

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Overview and Contact Information

The Department of Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin American Studies engages in the multidisciplinary study of the past, current state, and emerging realities of societies and cultures of Latin America, Spain, the Caribbean, and the Latino/a heritage populations within the United States and their relations with each other and with the wider world. To that end, our courses adopt a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, including literary studies, film and media studies, social history, and politics.

The Department of Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin American Studies also collaborates closely with a number of other departments and programs on campus, frequently cross-listing courses with film studies, gender studies, history, and Romance languages and cultures. Regular co-curricular activities organized by the department (film series, lectures, etc.) also engage the larger college community in the interests of our students and faculty. In addition to providing opportunities for learning on campus, the department also strongly recommends that students study off campus in a Spanish-speaking context in order to enhance their language skills and to forge their own connections to place through language.

The interdisciplinary major and minor in Latin American studies emphasize critical approaches to the culture, history, society, and political economy of the region. As societies long defined by and in opposition to external powers, Latin America and the Caribbean have in modern times developed distinctive national and cultural identities celebrated on a world stage in art, music, and literature. The major and minor study the region in its enormous geographic diversity—from plantation to highland Americas, from Mexico to Argentina; and linguistic variety—four European, several Creole, and numerous indigenous languages. Students pursue course work in several thematic and geographic areas.

See Also

- Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/latin-american-caribbean-latino-studies>)

Contact Information

Justin Crumbaugh, Chair

Debra Morrissey, Academic Department Coordinator

105 Ciruti Language Center

413-538-2347

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Faculty

This area of study is administered by the Department of Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin American Studies:

Lowell Gudmundson, Professor of Latin American Studies and History

Dorothy Knight-Mosby, Professor of Spanish; Associate Dean of Faculty

Nieves Romero-Díaz, Professor of Spanish

Justin Crumbaugh, Associate Professor of Spanish, Latina/o and Latin American Studies, Teaching Spring Only

David Hernández, Assistant Professor of Spanish, Latina/o, and Latin American Studies

Vanessa Rosa, Assistant Professor of Latina/o Studies

Esther Castro, Senior Lecturer in Spanish; Spanish Language Program Director, Teaching Spring Only

Dimaris Barrios-Beltrán, Visiting Language Instructor in Spanish

Flávia Cunha, Language Instructor in Spanish

Elena García Frazier, Language Instructor in Spanish

Antonio Illescas, Language Instructor in Spanish

Adriana Pitetta, Visiting Lecturer in Spanish, Latina/o and Latin American Studies

Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 40 credits:

A command of Spanish or Portuguese

A minimum of 40 credits in Latin American Studies including:

LATAM-180	Introduction to Latin American Cultures	4
Two elective courses, at any level, in Latin American studies		8
At least one course, at any level, dealing with subjects outside traditional Latin America—that is, the non-Hispanic areas of the Caribbean or South America; indigenous peoples of the region; the migration of Hispanic or Caribbean communities abroad		4
At least two courses, at any level, outside the student's primary area of interest		8
At least one advanced (300-level) course on Spanish American or Brazilian literature taught in the language		4
At least three additional 300-level courses in Latin American studies		12
Total Credits		40

Other Requirements

- Students pick an area of interest within Latin American Studies and plan their coursework in close consultation with their major advisor.

Additional Specifications

- An elementary knowledge of the other language (Spanish or Portuguese) and study abroad are strongly recommended for all majors.
- It is also strongly recommended that majors complete an appropriate course in American, African American, or Latin American studies that assesses the role of the United States in Latin America, studies United States Latino communities, or compares related experiences across United States/Latin American boundaries
- Programs for study abroad can be arranged throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of 20 credits:

LATAM-180	Introduction to Latin American Cultures	4
One 200-level or 300-level Latin American studies course		4
At least one course at the 300 level		4

2 additional approved courses	8
Total Credits	20

Additional Specifications

- Courses in the student's major field may not be used to fulfill the requirements of the minimum minor. For example, a student majoring in Spanish may not use any Spanish course to count towards the both the Spanish major and the Latin American Studies minor.

Related Courses

For related courses in other departments, please check the major website or consult with your major advisor.

Course Offerings

LATAM-180 Introduction to Latin American Cultures

Fall and Spring. Credits: 4

Examines the confrontation, assimilation, and transformation of Amerindian, African, and European cultures in Latin America from the sixteenth century to the present. Focuses on the processes in which distinctive self-images emerged in the region and how these images have been challenged and changed over time. Uses films, literature, and folk traditions to complement scholarly analysis of the emergence of a New World mentality.

