

Latin American Geographies

Geography 300.1

Department of Geology and Geography

Ohio Wesleyan University

Spring 2009

Course Syllabus¹

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Office: SWSC 237

Office Hours: 11-12 MWF and by appointment

I am in my office many times other than office hours. If my door is open, students are welcome and invited to come in if they wish to see me. I am also happy to make appointments to meet with students at other times.

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A. Course Overview

The objective of this course is to provide an understanding of the region known as “Latin America: i.e. Mexico, which geographers regionally classify as part of North America—but because of its history and cultural hearths it is part of “Latin America”; Central America; South America; and the heterogeneous region of the

¹ As per the usual caveat, this syllabus is a work in progress. I may alter the syllabus throughout the semester depending on events that emerge, new readings that surface, if I choose to include films as a pedagogical tool, invite guest lecturers, or if I choose to include in the syllabus any contemporary news-worthy events pertaining to the class.

Caribbean, through a geographical framework focusing on how the region is perceived from the inside, as well as how the region has been socially constructed from the outside. We will accomplish the objectives of this course through an appreciation of the construction of the region called Latin America from a political-economic framework by following the themes of colonialism, imperialism, development, globalization and neoliberalization. However, political economy cannot be studied apart from other spheres of life (e.g. cultural, social, and for geographers, the socio-spatialities of these intertwined categories.). So when we conduct readings on how United Fruit Company—the first truly multinational corporation—impacted the Caribbean and Central America, we will consider the economical influences as well as race and gender relations that emerged from the dis-encounters of UFCO with these sub-regions. What follows are sub-themes/categories that we must consider while conducting the readings and discussing Latin American Geographies within a geographical political-economy framework:

- Class
- Gender
- Urbanization
- Hybridization /Syncretization
- Agrarian Reform
- Race/Mestizaje
- Culture: (music, religion, language, gastronomy, family, art, and more?)
- Sexuality
- Latin America and the World
- Latin America and the U.S.
- Inter-country relations in Latin America
- Literature

These chosen themes are not neatly divided categories. Rather, they are sets of messy overlapping processes and practices that have material effects on the region – ranging from the deterioration of the agricultural sector that has spurred large scale rural-to-urban migration and subsequent uncontrolled urbanization in the form of shanty towns and *Favelas* – to the emergence of ‘free trade’ blocks (such as NAFTA) that have directly led to an increase in the polarization of wealth and the rise of Civil Society groups throughout the region. As we learn about the socio-spatial aspects of neoliberalization and globalization in Latin America we will gain an appreciation of how these cultural and economic practices function around the globe – even right here in the United States.

But what is a geographical framework, and what is geography anyway? Geography is the study of relations between society and the natural environment. Geography looks at how society shapes, alters and increasingly transforms the natural environment, creating humanized forms from stretches of pristine nature, and then sedimenting layers of socialization one within the other, one on top of the other, until a complex natural-social landscape results. Geography also looks at how nature conditions society, in some original sense of creating the people and raw materials which social forces "work up" into culture, and in an ongoing sense of placing limits and offering material potentials for social processes like economic development. The "relation" between society and nature is thus an entire system, a complex of inter-relations. These processes are what geographers call the “socio-spatial dialectic” (Edward W. Soja,

Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 70, No. 2, Jun., 1980, pp. 207-225).



- people modify the spaces they live in
- people in turn are modified by the spaces they live in

B. Class Conduct

Required Reading

You are required to bring text/articles with you to class on a daily basis as we will frequently refer to the readings during discussion and lectures.

- Text: Skidmore and Smith (2005) Modern Latin America, Sixth Edition , Oxford Press
- Text: Peter Chapman (2007) Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World Canongate Press
- Text: Gwynne/Kay (2004) Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity, Second Edition, Arnold Press
- Articles: Additional articles are found on eres. Password is: latamgeog– be sure to type it in lower-case.

You must be willing to read in order to receive a passing grade in this class.

