez-Arias and Gladys M. Varona-Lacy. New York: Peter Lang, 1999. ISBN 0-8204-3479-5

*Questions and Swords: Folktales of the Zapatista Revolution*. By Subcomandante Marcos. El Paso, Texas: Cinco Puntos Press, 2001

*Latin America and The Caribbean: Lands and Peoples*. 3rd ed. By David L. Clawson. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2004.

*Latin America*. 10th ed. By Paul Goodwin, Jr. Guilford: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

*Latin America and the Caribbean: A Systematic and Regional Survey*. 4th ed. By Brian and Olwyn Blouet. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2004.

*Latin America: Land of Diversity- A Comprehensive Social Studies Course on Latin America*. Stone Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University.

*Latino Voices: Stories of Latin American Immigrants and Their Impact in a Community*. Minneapolis: Resource Center of the Americas, 2000.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Attendance- Students should read and be familiar with attendance policies in the Student Handbook. These policies will be applied in this class.
- Academic honesty- Plagiarism is not tolerated and the Student Handbook spells out how infractions will be handled. In doing good research you are expected to use the work of others as evidence and support in many of your assignments. If and when you use material from another source, be sure to cite it properly. With regards to lying, I expect students to be honest with me. I know that your lives are busy and at times your circumstances will require special consideration, whether regarding homework or a major assignment. You will find that if you speak with me about your circumstances with honesty and in a timely manner I am more than willing to accommodate your needs.
- Reading- Preparing for each class by carefully reading each assignment is essential. The readings are challenging. I have taken care to assign a

manageable number of pages to be read each night. The readings will provide the background for class discussion. In order to follow along during class meetings you will need to do the reading and do it carefully before you come to class. I expect that you will take notes while reading and/or complete the worksheets provided, paying special attention to words and concepts that are new or of interest to you.

- **Assignments-** At the beginning of the year you will choose a country and a region that will serve as a continuous “case study” for applying much of what you learn in the course about Latin America. There will be between 6-8 assignments over the course of the semester in which you will be asked to demonstrate your understanding of the course material by applying what you have learned to your specific country and region. These assignments will count for 40% of your grade and are the primary means of assessing your understanding of the material covered in class. Grading rubrics will always be provided when an assignment is introduced. These rubrics will encourage you to “think about thinking” and to apply the following intellectual standards: clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic. Each assignment will be introduced at least a week or more before it is due. Class time will often be set aside to allow you to work on an assignment. It is my hope to encourage you to apply self-regulated thinking by planning appropriately, identifying and using necessary resources, responding to feedback, and evaluating the effectiveness of your actions.

### **Grading:**

Participation 20%

Homework 20%

Assignments 40%

Quizzes/Exams/in-class writing and “Outside the Classroom” 20%

Grading in the humanities is inherently subjective. The use of rubrics is intended to make the grading as transparent as possible. There should be no surprises. In general, the following is a general understanding of how I think about grading:

*Distinctive:* shows mastery of the material, the ability to draw connections and have independent insights consistently, uses thorough supporting evidence, and clear expression.

*Quality:* shows a strong grasp of the material, some independent insight and/or connections, uses good supporting evidence, and clear expression.

*Competent:* shows an understanding of the material as it has been discussed in class, the ability to recall and use the insights in the readings or from class discussion, and the use of some supporting evidence.

*Poor work:* unable or rarely able to do competent work, unclear expression, minimal supporting evidence.

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*Failing work:* no evidence of reading or preparations. No supporting evidence, unclear expression.

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## Latin America Outside the Classroom

**Student** \_\_\_\_\_

Students must earn a total of **50** points

<b>Category</b>	<b>(#) title</b>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The objective of this project is to experience the Latino community here in the Twin Cities.

In order to obtain all the points the student must:

1. Demonstrate their participation in different activities. This can be done through turning in tickets, programs, cultural materials, photos, or even signatures from someone who can attest to your participation in an event.
2. Write a reflective piece about each experience of 1-2 pages.

¡Attention! The only activity that can be repeated more than once is #2. Attend a cultural event. In the other categories a student may receive no more than 10 points!

