

## SYLLABUS

### Geography of Latin America GRG 319 / LAS 319

Spring 2012

Unique numbers 37320 and 40170

Meets MWF 12:00-1:00 in room GRG 102 (Geography Building)

Professor Gregory Knapp, Department of Geography and the Environment

Office hours WF 11:00-12:00 GRG 326 and by appointment

Optional Spanish Discussion Sections TBA

TA Vanessa Martinez, Office hours TBA

Syllabus last updated January 10, 2012

This course is a general introduction to Latin American environments and peoples from a geographical perspective. There are no prerequisites, and an effort is made to make the material accessible to the broadest possible range of students, as citizens and future leaders. At the same time, more advanced students can benefit from the exploration of such topics as landforms, climate, plants and animals, environmental hazards, Native American lifeways and resource management, globalization, population and migration, cities, sustainable development, geopolitics, frontiers, conservation, and cultural survival. The class serves as a basic preparation for travel, business, government service, journalism or volunteer work in Latin America, as well as for elementary or secondary school teaching.

This course can be used toward a major or minor in either Geography or Latin American Studies, and for a Latin American concentration in International Relations and Global Studies. In the Geography major, the course meets the human geography core requirement, and is also appropriate for students taking the Cultural Geography, Environmental Resource Management, and General Geography tracks. The course can be used to meet the University's Core Requirement in Social and Behavioral Sciences. This course may **not** be used towards the Science & Technology requirement (some other courses in geography do meet this requirement). The course has a Global Cultures flag. This is also a Bridging Disciplines course (for either the International Studies or Environment BDP).

Prerequisites: **This course should not be taken by anyone who has completed UGS 303: Latin America Environmental History and Sustainability.** Otherwise the course is open to all students.

#### **Required textbooks**

Robert B. Kent, *Latin America: Regions and Peoples* (Guilford 2006)

Gregory Knapp, ed. *Latin America in the Twenty First Century: Challenges and Solutions* (UT Press, 2002).

In addition, other required materials from the web will be assigned during class.

## **Optional textbook**

Charles Mann, 1491: *New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (2006)

Enrichment materials will be suggested during the semester. Students are encouraged to read about current events in Latin America using, for example, the online sites of the BBC or the New York Times. Many Latin American newspapers are online for those who read Spanish or Portuguese.

## **Blackboard Website**

You should be able to access Blackboard for this course on the following site: <https://courses.utexas.edu/>

The Blackboard web syllabus and schedule is the official syllabus for this course. Course lecture Power Points will usually be placed on line within 24 hours after each lecture, but these are no substitute for lecture notes.

## **Optional Spanish Language Discussion Sections**

Optional discussion sections are available to students who wish to practice conversational Spanish in the context of this course. The sessions will require minimal additional preparation. These sessions are not graded, but students who attend and participate will get consideration for extra credit. Times will be arranged during class.

## **Grading**

Exams and quizzes test knowledge of locations (with map questions), concepts, explanations, and solutions. The tests contain objective, map, and essay type questions. The student is responsible for all the material in the readings, assigned web pages, and lectures, including maps and other graphics, but the lectures are most important.

\* *Quizzes and attendance* (15%). 17 short quizzes will be handed out before, during, and/or after randomly selected lectures and will test a simple concept as discussed in class and also check attendance. They are designed to be finished in less than 2 minutes. Students who arrive late will not be allowed to take quizzes. More than one quiz may be administered in the same class. **If you anticipate being late to class, or leaving early, do not take this course!** Students missing a quiz will earn a zero; however, the lowest two quiz scores will be dropped. Quizzes may not be excused unless you provide an acceptable reason such as illness (from a physician or student health service). Extracurricular activities are only excusable if cleared with the professor before the beginning of class. Family obligations such as weddings are not excusable unless cleared with the professor before the beginning of class.

\* *Exams* (60%).

There are three midterms and a final; the lowest of the four scores will be dropped. Students who take all the midterms and are satisfied with their scores need not take the final. Students will be

given review sheets of vocabulary terms and practice questions prior to each exam.

\* *Project (25%)*. Commodity Chain term paper. Details will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading is based on total points (90-100 A, 80-89.5 B, etc) and is not "curved." No plus or minus grades are given in this course (only A, B, C, D, and F).

