

Latin America and the Caribbean: Landscapes of Inequality 2020B



“El Albañil”, Diego Rivera, 1904
(Translation: “The Bricklayer”)

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Class: Tuesday 9:30- 10:20 SSC 2050

Class: Thursday 12:30-2:20 SEB 1200

How does geography influence a region’s historical development? And how does a region’s history influence its contemporary geography? This course on Latin America and the Caribbean is organized with a primary focus on the shared history of the region in order to highlight underlying themes that have shaped its development and define the characteristics of the landscape and its people today. Although there are important country differences to highlight, the regional history of Latin America and the Caribbean has been largely brutally shaped by forces originating from outside the region itself, which have served to sustain the conditions for the uneven landscapes, some of the highest rates of social and economic inequality, and the general states of underdevelopment and unequal development that persist today. However, there has also been a powerful and ongoing history of struggle and resistance, with several movements not only gaining local and regional traction for a more self-determined development but also leveraging international support. The course will balance critical discussion of both exploitation and resistance, and will often augment these conversations with art—in poetry, song, story-telling, mural, and film—that portray these dynamics and have become emblematic of the region.

Objectives

- To explain how the region and its contemporary characteristics cannot be understood without a critical understanding of its geography and history.
- To help you understand several themes that undercut the course (on inequality and poverty, violence, repression and exploitation, armed resistance, peaceful struggle, and issues associated with race) and how these are associated with certain development processes like colonialism, independent nation building, globalization and neoliberalism. These themes and development processes will come to life in country case studies highlighted throughout the course.
- To unearth stereotypes that are often held of the region and its inhabitants. I want to reveal our inherited histories of interconnection, as well our current broader relations of interdependence. Through this, I want to stimulate critical thinking about contemporary development practices in the region and Canada's role in these.
- To expand your curiosity for the region and its people—perhaps you will become a conscientious traveler of the region, or maybe you will consider volunteer opportunities, an exchange program or work abroad!

Thematic Outline of the Course (organized by week)

1. Introduction:

Exposé of the region through art;

Case Study on Bananas to highlight central course themes;

Course organization and expectations

reading: "La United Fruit Co." Poem, Neruda

-bring in news article

2. Understanding Landscape to Understand History: How Place Matters

Common stereotypes and biases (discussion with news article)

'Defining' a region geographically and culturally

Physical landscape features

Geographic Change and Bordering: Locating societies and communities over time

reading: Clawson, Latin America and the Caribbean: Lands and Peoples: 1. Changing Faces of LA & C, and 2. Landform Regions

3. Indigenous Societies, Conquest and Columbian Exchange

Aztec, Mayan and Incan Societies: Key Characteristics, Development, and Experience of Conquest

Why does this history matter?

watching: National Geographic Inca & Aztec documentary

Wade Davis @ TED

4. Colonialism Part 1

Appropriation and Pillage

Triangular Trade

Reorienting communities and landscapes

reading: Galeano, Open Veins of Latin America: 1. Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver

5. Colonialism Part 2

Mining

Agricultural Development

Missions

6. End of Colonial Regime, Independence and Emergence of Nations

Change of demographics

Bordering and Conflict

World System and Underdevelopment Theory

Case of Guatemala

reading: Menchu, I, Rigoberta Menchu, p.23-30/ 166-175/ 201-220/ 278-284

7. Midterm Exam (Thursday February 27 2014)

8. Problems of Nation Building and Economic Development

Import-substitution industrialization

Agrarian Reform

Influence of Race

Territory and Indigeneity

Case of Cuba (w/ documentary clip) & Case of Chile (w/ documentary clip)

reading: Sawyer, Crude Chronicles, 1. Amazonian Imaginaries.

Mallen, International Business Times, Chile Since Pinochet: On the 25th Anniversary of the Dictator's Ouster, Is he Among the Disappeared?

9. Neoliberalism and Development

Broad Policies and Regional trends

Unique Cases of Mexico, Brazil, and Haiti/DR

reading: Barndt, Tangled Routes: Women, Work and Globalization on the Tomato Trail, 1. Across Space and Through Time: Tomatl Meets the Corporate Tomato

Country Highlight Assignment Due (Thursday March 13 2014)

10. Contemporary LA and C: Inherited Landscapes of Inequality

Urban bias and uneven rural landscapes

Indigeneity and Neocolonialism

Tropical Commodity Dependence, Resource Extraction, and Off-sourcing

Influence of Tourism, Drug Trade and Violence

reading: Sawyer, Crude Chronicles, 2. Crude Excesses

Davis, The Clouded Leopard: 9. The Forests of Amazonia

11. Contemporary Revolutionary Movements and Inter-American Relations

Solidaridad: Via Campesina, MST, Development of South-South Relations

Highlight on new progressive political leaders

Canada-LA&C relations

reading: Dangl, Dancing with Dynamite: Social Movements and States in Latin America, 5. Venezuela: Uses of the Bolivarian Revolution

Course Materials

Weekly readings are in a custom course reader.

