

GEOGRAPHY 335

GEOGRAPHY OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Fall 2007

Tuesday & Thursday 10:20-11:40am
110 Berkey Hall

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My mailbox is in Room 118, Geography Building (M-F 8-12, 1-5);
Office hours: Tuesday 1-2pm, Wednesday 10:30 – 11:30am or by appointment

Course outline

This course is intended to introduce students to Latin America and the Caribbean through the region’s contemporary and historical geography. In other words, by taking this course you will gain a broad knowledge of the physical, cultural, social, and economic factors that have shaped, and continue to shape, this amazing world region. The subject matter in this course will be addressed from a geographic perspective frequently referred to as Human-Environment geography, which means lectures, readings, and activities will tend to emphasize the social/cultural and physical processes that have helped form the landscapes of Latin America and the Caribbean. This human-environment focus means that in this course even when we focus on the physical landscape, humans will not be ignored. In this course, we will cover the physical environment, historical geography, population shifts, urban issues, economic trends, agricultural systems, environmental concerns, and globalization in Latin America and the Caribbean.

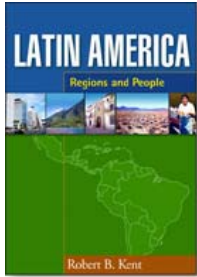
Course prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, but the assumption of this instructor is that each student in the class is aware of the location of important places throughout the world, or is willing to look them up. Please do not ignore Michigan State’s physical library resources, including the Map Library (located on the 3rd floor of the main library), as they are typically more complete and less problematic than many widely accessible electronic resources.

Course format

I will teach this course through lectures (the primary content) enhanced through slides, videos, small-group discussions, and guest lectures. This course will be greatly aided if everyone remains engaged during our meeting times, particularly during lectures and small-group discussions.

Course readings



Textbook (required, pictured right): Kent, R.B. 2006. ***Latin America: Regions and People***. New York: Guilford Press.

Atlas (highly recommended): Veregin, H., ed. 2005. ***Goode's Atlas of Latin America***. New York: Rand McNally and Co.

****One copy each of the book and atlas will be on reserve (2 hours, no removal from library) at the Main Library Reserve Desk.****

Supplemental materials: Will be made available on ANGEL as needed.

Course management

We will be using ANGEL, Michigan State's online course management system, in this course. When you enroll for the course you are automatically granted access to the GEO335 ANGEL page. To login to the page, please go to <https://angel.msu.edu>, and login with your MSUNet ID and password (please note that your MSUNet ID is the portion of your MSU e-mail address before the "@" symbol). **All emails from me to you will use the ANGEL system and will be sent to your MSU e-mail account. If you use a different email system, be sure to forward your MSU account to that other address.** I apologize, but I will not be able to honor requests to use other e-mail directly. All assignments, handouts, assignment scores, and lecture outlines will be available through ANGEL. Lecture outlines will be available at least 12 hrs before the scheduled lecture and will remain posted throughout the semester. Specific readings, assignments and events will be posted on the announcements and calendar pages. Be sure to check ANGEL frequently.

Course requirements

Your performance in this course will be evaluated by three short reflection papers (38%), two mid-term exams (40%), and a final essay exam OR final paper (28%).

A) Reflection papers:

REFLECTION PAPERS consist of three short (two-three pages long) papers reflecting on (1) your relationship with Latin America, (2) a topic to be announced, and (3) on the analysis of a newspaper article (from a major newspaper) about Latin America. Specific due dates for the papers are given in the course schedule.

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of other people's work presented as one's own. I will NOT tolerate plagiarism and anyone plagiarizing another's work either in whole or part will be subject to a FAILED grade for the course and a report filed with their respective college. If you are unclear on what plagiarism is, please read the University-Wide policy on it at:
<http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/rule32.htm>

B) Exams:

EXAMS for the course will contain a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, and map questions and will be administered online via the ANGEL course management system. This means that during exam periods you will have to have access to an internet-connected computer. These online exams are **open book and will be open for a 24-hour period**. I will provide more specific information in class, but the exact dates for the exams are given in the course schedule.

