

## Geography 605

### Changing Geographies of Latin America

(Special Problems in the Geography of Latin America)

Instructor: Dr. Kendra McSweeney  
Office: 1164 Derby Hall  
E-mail: [mcsweeney.14@osu.edu](mailto:mcsweeney.14@osu.edu)  
Phone: 247-6400  
Office hours: Tues 1:00-3:00, or by appointment

Class: MW, 1:00-2:48, Derby Hall 1116

Call No.: 10253-1L, 5 credits

#### Overview

Latin America's landscapes have undergone dramatic and sometimes surprising changes over the past quarter-century: rapid deforestation as well as forest regrowth; massive agroexport booms alongside plummeting staple production; rural depopulation coincident with resort development booms; ghost towns full of empty mansions adjacent to burgeoning slums. How can we make sense of this dynamic region? And what do these changes have to do with more persistent characteristics of the region, such as the chronic disparity between rich and poor? What motivates the millions of Latin Americans who head for the U.S. every year? How are our lives connected to theirs, and how do our actions influence their well-being? The purpose of this course is to address these questions, and to use geographers' integrative perspective to understand Latin American landscapes as historically shaped by these deeply interrelated processes. With an emphasis on case studies and personal narratives from the tropical regions of Central and South America, we will explore ongoing debates about the best paths to socially equitable and environmentally sustainable development in Latin America, with particular attention to how Latin Americans envision their lives, livelihoods and landscapes.

There are no prerequisites for this course, and no prior knowledge of Latin America is expected.

#### Course Format

This course meets twice a week, and will be run as a seminar, combining brief lectures with student-led group discussion. Critical and interesting class discussion requires that you come to class with the readings completed. Readings are diverse, and combine theory, case studies, and personal narratives in order to provide both a general understanding of the issues and a sense of how they play out in particular places in particular ways. To help you stay on top of the readings and to structure discussion, all students will send \*brief\* but substantive questions/comments on the readings by noon on the day of class (M and W). Please do so by uploading a file of your comments to the appropriate folder in the Carmen course dropbox; should this be impossible, you may send me your comments in the body of an email.

#### Required Readings

There are two required texts.

One is a course pack, produced by Zip Publishing and available at **SBX**, which holds the bulk of the readings:

- 1) **Geography 605 Reader.** \$TBA (Questions or other purchase options? Contact Zip Publishing at: [info@zippublishing.com](mailto:info@zippublishing.com), [www.zippublishing.com](http://www.zippublishing.com)).

One backup copy of the reader is available on 3-hour reserve in SEL for emergency use only. Please bring the coursepack to ALL class meetings, as we will refer to readings and figures frequently.

The other required text, available at **OSU Barnes & Nobles/Long's** is:

- 2) Benjamin, Medea, ed. 1987. ***Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart (The Story of Elvia Alvarado)***. New York: Harper and Row (paperback). \$12.95 (new); \$9.70 (used). Also available from Amazon.com (any edition is fine), used and new from \$1.00.

### Recommended Reading

The following text is recommended, and is also available at the OSU Bookstores:

- 3) Nazario, Sonia. 2007. ***Enrique's Journey***. New York: Random House (paperback). \$14.95 (new); \$11.20 (used); at Amazon.com used and new from \$3.25.

### Evaluation

Success in the course rests more than anything on keeping up with readings and contributing to class discussion, which means that evaluation is spread fairly evenly over the quarter. Every student will help to lead one class discussion (see separate guidelines). There will be one in-class exam (**March 4**) that will encourage you to review and synthesize materials read and discussed in class. A project is due at the end of the quarter (proposal, worth 5%, is due Feb. 9). The project requires conducting primary research; specific topics will depend on the level of the student and be developed in consultation with the instructor to clearly reflect course themes. Students will present their projects in Week 10. Class attendance, participation, and written responses to readings account for 40% of the final grade.

Note: Undergrads will be evaluated differently from graduate students:

	<u>UG</u>	<u>Grad</u>
Class attendance, participation, and written contributions	40%	40%
Class leadership (graded as a group)	10%	10%
In-class exam (March 4)	20%	10%
Project proposal	5%	5%
Project report (max 10 pages) + presentation	25%	20%
Book review (graduate students only; ~ 5 pages; on recent migrant narrative)		15%

### Policies

All assigned work is due by 5 pm on the due date in the Geography Main Office. Late work will lose two (2) percentage points per day. In-class evaluation cannot be made up without special advance notice and at the discretion of the instructor.

