

Geography of South America

University of Northern Colorado

Course Syllabus – Spring 2009

Instructor: Dr. Karen S. Barton
Office phone: (970) 351.4620
Office: Candelaria 2249

Email: karen.barton@unco.edu
Department phone: (970) 351.2715
Office hours: MWF 12.10pm -1.10pm

Course Description:

This course will explore the dynamic region of South America from a geographic perspective. The first objective is to introduce students to the region's physical geography, including major landforms, climate, and natural regions. We focus in particular on forces that shape the eastern highlands of Brazil, the four great lowlands, and the Andean highlands. The second aspect of this course emphasizes the political, cultural, and economic landscapes of South America. We emphasize topical themes to understand the region, such as the geography of religion, agriculture, race, conservation, and everyday life. We will delve into issues such as livelihood struggles and resistance movements, poverty, the drug wars, rainforest conservation, tourism and the potential of micro-credit programs.

This class requires participation for it to be successful. I will use a combination of methods (lectures, videos, discussions, in-class exercises) to show how South American countries share some characteristics yet maintain important distinctions. You will be required to think critically about the texts you read in order to participate fully in the classroom experience.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, the successful student should:

1. Possess basic geographic literacy regarding the countries and sub-regions of South America.
2. Explain the physical diversity of South America's landforms, climate, and natural regions.
3. Describe the complex and often controversial relationships between humans and the natural landscape.
4. Understand South America's historic and contemporary cultural, political, and economic patterns.
5. Analyze a South American case study and present the results in graphic, written, and verbal form.

Required Readings:

- Clawson, David L. 2006. Latin America and the Caribbean: Lands and Peoples. (4th edition). McGraw Hill. ISBN: 0-07-282694-0.
- Blackboard: <http://bb.unco.edu> Class materials will be posted on the class blackboard site. All students are expected to check the site regularly for announcements, lecture notes, and/or assignments.

Selections from the following texts (please see Blackboard for specific pages):

- Charriere, H. 2002. Papillon. Press Pocket.
- Cardoso, F.H. 2007. The Accidental President of Brazil: A Memoir. Public Affairs.
- Denevan, W. 1992. The Pristine Myth. Annals of the AAG, Vol 82 (3): 369-385,
- Diamond, J. 2006. Collapse. W.W. Norton.
- Kirk, R. 2004. More Terrible Than Death: Massacres, Drugs, & America's War in Colombia. World Press.
- Levine and Crecitti (eds.). 1999. The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics. Duke University Press.
- McEwan, C., Barreto, C., and E. Neves (eds). Unknown Amazon. 2001. British Museum Publications.

- McGrath, S. The Wild Wet. National Geographic Magazine. August 2005, pp. 47-71.
- McLaren, D. 1998. Rethinking Tourism and Ecotravel. Kumarian Press.
- Mann, C. 2006. 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus. Vintage.
- Slater, C. 2002. Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon. University of California Press.
- Swartz, Frederic (ed). 2000. The Pantanal of Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay. Hudson Macarthur.
- Wallace, S. 2007. Farming the Amazon. National Geographic Magazine, January 2007, pp. 40-72.
- Yunus, M. 2003. Banker to the Poor. Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty. World Press.

Documentary Film List:

- Living Edens: Venezuela’s Tepuis. 2003. PBS Home Videos.
- Voodoo Secrets. 2006. History Channel.
- Favela Rising. 2007. Netflix Studios.
- Amazon Adventures. 2007. History Channel.
- Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the Drug War Failure. 2003. Cinema Libre.

Grading Criteria, Assignments, and Course Policies

Students are evaluated on two exams, a map quiz, in-class assignments, a film critique, participation, term project, and a presentation. Use the spaces provided below to keep track of your points.

<u>Grading Criteria</u>	<u>% Grade</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>	<u>your score</u>
Exam 1	20%	80	_____
Exam 2	20%	80	_____
Map Quiz	5%	20	_____
Paper	15%	60	_____
Presentation	15%	60	_____
Film Critique	5%	20	_____
Participation	10%	40	_____
Assignments	10%	40	_____
Total	100%	400	_____

Course Assessment:

- A: Achievement that goes well above and beyond, or is truly exemplary, of the assignment
- B: Achievement that goes well above the level necessary to meet assignment requirements
- C: Achievement that meets the assignment in every respect.
- D: Achievement that deserves some credit due, even though it does not fulfill the assignment
- F: Assignment either was not completed, or did not follow instructions.

Evaluation:

Based on the grading scale above, for a letter grade of "A" you will need 90% of the total points; a "B" requires 80%; a "C" requires 70%; a "D" requires 60% and an "F" grade is awarded for anything less than 60% of total points. You should keep a running total of your points to get a sense of your grade. Grades cannot be emailed due to university policy.

