

# Latin American Studies: A Middle School Curriculum

Eric Mackintosh, Samuel Green Middle School

## Course Outline

### Week 1:

General introduction to Latin America

- Map making

- Geography

- Basic language and culture

Start Unit 1: Pre-Columbian Civilizations: The Maya

### Week 2:

Continue with Unit 1: The Maya

- Key concepts:

  - Indigenous culture and language

  - Belief systems and worldview

  - Environment and agriculture

  - Number system and astronomy

  - Persistence of culture after conquest

- Possible activities:

  - Popol Vuh* Film screening

  - Living Maya* Film screening

### Week 3:

Finish Unit 1, begin Unit 2

Unit 2: The Caribbean

- Key concepts:

  - Arrival of Columbus in Caribbean

  - Colonial period and slavery

  - Unique multicultural history

    - African cultural influences (music, dance, food)

  - Connections with New Orleans (and the greater United States)

  - Contemporary issues

    - Tourism

    - Poverty

    - Hardships of life

- Possible Activities

  - Videos on popular culture

  - Music from *Latin Playground*

**Week 4:**

Continue with Unit 2

**Week 5:**

Unit 3 – Brazil and the Southern Cone

Key concepts:

Basic country info

Language

Regions

Correlations with U.S.

Size

Geographical variation

Ethnic and racial diversity

Contemporary history

Brazilian and other southern cone dictatorships

Cultural imperialism

Social stratification

Urban vs. rural

Favelas

Popular culture:

Music (samba, funk, hip-hop, rock)

Dance

Carnival

*Capoeira*

Soccer

**Week 6** “Wonder Week”**Week 7** Spring Break**Week 8**

Continuation of Unit 3 – Brazil

Possible activities

Activities from web

Videos

Music demonstrations

Possible capoeira and/or samba demonstration

Dance lesson

**Week 9:**

Unit 4 – Andes

Key concepts

Indigenous traditions

Folk culture

Current challenges of indigenous groups

Possible Activities

Videos  
Music  
Guest speakers

**Week 10:**

Unit 5 – Latinos in the United States and Course Wrap-up

Key concepts:

Reasons / geography of migration

Special cases:

Mexico

Puerto Rico

Latino influence on US

Changing and adapting cultures and traditions