GRADING options for course: A,A-,B+,B-,C+,C-,D+,D, OR E. Students will be evaluated based on their academic level.

### Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

### Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

### Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

### EVALUATION Schedule

W1	Jan. 5	Course introduction.	
		<b>I Picturing the Latin American Tropics</b>	
	Jan. 7	Looking at Latin American landscapes	
W2	Jan. 12	Picturing the tropics: Peoples	
	Jan. 14	The Columbian Exchange	
W3	Jan. 19	<i>No class; MLK holiday</i>	
	Jan. 21	Picturing the Tropics I: “Nature” [Conservation]	
W4	Jan. 26	Picturing the Tropics II: The Pristine Myth [Native Peoples]	
		<b>II Hunger &amp; Plenty: Commodifying Latin America’s Tropics</b>	
	Jan. 28	Oligarchs & Multinationals: Latin America’s Globalized Agriculture	<b>Begin to meet for project</b>
W5	Feb. 2	Tackling land inequality: Agrarian reforms	
	Feb. 4	Tackling land inequality: Revolution	
W6	Feb. 9	‘Adapting’ to poverty	<b>Project proposal due</b>
	Feb. 11	Women, Non-traditional agricultural exports, and <i>Maquiladoras</i>	
W7	Feb. 16	Cocaine: another NTAE	
	Feb. 18	Is Fair Trade the answer?	
		<b>III On the Move: Latin American Migrations</b>	
W8	Feb. 23	Rural-urban migration & Making a living in the city	<b>Project updates in-class</b>
	Feb. 25	International migration I: Getting There	
W9	Mar. 2	International migration II: Being Here	
		<b>IV Exam, Presentations and Wrap-Up</b>	
	Mar. 4	In-class exam	<b>Exam</b>
W10	Mar. 9	Project presentations	<b>Presentations</b>
	Mar. 11	Project presentations and class summary	<b>Presentations</b>
	<b>Mar. 17</b>	Project due for graduating seniors (Tuesday)	<b>Grad’ing Senior PROJECT DUE</b>
	Mar. 19	Grades posted for graduating seniors	
	<b>Mar. 20</b>	Project due for all others (Friday)	<b>PROJECT DUE (all others)</b>

Mar. 23      Grades posted for all others

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### PLEASE READ IN THE ORDER LISTED

Note:

- “Elvia” Denotes readings from story of Elvia Alvarado, “Don’t Be Afraid Gringo”  
“Enrique” Denotes readings from “Enrique’s Journey”  
*These books are not in the course pack.*

### WEEK 1

#### Jan 5 Course Introduction

- Carlsen, L. 2008. Latin America sends Obama congratulations—and a piece of its mind. *Americas Policy Program*, Commentary. Available at <http://americas.irc-online.org/am>

### I PICTURING THE LATIN AMERICAN TROPICS

#### Jan 7 Looking at Latin American Landscapes

- Blaikie, Piers. 1995. Changing environments or changing views? A political ecology for developing countries. *Geography* 80(3):203-214.
- Doolittle, W. E. 2001. Learning to see the impacts of individuals. *The Geographical Review* 91(1-2):423-429.

### WEEK 2

#### Jan 12 Picturing the Tropics: Peoples

- Columbus, C. 1492 [1492-1493]. The discovery of the Bahamas. In *The Log of Christopher Columbus*, pp. 73-92. Translated by R. F. Fuson. Camden, Maine: International Marine Publishing Company.  
Map: “Columbus’ voyages to the New World,” Clawson (2004):96.
- Díaz, Bernal. 1963 [~1568]. The entrance into Mexico. In *The Conquest of New Spain* pp. 216-219, transl. By J. M. Cohen. Baltimore, MD: Penguin.
- Lovell, W. George. 2000. Ch. 21: The T-shirt parade (pp. 143-148). *A Beauty That Hurts*, 2nd ed. Toronto: Between The Lines.