**Due:** \_\_\_\_\_ **at class time.**

**10 pts. will be deducted for each day late.**

**Total points and grade** \_\_\_\_\_ / 50

**(This cover sheet must be turned in with evidence of your activities)**

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- 1. Watch Spanish language TV- 5 points for one half hour, 10 points for one hour.** Programming to be aware of are: Univisión has a variety of programming including news programming M-F at 5:30- 6:00. Weeknight evenings there are **Telenovelas** (soap operas).
- 2. Attend a cultural event- 10 points.** These are posted on the wall outside my room. You may also find listings on your own. You will get extra points for bringing listings to my attention.
- 3. Go to a movie- 10 points** - There are frequently movies featuring Latin American content showing around the Twin Cities. Check with me, see the wall or check listings.
- 4. Video or presentation for the class- 10 points.** Make a video with your original idea or use textbook themes and vocabulary. A live presentation is also encouraged. Share your talent with us. A musical presentation is also acceptable.
- 5. Attend a class at a university- 10 points.** At any of the many universities around the Twin Cities, you may attend a class about Latin America. It is important to speak with the professor beforehand to explain your presence.
- 6. Attend a multi-cultural event - 10 points.** In an effort to broaden your experiences at Blake, you may use any multi-cultural event around the Twin Cities for 10 points towards your total points.
- 7. Attend a presentation or a lecture- 10 points.** Suggestions will be posted.
- 8. A restaurant- 10 points.** Have a meal at a Hispanic restaurant (not Taco fast food) and enjoy something new. Did you speak in Español?
- 9. Travel- 10 points.** Any travel experience to a Spanish speaking country should provide enough to complete this assignment. The travel is worth 10 points. You must have completed the travel during the school year or the summer prior.
- 10. Attend a religious service- 10 points.** Students may attend services in Spanish. Check Saturday newspaper and Yellow Pages. Ask me for suggestions.
- 11. Pen Pal- 10 points.** (<http://www.iecc.org>)  
The IECC (Intercultural E-Mail Classroom Connections) mailing lists are provided by St. Olaf College as a free service to help teachers and classes link with partners in other countries and cultures for e-mail classroom pen-pal and project exchanges. This site contains information about how to set up these "electronic pen pal" relations for your students as well as providing the technical background

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behind the various choices available given the particulars of your school's computer accounts and network organization.

**12. Connections- 10 points.** Some kind of project you are doing in another class or outside of school that is related in any way with the Hispanic world.

**13. Service to the community - Points based on degree of service commitment.** Volunteer work at the following locations may count towards Outside credit: Abraham Lincoln School for New Americans, Centro Cultural Chicano, CLUES, Minnesota Internship Center Charter School, Resource Center of the Americas, Lyndale School (you may suggest others).

**14. Something else?- 10 points.** Do you write poetry, make crafts, play guitar, and act in theater? Come talk to me about what you want to do.

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## Course Schedule:

### 1st Quarter (8 weeks)

#### **Week 1**

Put field trip at beginning of semester: Lake St. and Resource Center or create required outings to be completed within first quarter.

### Physical and Human Geography

Day 1 Introduction to course.  
Students create a hand drawn map of Latin America.  
Assign students to a region and have them pick a country.  
Handout regional, country profiles (from Goodwin, Latin America) and a set of questions. Questions are due Day 3.

#### *Assignment #1*

Locate 3 Internet sites for your country. Write a short annotated review (one paragraph) for each site. One of the sites should be the country's official web site. The assignment is due on Monday.

Day 2 Thematic maps and geographic terms and concepts.  
Latin America, Goodwin, p. 2  
Cultural core and fringe areas of Latin America, Clawson p. 7  
Latin America and subregions, Clawson p. 9  
Viceroyalties of colonial Latin America, Clawson p. 103  
Plate, trenches, and fracture zones, Blouet p. 19  
Vegetation and altitude, Blouet p. 21  
Major climate and vegetation regions, Blouet p. 22  
Distribution of rainfall, Blouet p. 39  
Brazilian colonial economy, Blouet p. 70

Day 3 Reading questions due today.  
Continue working with maps of the region.

#### **Week 2**

Day 1 Read Clawson p. 161-170  
Physical and human geography terms and race and ethnicity.