A note on cheating: I consider cheating to be the copying of other student's answers and/or assisting others when an exam should be completed individually. I do NOT tolerate cheating. Cheating will result in a failed grade for the course as well as being reported to the appropriate college. For more information on the consequences of cheating, please see: <http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/rule32.htm>

Exam make-up policy: Make-up exams are offered ONLY to those who have made previous arrangements with me. Should a life circumstance occur at exam time, you need to contact me by email or telephone to let me know you will require a make-up. **THIS NOTIFICATION NEEDS TO OCCUR AS SOON AS YOU CAN BUT NO LATER THAN 24 hrs AFTER THE EXAM WAS ADMINISTERED**, and preferably should be before the exam. Also, though circumstance may be traumatic, do not be surprised if I ask for official confirmation of the event before excusing your absence. Sleeping-in or forgetting (or *'forgetting'*) an exam are not excuses for which make-ups are offered.

Exam review: Before an exam, please feel free to ask questions about the material in class or via email, or come to my office hours. I will run pre-exam review sessions that will be *question and answer* only – I will not review whole portions of the lecture material. After the exam I do not go over exam questions in class. Instead, the questions and correct answers to them will be available online. Also, please feel free to contact me directly with specific issues after class, during office hours, or via email.

C) Final exam, project or paper:

The final assignment in the course depends on your selection:

- 1) Pairs or individuals (your choice) may write a final paper (max. 10 pages) on a topic of your choice, decided by mid-semester (and approved by instructor). This option also requires *two* meetings with the instructor while the paper is being prepared and the handing-in of a draft TWO weeks before the final is due (a missed deadline for topic-choice or draft submission means you will have to go with option 2, below).
- 2) Taking the final short-essay exam (comprehensive and in-class) during the final exam slot.

Other course options:

Honors options are available for Honors students. Please contact me and we will work out the details. Projects need to be based on your own initiative. A short contract will be written up and adhered to. **NO honors option requests will be accepted after Exam 1 has been completed (no exceptions).**

Extra-credit can be earned by attending a lecture or other event that is relevant to the class (i.e., something about Latin America or the Caribbean) outside of class and then writing a one page summary *and* reflection about the experience. The paper must be thoughtful and well written (good grammar and punctuation are a must). A maximum of 5 points each can be earned and you are permitted to complete **2** (i.e., up to two, but not more than two) of these in the semester. Relevant lectures will be announced in class and posted on ANGEL, though I am open to other activities as well (subject to pre-approval). *No more than one Latin American movie can be used for extra credit.*

Course grading:

Your grade will be calculated using the following point system:

Reflection paper 1	25 points
Reflection paper 2	35 points
Reflection paper 3	35 points
Exam 1	50 points
Exam 2	50 points
Final exam, project, or paper	55 points

TOTAL	250 points

The following grading scale will be used in this class:

92 -100	%	4.0
84 - 91	%	3.5
79 - 83	%	3.0
70 - 78	%	2.5
64 - 69	%	2.0
56 - 63	%	1.5
51 - 55	%	1.0
0 - 50	%	0.0

N.B. THE FOLLOWING POINTS & POLICIES ARE VERY IMPORTANT!!!!

- 1) **PLEASE INFORM THE INSTRUCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU WILL HAVE ANY CONFLICT WITH CLASS MEETINGS AND EXAM PERIODS DUE TO RELIGIOUS, ATHLETIC, OR OTHER REASONS.**
- 2) **IF YOU HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS, PLEASE INFORM THE INSTRUCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.** In order to accommodate RCPD requests, I need to have your VISA before the first exam.
- 3) **N.B. Class policies:**
 - Wikipedia & Electronic Resources: While Wikipedia and other online resources can be incredibly helpful, they are subject to a range of problems that printed and reviewed media (such as journal articles, newspapers, and books) are not. Therefore, in this course, Wikipedia should only be used as a springboard to more formal sources of information. If you are curious or need to know fast-facts about a subject, location, or idea in the class, by all means use Wikipedia. However, Wikipedia sources are unacceptable in papers and assignments. Please make the effort to find conventional resources.
 - Communication (especially e-mail): Electronic communication is quickly becoming the standard method of rapid communication, both socially and professionally. Because we contact friends and family online all the time, online communication often becomes informal. However, because part of your education at MSU includes *professionalization*, all e-mails to me and to other students must include: (a) a greeting (e.g., “Dear _____,” “Hello,” or the person’s name, BUT NOT: “Hey,” “Whatup,” etc.), (b) an e-mail body that clearly describes your concern, question, or problem and is free of AIM/133tspeak, and (c) a closing (e.g., “thank you,” “sincerely,” or even “thanks”). *I am not an overly formal fellow, but e-mail etiquette is something we can all benefit from.*
 - Citations: If you use a source, including online material (on ANGEL or otherwise) and the textbook, in your papers, you must insert a fully-formed citation. Citation guidelines are available on ANGEL, please look them over so you know how to cite the work of others, and when it is necessary to do so (which is nearly always). Malformed citations or the lack of a citation when one is necessary WILL result in a reduction of your grade.
 - Spelling, Grammar, & Punctuation: We all make mistakes when writing – it is not an easy undertaking. Despite this, it is very important that we all strive to avoid typos, grammar mistakes, and punctuation problems as we will use these skills for the rest of our lives. Therefore, I will tolerate the occasional mechanical issue in written work provided there is no more than one error of each type on each page. Obviously, because the final exam is written during the exam period by hand, I will allow more errors; I will tolerate three errors of each type on each page. More mechanical errors than these limits will result in lost points.
 - Electronics in the Classroom: I love my iPod, and my cellphone is a pretty important tool as well, but they will REMAIN OFF while I am lecturing or during class discussions. *Similarly, your electronic gear will be off as well.* Receiving text messages or phone calls during class is unprofessional and unacceptable. *Laptop computers* can be used for note-taking if you must, but as slides will be available before class on ANGEL you may find lugging around a computer difficult.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (with readings)