*In-class reference:*

- Helms, Mary. 1976. “The Spanish Legacy.” Ch. 8 (pp. 127-134) in *Middle America: a Culture History of Heartland and Frontiers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

#### Jan 14 The Columbian Exchange

- Blaut, J. M. 1993. “After 1492” Chapter 4 (pp. 179-191; 201-213), in *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. New York: Guilford Press.
- McNeill, W. H. 1992. American food crops in the Old World. Pp. 42-59 in H. J. Viola and C. Margolis, eds. *Seeds of Change: A Quincentennial Commemoration*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Maps and Tables:

All from: Dunmire, William W. 2004. *Gardens of New Spain*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

“Agriculture in Spain ca. 1492; Some Utilitarian plants cultivated in Spain, 1492”

“World Centers for Plant and Animal domestication”; “Pathways to Spain”; “Plants previously absent in Spain introduced by Moors”; “Prehispanic diffusion of food plant cultivation in the Americas”

**WEEK 3**

**Jan 19**            **No class; MLK Holiday**

**Jan 21**            **Picturing the Tropics I: “Nature”**

- Vandermeer, John, and Ivette Perfecto. 1995. “The rain forest is neither fragile nor stable” (pp.19-38). In *Breakfast of Biodiversity: the Truth about Rainforest Destruction*. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.
- Forsyth, A., and K. Miyata. 1984. Chapter 2: “Fertility” (pp. 17-30). *Tropical Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Rivera, José Eustasio. 1993 [1935]. Excerpt from “The Vortex.” In S. Place, ed., *Tropical Rainforests: Latin American Nature and Society in Transition* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.), pp. 3-7. Wilmington, Delaware: Jaguar Books.
- Barrionuevo, Alexei. 2008. Brazil rainforest analysis sets off political debate. *New York Times* On-line, May 25.

**WEEK 4**

**Jan 26**            **Picturing the Tropics II: The Pristine Myth**

- Mann, Charles. 2005. Chapter 9: “Amazonia” (pp. 280-311). *1491*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

And read one of the following:

- Sawyer, Suzana. 2003. Subterranean techniques: corporate environmentalism, oil operations, and social injustice in the Ecuadorian rain forest. Pp. 69-100 in *In Search of the Rain Forest*. Edited by Candace Slater. Duke University Press.
- Fedick, Scott. 2003. In search of the Maya forest. 133-164 in *In Search of the Rain Forest*. Edited by Candace Slater. Duke University Press.

**II            HUNGER & PLENTY: COMMODYING LATIN AMERICA’S TROPICS**

**Jan 28**            **Oligarchs & Multinationals: Latin America’s Globalized Agriculture**

- Clawson, David L. 2006. Selections from Ch. 10, “Agriculture and agrarian development.” In *Latin America and the Caribbean: Lands and Peoples* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), pp. 252-263. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Tucker, Richard P. 2007. “Banana Republics: Yankee fruit companies and the tropical American lowlands” (Ch. 2; pp.43-80) in *Insatiable Appetite: the United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*, Concise Revised Edition. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Koepfel, Dan. 2008. Yes, we will have no bananas. *New York Times*, June 18, pp. A22.

*In-class reference:*

- Hecht, S.B., and C. C. Mann. 2008. How Brazil outfarmed the American farmer. *Fortune Magazine* (January 19); Available on-line at [CNNmoney.com](http://CNNmoney.com).

## WEEK 5

### Feb 2 Tackling Land Inequality: Agrarian Reforms

- Elvia: Chapters 1-8
- Kay, C. 2004. Rural livelihoods and peasant futures. In *Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. R. N. Gwynne and C. Kay, 232-250. London: Arnold.
- Romero, Simon. 2007. Clash of hope and fear as Venezuela seizes land. *New York Times Online*. 17 May. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

### Feb 4 Tackling Land Inequality: Revolution

- Howard, P. 2001 [1998]. The history of ecological marginalization in Chiapas. Pp. 56-76 in S.E. Place, ed., *Tropical Rainforests: Latin American Nature and Society in Transition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Wilmington, DE: Jaguar Books.
- Marcos, S. 2001. Marcos: Hope for a new dawn in Chiapas. *Multinational Monitor* 22 (3):Online.
- Stahler-Sholk, Richard. 2005. Time of the snails: autonomy and resistance in Chiapas. *NACLA Report on the Americas* 38(5):34-38.