Exams:

The exam format for Exams I and II may consist of any number of the following: true/false, multiple-choice, definitions, short answer, map and essay questions. All exams are mandatory and make-up exams will not be given without a valid, official, documented excuse (e.g., doctor's note, campus athletic commitment). Excuses such as "I was not feeling well" are only acceptable with documentation. In the same vein, exams will not be rescheduled to suit student schedules (e.g., travel plans), so take note of the relevant deadlines and plan well in advance.

In-Class Films and Critique Assignment:

Because we are unable to travel to the region of Latin America, a variety of documentaries and films will be presented in order to bring this region to life. Students will be required to choose one of the films from which to develop a typed-written critique that will be due within one week of the date the film was viewed in class. The professor will not accept e-mailed critiques, and please note that all assignments must be submitted in hard copy rather than electronic form on the due date.

Activities/Participation:

To do well in this course, it is important that you be present in class and come prepared to get involved in discussions. In-class assignments, activities, and participation contribute heavily to the course grade. We will use the PCs fairly often for in-class activities.

Class Project- Paper & Presentation:

The class project will enable each student to select a South American topic of his or her choice (with approval by the professor) and write a paper (10-12 pages) based on the results of individual research. Students will also be required to complete individual 5 minute class presentations (website, Power Point, Multi-media, or some other medium) based on their project. A presentation sign-up sheet will be made available during the first few weeks of class and presentations will take place at the close of the semester. Creative alternatives to the traditional paper will be taken into consideration.

Quizzes:

A map quiz that covers various physical and cultural features of Latin America will be given. No pop quizzes are scheduled, but if they become necessary to ensure participation or completion of readings, the grade for pop quizzes will be included in the activities and participation points.

Cell phones:

Use of cell phones/electronic devices in class is not permitted. Turn them off prior to class.

Respect:

Out of respect for the professor and fellow students, be on time for class. You must also refrain from using the classroom PCs unless otherwise instructed. If you are seen using the PCs without permission you will be assigned a zero for class participation.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, copying or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will automatically earn you an F for the entire course. I encourage students to work cooperatively on certain projects, but submissions must be your own, original work.

Special Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Access Center (970.351.2289) as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion

Extra Credit: At this point, extra credit is not part of our planned schedule.

Tentative Course Outline: This schedule is tentative, as the material we cover will depend on the time it takes to grasp the topics. In some cases, we may finish quicker than anticipate; in other cases, slower. We will do our best to watch at least half of the videos listed below. For those that we are unable to watch, I have provided links with more detailed information on these productions. Also, please note that some classes may be cancelled due to inclement weather or emergencies. If a class is cancelled on the proposed exam date, the exam will be given during the next class meeting.

Drop Deadline: _____

Last Day to Withdraw: _____

<u>Unit Topics and Readings (*all page numbers refer to Clawson text)</u>	<u>Tentative Dates</u>
I. South America as a World Region	1/12-1/16
II. The Physical Landscape	
<i>Martin Luther King Day: January 19, 2009</i>	
Landforms of Latin America (pp. 16-47)	1/21-1/23
Weather and Climate (pp. 49-72)	1/26-1/30
Natural Regions (pp. 74-92)	2/2-2/4
Case Study: Gran Pantanal and the Blue Macaw Project (Swartz; McGrath)	2/4-2/6
<i>South America Map Quiz: February 6, 2009</i>	
III. Political Patterns	
Iberian Heritage (pp. 96-100)	2/9-2/13
The Encounter, Conquest, and the Colombian Exchange (pp. 100-108)	2/16-2/20
The Colonial Era and Political Change (pp.108-146; Charier)	2/23-2/27
Case Study: the Accidental President (Cardoso)	2/23-2/27
<i>Examination 1: February 27, 2009</i>	
IV. Cultural Patterns	
Case study: the Pristine Myth (pp. 152-167; Delevan, Diamond, Mann)	3/2-3/6
Africans and Asians in the New World (pp. 168-171)	3/9-3/13
<i>Spring Break: March 16-20, 2009</i>	
Race, Ethnicity, Religion, Music (pp. 173-246)	3/23-3/25
Case Study: Voodoo and Santeria (History Channel Voodoo-DVD)	3/25-3/27
<i>Project Outline Due: March 27, 2009</i>	
V. Economic Patterns	
Plant Foods that Changed the World (pp. 252-284; Kirk; Wallace)	3/30-4/1
The Promises and Pitfalls of Ecotourism (McLaren)	4/1-4/3

Case Study: Poverty, Livelihood, Favelas, and Microcredit (Yunus)

4/6-4/10

VI. Human-Environmental Issues

Urbanization, Migration and Population Growth (pp. 328-376)

4/13-4/17

Case Study: Political Ecology of the Amazon (McEwan; Slater)

4/20-4/24

Student Presentations

4/24-5/1

Final Projects Due: May 1, 2009

Exam 2 (Final Exam): Week of 5/4-5/8 (See Final Exam Schedule)