Day 2 Assignment #1 due today.  
Continue working with maps of the region.  
Students create a second hand drawn map of Latin America to compare with the first.

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Day 3            Read Clawson p. 173-78 (or Goodwin p. 3-6)  
Review Clawson reading on Latin American culture.  
Continue working with maps of the region.

Day 4            Review Clawson reading on Latin American culture.  
Review for quiz on the physical and human geography of Latin America.  
Much of the quiz will consist of interpreting maps we have viewed in class.

### **Week 3**

Day 1            Take Quiz.

#### *Assignment #2*

1. Students will write a 1-2 page profile of their assigned country and region.
2. Students will create a travel itinerary for visiting 5 different locations in their country. Students will describe each location, provide a rationale for visiting it, and suggest the best means of travel to each location from the capital city.  
Profile and itinerary will be due in Week 4 .

Day 2            Read Clawson p. 178-87  
Discuss reading.

Day 3            Research time for assignment #2.

Day 4            Research time for assignment #2.

### **Week 4**

#### **Land and Conflict**

Day 1            Read Green, Ch. 1 The Curse of Wealth: the commodity trade p. 5-12  
In-class reading Green p. 12-20

Day 2            Assignment #2 is due.  
Pair-share within and across regions  
Core-Periphery model (Knox-Marston maps)

Day 3            Read Green, Ch. 2 Promised Land: land ownership, power and conflict, p.  
23-30  
Labor and land control in core-periphery model

Day 4            Read Green p. 30-35  
View slides or video (Unit 9 of Land of Diversity, slides from Central America, etc.)

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## **Week 5**

Day 1 View slides or video (Unit 9 of Land of Diversity, slides from Central America, etc.)

### **Population, Migration, and Urbanization**

Day 2 Read Green, Ch. 4 Mean Streets: migration and life in the city, p. 59-70  
Population: growth, distribution, migration, and urbanization.  
Listen to songs that address the issues raised in the Green chapters.

#### *Assignment #3*

1. Students will produce a series of maps (2-3) based on an analysis of regional data. These maps should display data on the topics covered in Green Ch. 1, 2, 4.
2. Students will write a one page first-person perspective piece in which they portray the experiences of a fictional character in their assigned country.
3. Students will write a 1-2 page analysis of the forces and institutions that have had an impact on their character's life.  
This assignment is due in Week 6.

Day 3 Read Clawson p. 321-332.  
Population: growth, distribution, migration, and urbanization.

Day 4 Quiz on Green, Ch. 1, 2, and 4.

## **Week 6**

Day 1 Read Clawson p. 333-348  
Population: growth, distribution, migration, and urbanization.

Day 2 Work day for assignment #3.

Day 3 Work day for assignment #3.

## **Week 7**

### **Politics, the Military and Human Rights**

Day 1 Assignment #3 is due.  
In-class reading: "Political diversity in Latin America" from Land of Diversity.  
Activity with Goodwin handouts- identify key information about politics of your assigned country

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Day 2 Read "The role of the military in Latin America" from Land of Diversity  
Late 20th century socio-political events in Latin America.

## **Week 8**

Day 1 Read Green, Ch. 8 Men at Arms: the military, p. 132-141  
Late 20th century socio-political events in Latin America.

Day 2 Read Green, Ch. 9 The Left: guerillas, social movements and the struggle  
for change, p. 145-154  
Late 20th century socio-political events in Latin America.

Day 3 Read Green, p. 154-161

### *Assignment # 4*

Students will review a film dealing with the military and civil society  
(*Romero, Official Story, Obstinate Memory, Missing, Salvador, Broken Silence, Men With Guns, Ciudad y Los Perros, Panama Deception, The Revolution Will Not be Televised, etc.*).

Each student will write a 2-3 page essay in which they:

Provide specific background information about the abuses and/or oppression depicted in the history of their assigned country.

Describe the popular response to the abuses and/or repression.

State how the country has dealt with past abuses (truth and reconciliation).

Critique the accuracy and bias of the film.

Students must refer to at least one published review or commentary on the film (attach review to paper).

Assignment is due in week 9

Day 4 Quiz on Green, Ch. 8 and 9.  
Late 20th century socio-political events in Latin America.

END OF 1ST QUARTER.