Please note: required readings are listed below ('Kent' refers to the textbook). On occasion I will supplement our readings with additional required handouts and other material which I will post on ANGEL (HINT: when the syllabus indicates "Reading (TBA)," check ANGEL!).

- Week 1 8/28 Introduction to the course.
 What is a region? What and where is Latin America?
 8/30 Overview of basic Latin American geography I (South America, esp. Brazil) **(REFLECTION PAPER 1 ASSIGNED)**

Readings: Kent chs.1, 13, and 16; Handout – Brazil map

- Week 2 9/4 Overview of basic Latin America geography II (Central America, Caribbean)
 9/6 Overview of Mexico

Readings: Kent chs. 11 and 6; Handout – Mexico map.

- Week 3 9/11 Latin American cultural issues **(REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE)**
 9/13 Physical geography I: Weather and climate

Readings: Kent chs. 2 and ch. 3 (start), Reading (TBA)

- Week 4 9/18 Movie – Most likely: *The Motorcycle Diaries* or *The Mission*
 9/20 Physical geography II: Landforms

Readings: Kent ch. 3 (finish)

- Week 5 9/25 Physical geography III: Vegetation and soils
 9/27 Natural disasters and people

Readings: Kent chs. 8 and 4

- Week 6 10/2 **EXAM 1 ONGOING, Q&A review in class**
 10/4 Historical geography I: Prehistory

Readings: Kent ch. 5

- Week 7 10/9 Historical geography II: Contact and colonization
 10/11 Historical geography III: Post colonization into the global era
 (REFLECTION PAPER 2 ASSIGNED)

Readings: Kent ch. 5 con'd; ch. 12

Week 8 10/16 Agriculture I: Smallholders
 10/18 Agriculture II: Largeholders and Commodities

Readings: Reading (TBA) on agriculture; Kent ch. 15.

Week 9 10/23 Tourism and development
 10/25 Coffee

(REFLECTION PAPER 2 DUE)

Readings: Reading (TBA)

Week 10 10/30 Globalization and Latin America
 11/1 **EXAM 2 ONGOING, Q&A review in class**

Readings: Kent chs. 10 and 18

Week 11 11/6 Population patterns and migration I
 11/8 Population patterns and migration, II

Readings: Kent chs. 9 and 20

Week 12 11/13 US involvement in Latin America and Plan Colombia
 11/15 Cities and urbanization I: Urbanization

(REFLECTION PAPER 3 ASSIGNED)

Readings: Reading (TBA); Kent ch. 14

Week 13 11/20 Cities and urbanization II: Urban structure
 11/22 *THAN KSGIVING (NO CLASS)*

Readings: Kent ch. 7

Week 14 11/27 Biodiversity and environmental protection 1
 11/29 Biodiversity and environmental protection 2

(REFLECTION PAPER 3 DUE)

Readings: Kent ch. 19; Reading (TBA)

Week 15 12/4 The Future in Latin America
 12/6 **Final Exam/Paper Review Session**

Readings: Kent ch. 21

**FINAL EXAM, PAPERS / PROJECTS DUE:
Tuesday December 11, 2006, 10 am –12 pm.**