Crosslisted as: HIST-180

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

L. Gudmundson, A. Pitetta

LATAM-217 Portuguese for Spanish Speakers I

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

This course is specially designed for students who are proficient in Spanish or another Romance language. This previous knowledge will be drawn upon to promote fast and solid acquisition of linguistic skills in Portuguese. Course conducted in Portuguese. Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to: interact with other students and the instructor in Portuguese; describe and compare people, places, and things in Portuguese; communicate future plans in Portuguese; narrate and understand past events in Portuguese; offer and understand advice and directions in Portuguese; give and understand opinions in Portuguese; and hypothesize in Portuguese.

Crosslisted as: SPAN-217

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language

F. Cunha

Prereq: SPAN-201 or placement test.

Advisory: Permission of instructor if you have proficiency in other Romance languages.

Notes: Students with proficiency in other Romance languages should seek permission of the instructor.

LATAM-227 Portuguese for Spanish Speakers II

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

The goal of this course is to offer students sophisticated linguistic tools that will allow them to interact and communicate in Portuguese in socio-cultural contexts that go beyond their immediate personal experience and daily life. The course is designed for students who have previous experience with Portuguese and are already familiar with the majority of the grammatical structures of the language. Through the use of authentic written texts, videos, and songs, students will broaden and deepen their reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities in Portuguese.

Crosslisted as: SPAN-227

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Language

F. Cunha

Prereq: SPAN-217.

Notes: Course taught in Portuguese.

LATAM-243 Introduction to Latin American Politics

Spring. Credits: 4

Why has Latin America struggled to achieve democratic stability? Why is it the region of the world with the highest economic inequality? How have the periodic political and economic crises allowed for creative experimentation with policy alternatives to create a more equal and sustainable social order? This course examines the political and economic evolution and transformation of Latin America from the time of the European conquest until these very days, with a particular focus on the 20th century. It will also analyze how these general trends took specific shapes in each of the 7 countries studied: Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Venezuela and Bolivia.

Crosslisted as: POLIT-243

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences

C. Fernandez Anderson

Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors

Advisory: Politics 106 (Comparative Politics) is recommended.

LATAM-260 Afro-Latin America: From Slavery to Invisibility

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Exploration of the history of Afro-Latin American populations since Independence within and outside the nation-state. We will question why and how to study those whose governments define them not as peoples of African descent but as part of a mixed-race majority of Hispanic cultural heritage, who themselves may often have supported this policy, and who may have had compelling reasons to avoid official scrutiny. Readings include early twentieth-century Latin American racist theorizing; research using census, economic, criminal, and marriage records; autobiographical works, and analysis of race in textual and musical representations of peoples, regions, and nations.

Crosslisted as: HIST-287AF, AFCNA-241AF

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

L. Gudmundson

LATAM-277 Caribbean Women Writers

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Comparative examination of contemporary women's writing in the Caribbean. Emphasis will be on their engagement with issues of history, cultural articulation, race, class, gender, and nationality, including exploration of their formal procedures, individual moods, regional particularity, and general impact as writers. Rosario Ferré, Ana Lydia Vega, Julia Alvarez, Edna Brodber, Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Jean Rhys, Beryl Gilroy, and Rosa Guy are among those whose works we will review.

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

D. Mosby

LATAM-287 Topics in Latin American Studies

This course studies significant problems relating to Latin America in greater depth from the perspectives of appropriate disciplines. Some topics may be cross-listed with other departments.

LATAM-287DE Topics in Latin American Studies: 'Rethinking (Under)Development in Latin America'

Fall. Credits: 4

When and how did the notion of "development" emerge and spread? Why does nearly every country now aspire to it? What stigmas and hierarchies does the term "under-development" imply? Throughout Latin America, such terms prove highly problematic not only with respect to the material reality they purport to describe but also as a framework for understanding place, time, and selfhood. In this course, students rethink conventional wisdom about "underdevelopment" through the study of writers, filmmakers, and painters from Latin America working at different historical junctures of the twentieth century.

Crosslisted as: CST-256

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

L. Gudmundson

LATAM-287RP Topics in Latin American Studies: 'Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Latin America'

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Since the 1990s Latin America has witnessed increasing societal and political debates over sexual and reproductive rights. Issues such as abortion, gay marriage, transgender rights, sexual education and assisted reproductive technology have risen to the top of some countries' agendas after decades of silence, taboos, and restrictive or non-existent legislation. The course aims to provide a survey of sexual and reproductive rights in the region as a whole while at the same time highlighting the disparities that exist within it. The course analyzes the multiple factors behind the current policies focusing particularly on the role of women and LGBT movements advancing more liberal legislation.

