INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICA
LAST 101 – Summer 2005

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the region of Latin America and its historical context. Based on interdisciplinary themes and perspectives, the course will familiarize students with the physical, political, and cultural boundaries of the region. The discussions are organized around four key concepts:

*Encounter.* We begin with the encounters of indigenous, Iberian and African peoples and cultures that have characterized the process of colonization of the region. Such encounter has created both a diverse background and an exploitive and violent pattern that has left deep marks in the region’s history.

*Nation.* The course will discuss the processes of nation-building of the newly independent states that emerged with the end of colonial rule. The course highlights some aspects of this complex historical development, stressing in particular the conflicts and exchanges between political movements and ideas (nationalism, liberalism, *caudillismo*, populism, and revolution).

*Peoples.* Students will be introduced to the struggles and dilemmas of some of the peoples that have actively participated in development of the region’s identity, despite processes of marginalization and exclusion, especially women, indigenous peoples, blacks, and other ethnic groups.

*Identity.* The course also discusses and problematizes the idea of a Latin American identity by investigating the complex, dynamic, and hybrid cultural formations that have emerged in the region. Among the broad and diverse set of cultural practices that can be found in Latin America, the course focuses on a musical genre (samba), a ritual (carnival), the most popular product of the region’s cultural industries (*telenovela*), and the shifting religious identities of its inhabitants. By discussing the notions of globalization and postmodernism, we will also investigate more recent changes in the region’s cultural identity.

The course concludes with a discussion of contemporary topics in the Latin American context. We start with drug trafficking and related violent conflicts, then move to the changes brought by neoliberal reforms, and conclude by discussing the prospects for democracy in the region.
**Course Texts:**


**Required texts:**
Besides the textbooks, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Electronic Reserves (<http://eres.library.tulane.edu/>), and as a packet from the Department of Communication.

**Blackboard:**
Blackboard will be used for this course for posting announcements, assignments, grades and other information. The system can be accessed at: <http://blackboard.tulane.edu/>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

**Attendance:**
Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss two class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Five unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a “WF”.

**Evaluation:**
Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) **Midterm exam:** Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers the first two weeks of the course. A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be on the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;

2) **Final exam:** Students will take an in-class final exam in the end of the last week. The final exam follows the same format of the midterm;

3) **Thematic essays:** Students will write three short thematic essays. The topics, questions and readings for these essays will be posted on the course Blackboard page. In order to be considered for a grade, the papers must:
   - be submitted in a hard copy no later than the beginning of class on the due date;
   - be typed, with font size 12, and double-spaced. It should be at least 2 but no more than 3 pages in length.

4) **Map quiz:** Students will be given a blank map of Latin America and asked to indicate the position on the map of a series of features, including countries, capitals, major cities, and bodies of water. Students will have one opportunity to re-take the quiz as part of the midterm. Because knowledge of physical features of the region is critical to the course, students who do not achieve at least 90 points (A-) will be assigned a 0 in this category;

5) **Participation:** Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus and students should bring the texts and their notes to class to enhance their participation in the discussions. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation.
Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

- **Midterm Exam** - 25%
- **Final Exam** - 30%
- **Thematic essays** - 25%
- **Map quiz** - 10%
- **Participation** - 10%

**Grading scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94.0 to 100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0 to 93.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84.0 to 86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0 to 83.9</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74.0 to 76.9</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0 to 69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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**Academic dishonesty:**

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else’s ideas as yours, without citing the source. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course on the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: <http://www.tulane.edu/~uc/honorcode.htm>

**Course Schedule:**

**WEEK I – ENCOUNTER**

**July 5, Tue – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.**
* Chasteen, chapter 1, pp. 15-27
* Goodwin, pp. 2-6.

**Film:** *The Gringo in Mañana-Land* (excerpts).

**July 6, Wed – Conquest and slavery. Convergence of Indigenous, African, and Iberian cultures.**
* Chasteen, chapter 2, pp. 29-57.

**July 7, Thu - Colonial empires.**
* Chasteen, chapter 3, pp. 63-87.

**WEEK II – NATION**

**July 11, Mon - Independence wars.**
* Chasteen, chapter 4, pp. 93-113.

**First thematic essay due!**
July 12, Tue - Nation building: liberal ideas, traditional oligarchies.
* Chasteen, chapters 5 and 6, pp. 119-211.
Film: *The Buried Mirror* (Program IV, *The Price of Freedom*).

* Chasteen, chapters 7 and 8, pp. 149-211.
Map quiz!

July 14, Thu – Populism, revolution and military rule.
* Chasteen, chapters 9 and 10, pp. 245-305.

July 18, Mon – MIDTERM EXAM.

WEEK III – PEOPLES

July 19, Tue – The excluded: marginalization and violence.
* Film: *Bus 174*.

* Goodwin, pp. 219-220.

July 21, Thu – Women and ethnic groups.
* Susan Tiano, “The role of women”, pp. 263-296; and

WEEK IV – IDENTITY

July 25, Mon – Cultural hybridism.
Second thematic essay due!

July 26, Tue – Culture and national identities: samba, carnival and telenovelas.
July 27, Wed - Shifting religious identities in Latin America.
Film: Televangelism in Brazil.

July 28, Thu – Globalization and cultural identity.

WEEK V – CONTEMPORARY DILEMMAS

August 1, Mon – Drug trafficking and war.
* Goodwin, pp. 169-175.
Third thematic essay due!

August 2, Tue - Neoliberalism and its discontents.
* Alma Guillermoprieto, Looking for History, pp. 185-223.

August 3, Wed - The prospects for democracy in Latin America.
* Goodwin, p. 168; and pp. 206-210.

August 4, Thu - Conclusions. Course evaluation.

August 5, Fri: FINAL EXAM.