#### Recommended:

- Muñoz-Ramirez, Gloria. 2008. Caracol #1: La Realidad. *Americas Policy Program* Special Report, Dec. 12. Online at <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/5742>.

## WEEK 6

### Feb 9 "Adapting" to Poverty

- Pace, Richard. 1998. Adaptations to poverty. Ch. 7 in *The Struggle for Amazon Town: Gurupá Revisited*, pp. 135-163. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Elvia: Chapters 9-12

#### And read one of the following:

- Rosset, P. 1997. The greening of Cuba. In *Green Guerillas: Environmental Conflicts and Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. H. Collinson, 158-167. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Van Gelder, Sarah. 2007. Health care for all. Love, Cuba. *Yes! Magazine* Summer: 28-31.

### Feb 11 Women, Non-traditional Agricultural Exports, and *Maquiladoras*

- Tiano, S. 2001. The role of women. In *Understanding Contemporary Latin America*, ed. R. S. Hillman, 263-296. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Stewart, Sarah. 1997. The price of a perfect flower. Pp. 132-139 in H. Collinson, ed., *Green Guerillas*, edited by H. Collinson. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Barrionuevo, Alexei. 2007. Political tango, women in the lead. *The New York Times* On-line, 4 November. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

## WEEK 7

### Feb 16 Cocaine: another NTAE

- Gray, Mike. 1998. The river of money. Chapter 6 (pp. 111-131) in *Drug Crazy: How We Got into this Mess and We Can Get Out*. New York: Random House.  
Map: GAO. "Map of Peru" Pp. 3 in U.S. General Accounting Office, 1994. *U.S. Anti-Drug Efforts in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley*. Avail. <http://www.gao.gov/archive/1995/ns95011.pdf>.
- Lee, Rensselaer. 2004. Perversely harmful effects of counter narcotics policy in the Andes. Pp. 188-210 in M. Vellinga, ed., *The Political Economy of the Drug Industry: Latin America and the International System*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

### Feb 18 Is Fair Trade the Answer?

- Waridel, Laure. 2002. "The conventional coffee route" and "A different path for coffee growers." Pp. 41-86 (Ch. 4-5) in *Coffee with Pleasure: Just Java and World Trade*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.
- Jaffee, Daniel. 2007. "Strengthening fair trade." Ch. 9 (p. 247-258) in *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vidal, John. 2007. Saving St Lucia. *Guardian Weekly* March 9-15, p. 27

## WEEK 8

### III ON THE MOVE: LATIN AMERICAN MIGRATIONS

### Feb 23 Making a Living in the City

- Roberts, J. T., and N. D. Thanos. 2003. Hazards of an urban continent. Pp. 95-128 (Ch. 4) in *Trouble in Paradise: Globalization and Environmental Crises in Latin America*. New York: Routledge.
- De Soto, Hernando. 2000. The mystery of missing information. Pp. 15-37 (Ch. 2) in *The Mystery of Capital*. Basic Books.

*In-class reference*: Table: Population Reference Bureau. 2008. Excerpt from *World Population Data Sheet*. Available on-line at <http://www.prb.org/pdf08>

### Feb 25 International Migration I: Getting There

- Enrique: Prologue - Chapter 5 (pp. vi-178).

## WEEK 9

### Mar 2 International Migration II: Remittances & Transnationalism

- Enrique: Chapter 6-Epilogue (pp. 179-269).
- de la Garza, Rodolfo O., and Manuel Orozco. 2002. Binational impact of Latino remittances. Pp. 29-52 in Rodolfo de la Garza and B. L. Lowell, eds. *Sending Money Home: Hispanic Remittances and Community Development*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Preston, Julia. 2008. Fewer Latino immigrants sending money home. *The New York Times Online*, May 1. [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)



***IV EXAM, PRESENTATIONS, AND WRAP-UP***

**March 4**      **No readings; In-class exam**

**WEEK 10**

**March 9**      **Project presentations**

**March 11**     **Project presentations and class summary**