## **2nd Quarter (8 weeks)**

### **Week 1**

Day 1 Culture and identity.

Day 2 Read Green Ch. 6 Writing on the wall: culture, identity and politics, p. 89-98  
Culture and identity.

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Day 3            Read Green p. 98-105.  
Culture and identity.

Day 4            Assignment #4 due.  
Culture and identity.

*Assignment #5*

Students will investigate a specific cultural phenomenon (afro-poetry, borderlands culture, popular music, visual arts, graphic novels or comics, chicanisma, cinco de mayo, etc.) and produce a 2-3 minute iMovie or Power Point presentation with sound, visuals, and narration in which identity is understood as a struggle for meaning in the face of specific socio-economic forces.  
The assignment will be due on Wednesday, 11/17

**Week 2**

**Popular Culture**

Day 1            Latin American culture (geography of Latin music?)

Day 2            Latin American culture. Or Work day for assignment #5

Day 3            Latin American culture. Or Work day for assignment #5

Day 4            Latin American culture.

**Week 3**

Day 1            Latin American culture

**Indigenous people, Women, Religion**

Day 2            Work day for assignment #5.

*Assignment #6*

Students will read one of three chapters in Green and create a 5 minute oral presentation on their topic.

Ch. 11 Race against time: indigenous people

Ch. 10 Women's Work: gender and politics

Ch. 12 Thy Kingdom Come: the church

The assignment will be due on Tuesday, 12/1.

Day 3            Assignment #5 due today.  
View presentations in class.

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Day 4            Read first half of assigned chapter in Green.  
In-class reading: second half of assigned chapter in Green.

#### **Week 4**

Day 1            Have a prepared outline and product for your presentation.  
Group share with others who have read the same chapter.  
Work day for assignment #6.

Day 2            Work day for assignment #6.

#### **Week 5**

### **The Economy, Globalization and Neoliberalism**

Day 1            Industrialization and import substitution.

Day 2            Assignment #6 due.  
Student presentations.

Day 3            Read Green Ch. 5 Growing pains: industrialization, the debt crisis and  
neoliberalism, p. 73-78  
Continue with student presentations.

Day 4            Read Green p. 79-86  
Debt crisis and neoliberalism.

#### **Week 6**

Day 1            Review main ideas from Green Ch. 5

#### *Assignment #7*

Students will write a 2-page paper on neoliberalism and globalization and how those forces are impacting their assigned country and region.  
The assignment is due in Week 7.

Day 2            View movie *Life and Debt* (about Jamaica).

Day 3            Continue with movie.

Day 4            Work day for assignment #7.

#### **Week 7**

Day 1            Assignment #7 due.

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## Latinos in the US

Day 2 Latino immigrants in the US and Minnesota.

Day 3 Read assigned pages in Latino Voices.  
Latino immigrants in the US and Minnesota.

Day 4 Read assigned pages in Latino Voices.  
Latino immigrants in the US and Minnesota.

### Week 8

Day 1 Latino immigrants in the US and Minnesota.

Day 2 Prepare portfolio and reflective essay for final exam.

#### *Assignment #8- final exam*

You will compile the previous 7 assignments into a portfolio.

Together these assignments provide an in-depth look at a specific country and region in Latin America.

1. You will evaluate your work over the semester. Identify:

- a. your best work.
- b. the work you took the most pride in.
- c. your proudest moment.
- d. when you felt most challenged and why.

2. Based on the information and perspectives you have acquired about your assigned country and region as well as what you have learned about other regions and countries and Latin America in general you are going to write a 3-4 page reflective essay. Consider the following questions for your essay:

- a. In what ways would you say there exists a Latin American unity?
- b. What are some specific examples of variation and diversity in Latin America?
- c. In what ways does your country and region represent the geography and human experience of the rest of Latin America? In what ways does it not?
- d. Describe some specific social institutions in Latin America and the ways in which these institutions impact the lives of real people. Provide specific examples.
- e. Identify any personal connections you have experienced with what you have learned.
- f. What has been most valuable to you personally?

Day 3 Prepare portfolio and reflective essay for final exam.

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## **Week 9**

Day 1

Final exam. Turn in reflective essay.

Group discussion/reflection based on reflective essays.