Weekly PowerPoint presentations will be posted on OWL before the lecture.

Evaluation

1. Country highlight: Thinking critically about current events and their historical context (30%)

Start with a news article or a few news articles covering a contemporary event in Latin America and the Caribbean. It will be helpful if you can find several articles from different sources. Based on this current event, write a short essay (1500 words) that discusses its historical context and what you believe are the causes for its development. Cover important themes from the class, while keeping the scope narrow by focussing specifically on those that are relevant to the event you have chosen. Use 2-3 journal articles to help you better understand the country's history. Be sure to integrate into your discussion what you think the articles' biases are, and highlight key points that were missing or misrepresented in terms of giving the general public a clear picture of why and how this event has manifested in this particular country. DUE: Thursday March 13, 2014

Media sources to get you started: BBC News (region tab: Latin America/Caribbean), Democracy Now, CNN

2. Midterm (30%)

The midterm will be written in class. Generally, it will be composed of multiple choice, fill in the blanks, map work and short answer questions. The format will be further discussed before the midterm, and example questions will be given. ON: Thursday February 27, 2014

3. Exam (40%)

The exam will occur during the regular exam break, and will be 3 hours long. Generally, it will be composed of multiple choice, map work, short answer and long answer questions.

No electronic equipment will be allowed during tests and exams.

Expectations

This is a lecture-based class, with assigned readings that are indicated in *italic* under the thematic outline of the course. The materials presented in class will complement the readings, so it is strongly recommended that you both attend lecture and maintain pace with the assigned material. The readings will not only help you with your assignments and exams, but will be instructive for classroom discussion. The class is small enough for interactive teaching methods, so you will be expected to engage actively in discussion.

The readings have been selected primarily as a means to enliven your interest in the material from class. I have chosen them carefully, to represent a diversity of authors from both within the region and outside of it, with a diversity of backgrounds—from scholars, to poets, to story-tellers, to journalists, to activists, to travel writers. Because the readings are fairly unique and diverse compared to more typical textbook readings, they may present you with a new challenge as to how to integrate them into your exam studying. We will discuss reading strategies further in class, but some of my expectations are that you question:

- 1) What is the perspective, how is this different from what we discussed in class, and what are the other possible perspectives?
- 2) Where is this author coming from—in terms of geographic location, background and experience?
- 3) How does this relate to the major themes of the course? How does it enliven class discussion?
- 4) How is it geographical?
- 5) What's missing?

Additional Information

*Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Scholastic Offences and Plagiarism:

Please read the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence at www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and plagiarism has severe consequences. Please recognize the sources of your ideas and writing by using quotations marks if necessary and citing the work, and feel free to ask questions about referencing if in doubt or unsure of formatting. The Writing Centre and Library have services to assist you with appropriate reference styles. There is no acceptable excuse of plagiarism.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Late Work:

Late submission of the assignment will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day, and a grade of 0% will be recorded if work is submitted more than a week late. I understand that on occasion, you may have extenuating circumstances and will not be able to submit an assignment on time. Please contact me as soon as possible to request an extension, because last minute requests will be less likely to be accommodated. You may need to provide documentation to the Academic Counselling Office. See <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp>

Medical Accommodation:

You may be unable to complete an assignment or other course requirement because of a medical reason. If you are seeking accommodation on medical grounds for a missed exam or assignment, you must apply to the Academic Counselling Office of your home Faculty and provide documentation. Accommodation cannot be provided by myself or the Geography Department. For UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable Student Medical Certificate, please see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accomodation_medical.pdf

Mental Health:

There are several resources at Western to assist you if you or someone you know is experience distress. University can be a busy and sometimes stressful time, please reach out to these helpful and confidential services if necessary.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Accessibility:

Please contact me if you require material in an alternative format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) is a resource you can access on campus for more information, or to address concerns:

ssd@uwo.ca / 519 661 2147 / www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

I welcome everyone equally into the classroom, and Western is committed to accessible education.

Support Services:

Office of the Registrar www.registrar.uwo.ca

Social Science Academic Counselling <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca>

Student Development Centre www.sdc.uwo.ca

Student Success Centre www.success.uwo.ca

Social Science Career Services www.ssc.uwo.ca/careers

Library Assistance www.lib.uwo.ca/programs/humangeography

University Ombudsperson www.uwo.ca/ombuds/