Expectations on readings vis-à-vis lectures

This is a small sized class. We have the luxury to run the class like a seminar, meaning that you don't have to be bored by the professor continuously lecturing and you can intervene and discuss the readings as well. Students are expected to do the readings for

each class period and to participate in class discussions about the readings. When I do lecture, the lectures will be based on the readings as well as supplementary information that will contribute to the readings and the overall themes and goals of the class. So, it is important to do the readings as well as come to class to participate in the lectures.

Attendance is required

You cannot pass this course without coming to class. I will take attendance daily. Throughout the semester:

- You are allowed two unexcused absences—no questions asked.
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in a demotion of your grade by one letter.
- I will excuse absences if you provide me with an official written document – such as a doctor’s note in case of illness. Excused absences are exempt from the two rules stated above.

Do not come to class late!!! This disturbs me and the rest of the class.

Class decorum

I do not mind if you eat or drink in the class- just do so discreetly. However, it is not tolerable for you to read magazines, newspapers, fill out crossword puzzles, ***fiddle with cell phones, black berries, computers etc!***, or do work for other classes during Latin American Geographies. Please take care of these duties before or after class.

- If you repeatedly leave the classroom to check your cell phone, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.
- If you repeatedly text or fiddle with your cell phone, blackberry, etc., you will be counted as absent, unexcused.

C. Class Requirements

Three take home tests worth 100 points each. The tests will cover the readings ***and*** lectures and discussions of the class. The tests will consist of short essay questions.

- First test: February 19th, due February 24th
- Second test: March 19th, due March 31st
- Third test : April 29th, due May 5th

Reading Reactions 15 points each for a total of 150 points.

You must write a summary and critique of the designated readings assigned for each class. These summaries form the basis of class discussion and are handed in (hard copy) at the end of each class.

These **two-page** (double-spaced, 12pt font, regular margins) submissions consist of questions and reactions to the assigned readings. These written reactions will be used to structure class conversations. Although you will include descriptions of the texts, the

emphasis in these papers should be on your analysis of the arguments. Thinking deeply about the assumptions and intellectual frameworks of the readings in these papers is of utmost importance; such questioning will further your own interpretations and add depth and vitality to our class conversations.

Your short essay should include:

- a) A concise (1-1.5 paragraph) summary of the main points of the readings.
- b) Your critical analysis of the article might address the following questions: What are the main arguments? What strategies do the authors use to make their point? What are the research questions? What methods are employed? What theories are used? What data are employed? You may address other questions as you see fit.
- c) What questions or issues do the assigned readings raise in your mind? What things do the authors do well, what things do they do less well? What points of agreement and disagreement emerged between you and the text?
- d) During (or at the end of) your discussion develop at least three well-conceived, well-articulated, and non-rhetorical questions pertaining to the readings. These questions can be broad in scope, meaning you may query a particular theme across the readings, or quite specific, you may have questions about a certain passage or argument in one text.

Why am I doling out Reading Reaction Assignments? This assignment is a form of active pedagogy. Theorists have proven that through active pedagogical techniques students make sense of or develop meaning from knowledge through the facilitation of a higher order of thinking skills, not just knowledge and a recall of facts, but comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of knowledge. The implementation of active learning techniques requires that students engage with the subject matter by participating in an activity and then reflecting on her/his experience with the activity. Writing reaction papers, crafting three questions and discussing your papers in class will encourage you to internalize key concepts and make linkages between theory and practice in relation to the construction Latin America and beyond.

Class Participation worth 75 points (there are 15 weeks; 5 points per week—it adds up): You are expected to contribute to the class discussion around the readings and topics at hand. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, make connections with the readings, and comment on lectures. The participation points are based on attendance and your engagement with the readings and class discussion. Remember, this is a small class.

If I feel that people are not keeping up with the readings I leave myself the option to administer up to 5 Pop-quizzes worth 15 points each for a total of 75 points: If I must take these measures, the quizzes will be based on the readings to insure that everyone is staying abreast with the texts. SO READ and PARTICIPATE!!

