

(PALAS 362) Latin American Cultures and Civilizations

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Universidad de Belgrano
Program in Argentine and Latin American Studies
Course Syllabus 2024

Course information

T–Th 1.00-2:30 PM
Instruction in English

Contact information

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Course description

Since its discovery until the present, Latin America has been imagined and conceived as the “New Continent”, a place for utopia, but also as a space of uneven modernity and extreme forms of violence. The course explores distinctive cultural aspects of Latin America by looking at the ways it has been represented in readings spanning from the decipherment of Maya script to the diaries written by Christopher Columbus, from the XIX Century independence and European travelers to the texts of the Cuban Revolution, the iconography of Peronismo, or the recent debates on Neoliberalism, Globalization and Populism. Drawing on essays, but also on short-stories, paintings, photographs, and films, the course addresses a set of questions that lie at the heart of how one thinks about Latin America. What is expected from “Latin America”? What were the different “ideas” that Latin America embodied? What are the forms of “Latin American” culture? How are the different “cultures” connected? The purpose of the course is threefold: to introduce students to problems central to Latin America, to familiarize students with a variety of non-fictional writings in Spanish, such as essay, chronicle, journalism and documentary films, and to sharpen student’s skills as analytical readers.

Course requirements

This hybrid course takes advantage of both face-to-face classes and online learning through Campus Virtual. The first 4 weeks will be via Zoom and from week 5 we will be having in person classroom work according to general conditions. Following UB policies, students need a minimum of 75% of attendance to be in good standing for the final exam. Sliding the ID card is the only way to track attendance. Students are expected to do close readings, participate in class, and do one oral presentations in pairs or in groups of three. During the semester, students will write two short (2-3 pages) papers. The requirements also include a midterm and a final comprehensive exam. In addition to this, each student will be expected to make a significant contribution to the classroom dialogue. As part of this, students will be asked to bring two specific comments regarding the required readings in order to discuss in class. Any student caught plagiarizing will be given a “no credit” for all courses taken in the semester. As part of the course requirements, the students will have to visit the Evita Museum in the assigned week (see academic calendar below).

Grading Policy

Participation	10 %
Oral Presentation (1)	15 %
Midterm	20 %
Final Exam	35 %
Short Essay (2) (2 pages)	20 %

For a better understanding of the comparable table for grading: check the conversion table for the numerical scale (in orientation kit packet).

Academic Calendar

Week 1:

Tuesday, March 5: The “New World”: Accounts of the Discovery and the Conquest: Christopher Columbus. “Letter to Luis de Santangel”

Thursday, March 7: The ideas of America. Early Travelers & Discoverers Amerigo Vespucci. Account of his first voyage. Edmundo O’Gorman. *The invention of America* (selection). Tzvetan Todorov. *The Conquest of America* (selection 14-33)

Week 2.

Tuesday, March 12: Hernan Cortés. “The Second Letter” (excerpts). Bernal Díaz del Castillo. *The conquest of New Spain*. (selection).

Thursday, March 14: *Cracking the Maya Code*. Documentary. The final decoding of the maya script.

Week 3. Colonial Encounters and its Consequences

Tuesday, March 19: Great pre-Columbian civilizations. Thomas Merton: The Sacred City. **Thursday, March 21:** Bartolomé de las Casas. *A short account of the destruction of the Indies*. **Oral presentation** on Bartolomé de las Casas.

Week 4. Revisiting the Conquest

Tuesday, March 26: Cortés and Montezuma. Atahualpa & Pizarro.

Thursday, March 28: Werner Herzog. *Aguirre, the wrath of God* (viewing at home, discussion in class).

First short paper / Prompt by email.

Week 5.

Tuesday, April 2: Holiday

Thursday, April 4: Inca Garcilaso, *Comentarios Reales*.

Week 6.Tuesday, April 9: Poma de Ayala *Nueva Crónica del Buen Gobierno*.Thursday, April 11: Sor JuanaWeek 7Tuesday, April 16: Simón BolívarThursday, April 18. Domingo F. Sarmiento. *Facundo. Civilization or Barbarism* (Selection). Lucio V. Mansilla “A Visit to the Ranquel Indians” (146-153) **Oral presentation.**Week 8.Tuesday, April 23: *Far away & long ago*, (Chapter 7) W.H. Hudson and *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Charles Darwin (Chapter 6) and from *Rough notes taken during some rapid journeys across the Pampas*, “The Pampas Indians” & “The Town of Buenos Aires” by Francis Bond Head and other European XIX Century travelers.Thursday, April 25. Alejo Carpentier: *The kingdom of this world*Week 9.Tuesday, April 30; **Midterm Exam**Thursday May 2: Miguel Barnet. “Biography of a Runaway Slave” (58-64).Week 10.Tuesday, May 7: Carlos Fuentes. “Land and Freedom: The Mexican Revolution”. Juan Rulfo stories. “Tell Them Not to Kill me”, & “No Dogs Bark”. **Oral presentations** on Mexican Muralists / Rulfo /Thursday, May 9: Fidel Castro. “History will absolve me” (excerpts). *Salut les cubains* (Agnès Varda. 1963) (27min film)Week 11.Tuesday, May 14: Daniel Santoro, *Manual del niño peronista*J.M. Taylor: “The Myth of the Myth”. “Queen of Hearts” documentary. Rodolfo Walsh, “That Woman”. Visit to the Evita Museum. Research and write a short paper on Evita. **Oral presentation** on WalshThursday, May 16: Julio Cortázar, “House Taken Over”. **O.P.** on Cortázar.Week 12.Tuesday, May 21: Andrés Di Tella. *Montoneros* (Argentina, 1998) / screening in class. **Short paper on Evita is due**Thursday, May 23: Review of *Montoneros* and analysis of its protagonist Ana Testa.

Week 13.

Tuesday, May 28: *Even the Rain*, film by Iciar Bolain... about the Water War in Bolivia. Readings: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43855376>,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26492223>

Thursday, May 30: Finnegan: *Silver or Lead: The drug cartel La Familia gives local officials a choice: Take a bribe or a bullet.*

Week 14

Tuesday, June 4. “The Maquiladoras”, William Langewiesche.

Film: Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita extraviada*. Discussion.

Oral Presentation on the Zapatistas & Maquiladoras.

Thursday, June 6. Review in class. Each student should bring a subject she/he feels strongly about.

Week 15

Tuesday, June 11: Final exam.

Thursday, June 13: Final Grade Sheet and signature of Hoja de situación (attendance is mandatory”).

Bibliography

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