Although the course is designed to be accessible to everyone, this is not an easy course, and some students do earn F's and D's every semester. If you are on probation, or are trying to use this course to raise your GPA to graduate, qualify for a study abroad program, or for other reasons, this course might not meet your needs.

### **Classroom Policy on Electronic Devices and Behavior**

Laptops are NOT allowed. Laptops, phones, MP3 players, and other such devices must be turned off and stowed during classes and exams. Lectures may not be recorded in any way without prior permission. Online materials may not be copied or distributed without prior permission. In exceptional cases, with prior permission, students will be allowed to take lecture notes on their laptops; in these cases, laptop lecture notes need to be provided to the professor for each class, and students need to pledge not to use computers for any other purpose during class. The professor will not provide feedback on lecture notes.

Students will arrive on time, minimize unscheduled personal breaks, and stay until the class ends. They will respect the views and opinions of their colleagues. Disagreement and debate are encouraged. Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.

### **Global Cultures Flag**

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

### **Accommodations for Special Needs**

The University makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

### **Religious Holidays**

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen

days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### **U.T. Learning Center**

You may find assistance with specific strategies to help you study effectively at the Learning Center. The Center for Learning offers a range of services to become a better student through assistance in one-on-one tutoring, academic counseling, and other classes. For more information see <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

### **Academic Integrity**

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS, AND EXAMS

Key to readings:

RK: Robert Kent, *Latin America*

GK: Gregory Knapp, *Latin America in the 21st Century*

Charles Mann, 1491

Note: THIS SCHEDULE IS TENTATIVE AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

### **Schedule**

#### **Week One**

Jan 18 Introduction

Jan 20 Countries and Boundaries

#### **Week Two**

**Readings:** RK 37-54 (for first five weeks; lecture notes very important for this part of course)

Jan 23 Volcanoes

Jan 25 Mountains

Jan 27 Highlands

#### **Week Three**

Jan 30 Lowlands, Continental Drift

Feb 1 Climate

Feb 3 Climate

#### **Week Four**

Feb 6 Vegetation and Soils

Feb 8 Southern Cone, Dry Lands

Feb 10 El Niño

#### **Week Five**

Feb 13 First Peoples

Feb 15 Domestication and Early Societies

Feb 17 Civilizations

### **Week Six**

**Readings:** RK 67-90; Charles Mann (optional, entire book)

Feb 20 Civilizations; Review

Feb 22 MIDTERM 1

Feb 24 To Be Announced

### **Week Seven**

**Readings:** RK 113-129, 206-235

Feb 27 To be Announced

Feb 29 Empires in Collision

Mar 2 Conquest Culture

### **Week Eight**

**Readings:** RK 154-178

Mar 5 Colonial Economies

Mar 7 Gold and Silver

March 9 New Commodities and Commodity Chains

### **March 10-18 spring break**

### **Week Nine**

**Readings:** RK 322-347

Mar 19 New Commodities

Mar 21 Drugs

Mar 23 Transportation

### **Week Ten**

**Readings:** GK 77-104

Mar 26 Markets and Population

Mar 28 Population and Cities

Mar 30 City Systems and Urban Employment

### **Week Eleven**

**Readings:** GK 251-268, RK 246-270

Apr 2 Housing; Review

Apr 4 MIDTERM II

Apr 6 Development

### **Week Twelve**

**Readings:** RK 55-60, 91-112, 130-153, 292-307; GK 105-148, 171-250

Apr 9 Development

Apr 11 Development Example

Apr 13 Free Trade and Nontraditional Exports

### **Week Thirteen**

Apr 16 Modernization's Critics

Apr 18 Development Politics

Apr 20 Geopolitics

### **Week Fourteen**

**Readings:** RK 348-364, 179-186

Apr 23 Frontiers and the Amazon PAPER DUE

Apr 25 Political Perspectives, Course Evaluation

Apr 27 Immigration Issues

### **Week Fifteen**

**Readings:** RK 236-245, 271-291, 308-321, 365-389; GK 45-76. 1-44, 149-170

April 30 Perceptions and the Media

May 2 Conclusions and Review

May 4 Midterm 3

May 12 FINAL EXAM 7-10 pm