Map Test on the Region of Latin America: I will give you a set of blank map(s) of the region with an attachment listing countries and capitols and aspects of physical geography that correspond with letters and numbers. You will write the letter or number in the appropriate site on the map. **81 points**

One written literature review: 50 points (2-3 pages) of a novel, poetry, or short story written by an author from Latin America where the student engages with the literature in relation to the themes discussed in class (i.e. neoliberalization, globalization, development, urbanization, cultural aspects etc.). When you read your chosen piece of literature, think about the themes from the class and then choose one that you believe appropriate in order to engage with the text. **This is not a book report.** This assignment is a literature response. You do not need to recount the entire text but only weave one of the themes of the class through the literature. **Due March 17**

Term Paper and presentation 300 points (8-10 pages): In consultation with me you will chose a contemporary Latin America topic about an issue that relates to one or more of themes of the class. Your topic can focus on issues from just one Country (or a region or city in that country) or your topic can focus on the region at large. There is much currently afoot in Latin America—political changes (from the right to left in every nearly every country in the region *menos* Colombia and Mexico); 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; Music and Art; Social Movements; Agricultural Production; Free Trade Blocks; Race and Gender Issues etc. Find something that interests you. Check Newspapers online to perhaps find a topic that intrigues you (New York Times www.nytimes.com or The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>), or talk to me about a topic. You will write your papers in an academic style, which means with citations and a final bibliography. If you are not familiar with citing your written work, please refer to *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White). This small reference book can also help you with your grammar and writing style. You will gradually work on the term paper throughout the semester.

Term Paper Tasks:

- Your first task is to choose a topic and then to meet with me. You need to choose your topic and meet with me by **Thursday January 29th**. You will be fined **50 points** if you do not meet this deadline.
- Thursday, **February 26th**, Annotated Bibliography due. **50 points**. For instructions on how to prepare an annotated Bibliography, please refer to: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>
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.

- Thursday, March 19th, annotated outline of your research paper due. **50 points.**
- You will give a 20 minute power-point presentation on your term-long research paper on the following dates: **April 23, April 27th and April 29th. 50 Points.** The presentation must include maps and visuals.
- Your term-long research papers are due on **April 29th, 150 points.**

D. Class and Reading Schedule

Week One: Where is Latin America; what are the Geographies of the Region?

- January 13 = Introduction to the Latin American Geographies; Read Syllabus: and read

David L. Clawson, *The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean*, in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lands and Peoples

- January 15 = David L. Clawson, *Landform Regions of Latin America and the Caribbean* in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lands and Peoples

Week Two: The formation of the concept of Latin America: The notion of the other.

- January 20 = Skidmore and Smith, Why Latin America? **and** 'Under Northern Eyes: Latin American and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas' pg. 1-30
- January 22 = MT Berger (1995) 'Under Northern Eyes: Latin American **and** U.S. Hegemony in the Americas' pg. 30-65

Week Three: The Americas Before 1492

- January 27 = Man, Charles C. '1491', in the Atlantic Monthly, March 2002. pg. 41-53 (Charles has developed this article in to a full text by the same title, highly recommended)
- January 29 = Deneven: The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492. access article from:
<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~alcoze/for398/class/pristinemyth.html>

Suggested Readings: The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico by Miguel Leon-Portilla (available from the Library)

Week Four: Colonial Latin American Spaces

- February 3= Skidmore and Smith: Chpt. One ‘The Colonial Foundations, 1492-1880s’
- February 5= Newson, L.A. *The Latin American Colonial Experience*”, in Latin American Development: Geographical Perspectives, and George Lovell, “*Heavy Shadows and Black Night*”: *Disease and Depopulation in Colonial Spanish America* ANNALS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS, 1992 Sep; 82(3):426-43.

Week Five: Modernity and Imperialism

- February 11= Jorge Larraín. Chapter 2 *Modernity and identity; cultural change*, in Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity
- February 12= Jackiewicz and Quiquíviz (2007), *Eras and Errors: A historical and Geographical Overview of Latin America’s Economic and Political development*, in *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Human Geography* , and Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 2, *The Transformation of Modern Latin America*

Week Six: Modernity. Imperialism, Embedded Capitalism and Bananas

- February 17= Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 12 ‘Latin America, the United States, and the World’ and Skidmore and Smith Chapter Ten, ‘The Caribbean: Colonies and Mini-States’
- February 19 = James Wiley, Chapter 1, *The Creation of a Banana Empire*, in The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization

Week Seven: Globalization, the emergence of the First Trans-cum-Multinational Corporation, and Banana Republics

- February 24= Peter Chapman, Chapter 1-4 (pp 1-43) Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World and Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 11, *Central America: Colonialism, Dictatorship, and Revolution*. **First Test Due.**
- February 26= Peter Chapman, Chapter 5-9 (pp 59-126) Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World

Week Eight: Spaces of Globalization and Neoliberalism

- March 3= Gwynne and Kay, Chapter 1, *Latin America Transformed:*

Globalization and Neoliberalism, and Chapter 3, *Structural reform in South America and Mexico: Economic and Regional Perspectives*

- March 5 = Gwynne and Kay, Chapter 4, *Globalization, Neoliberalism and economic change in Central America and the Caribbean*. and James Wiley, Chapter Eight, *The World Trade Organization and the Banana Trade in The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization*

Week Nine: Spring Break

- March 10 Spring Break
- March 12 Spring Break

Week Ten: Accentuated Spaces of Globalization: The U.S. Mexico Border

- March 17 Altha J. Cravey, *U.S.-Mexico Border Lands*, in *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Human Geography* and , David V. Carruthers, *Where Local Meets Global: Environmental justice along the U.S.-Mexico Border*, in *Environmental Justice in Latin America: Problems, Promise and Practice*
Literature Response Due
- March 19 = Guillermo Gómez-Peña, *The New Global Culture: Somewhere between Corporate Multiculturalism and Mainstream Bizarre (a border Perspective)* and Herzog and Berlowitz .

Suggested Reading: Luis Alberto Urrea, *Across The Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border* Anchor Books Press. and, HICKS, D. E. (1991) *Border Writing: The Multidimensional Text*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Week eleven: Association of American Geographers Conference

- March 24 AAG = Work on your research papers
- March 26 AAG = Work on your research papers

Week twelve: Reactions to Globalization and Neoliberalism: Social Movements and Drug Geographies of Latin America

- **March 31 = Fernando, J. Bosco**, *The Geographies of Latin American Social Movements*, in *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Human Geography*. **Second Test Due.**
- **April 2** = Tom Perrault, , *Popular Protest and Unpopular Policies: State*

Restructuring, Resource Conflict, and Social Justice in Bolivia, in *Environmental Justice in Latin America: Problems, Promises and Practice*, **and** Kent Mathewson, *Drug Geographies*, in *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Human Geography*

Week twelve: Creating Alternative Spaces to Globalization and Neoliberalism in Latin America

- **April 7** = Gwynne and Kay, Chapter Thirteen, *The Alternatives to Neoliberalism* **and** Gustavo Esteva *The Other Campaign Part I*
- **April 9** = Gustavo Esteva *The Other Campaign Part II and III* view short documentary on the Oaxaca 2006 Summer Uprising.

Week thirteen: Revolts, Revolutionaries and Cyberspace Resistance: The Zapatista reaction to NAFTA and Neoliberalism

- **April 14** = Dan LaBotz, Chapter One *Rebellion of the Faceless*, Chapter Two, *Peasant Rebels: The Zapatista Army of National Liberation*, Democracy in Mexico, Peasant Rebellion and Political reform. South End Press. **and** Richard Stahler-Sholk, *Globalization and Social Movement Resistance: The Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico*, source, *New Political Science*, Volume 23, Number 4, 2001
- **April 16** = Oliver Fröhling, *The Cyberspace "War of Ink and Internet" in Chiapas, Mexico*, Source: *Geographical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), pp. 291-307 **and** Oliver Fröhling, *Internauts and guerrilleros: the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico and its extension into cyberspace*, in *Virtual geographies : bodies, space and relations* / edited by Mike Crang, Phil Crang and Jon May

Week Fourteen: The Latinoficación of the U.S.

- April 21= Joel Jennings, *Beyond the Nation State: Scaling Claims to Latino/a Citizenship in the United States*, in *Placing Latin America: Contemporary Themes in Human Geography*
- April 23 = Presentations

Week Fifteen

- April 28 = Presentations
- April 30 = Presentation, **Term Paper Due**

Third Test Due: May 5th, Noon in my Office.