Crosslisted as: POLIT-255RP, GNDST-250RP

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives

Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive

C. Fernandez Anderson

Advisory: Previous coursework in Latin American Studies and/or Gender Studies recommended.

LATAM-288 Modern Mexico

Fall. Credits: 4

An analysis of the modern Mexican nation-state organized around three major themes: the conflictive yet symbiotic relationship with the United States, from the war of the 1840s through NAFTA most recently; the succession of reformist and revolutionary upheavals in 1810-1821, 1856-1867, 1910-1917, the 1930s, and again today, seeking to resolve both problems of the colonial past and new conflicts traceable to the very reforms generated by earlier political and social struggles; and the meaning of Mexican nationality from different ethnic, gender, and class perspectives. Readings include autobiographical and literary works, historical studies, and films.

Crosslisted as: HIST-288

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

L. Gudmundson

LATAM-289 Slavery in the Americas

Spring. Credits: 4

A course, organized topically rather than geographically or nationally, that offers a comparative analysis of African American slavery as a dominant social system in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the U.S. South. Topics include: why slavery?; sugar and slavery; historical demography; culture and the law; kinship and family; long-run economic development; patterns of race relations; master class and racist ideologies; resistance to slavery; and abolition and its aftermath. Readings include historical and anthropological studies, as well as a major documentary collection on slavery in Brazil.

Crosslisted as: HIST-289, AFCNA-241SA

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

L. Gudmundson

LATAM-295 Independent Study

Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4

The department

Instructor permission required.

LATAM-374 Latin American Cinema: Beyond the Farm and The Factory

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

How do labor relationships and the social construction of what work means affect our lives as well as our communities? How do they contribute to shape our identities? In which ways can our gender, sexual orientation, race, social class or migratory status define our working possibilities? How do the concepts of marginality and informality emerge to identify the precarious Latin American labor conditions? Through Latin American films, students will problematize the idea of service, worker, industry, classic and non-classic work, sexual and affective work, and child labor, among others.

Crosslisted as: GNDST-333FC

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

A. Pitetta

LATAM-386 Central America: Reform, Reaction, Revolution

Spring. Credits: 4

This seminar explores the diverse experiences of Central American nations in the twentieth century. From a common basis in an export-oriented agriculture, social and political alternatives ranging from social democracy to recurrent military rule, neofascist regimes, and revolutionary socialism have emerged in the isthmus. The course uses materials ranging from autobiography and literature to historical and anthropological studies to understand how this came to be. In addition to national cases, we consider the unique experiences of the area's indigenous and Atlantic-coast peoples within and outside the nation-state framework.

Crosslisted as: HIST-386

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives

L. Gudmundson

Restrictions: This course is open to Juniors and Seniors.

Prereq: 8 credits in Latin American Studies or related field.

LATAM-387 Special Topics in Latin American Studies

LATAM-387HR Special Topics in Latin American Studies: 'Human Rights Abuses and Accountability Mechanisms in the Southern Cone of Latin America'

Spring. Credits: 4

During the 1960s and 1970s military coups brought authoritarian regimes to power in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay). Human rights movements emerged demanding information about victims of torture, executions and disappearances which became the way military regimes attempted to eliminate dissent. What accounts for the different role these movements in the transition and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law? Did they take part to the same extent in the design and implementation of accountability mechanisms to prosecute those responsible for the abuses? We will answer these questions through the analysis of academic readings, movies, and primary sources.

Crosslisted as: POLIT-364

Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives

Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive

C. Fernandez Anderson

Advisory: Previous coursework in Latin American Studies and/or Comparative politics recommended.

LATAM-389 Agrarian America: Sugar, Cotton, Coffee, Bananas, and Wheat

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Explores societies generated in the Americas by several widely distributed export crops. Multinational and cross-cultural comparisons holding constant the crop itself allows a focus on the possible variations by time and place in each commodity's technologies, labor systems, farm sizes, and social structure; their political and social dynamics; the problematic features of capitalism in agriculture, or if, how, and when do peasants become farmers and farming agribusiness? Particular focus on family and household relations under so-called "peasant to farmer" agricultural transitions and environmental implications of single-crop and export agriculture.

Crosslisted as: HIST-389

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

L. Gudmundson

Restrictions: This course is open to Juniors and Seniors.

Prereq: 8 credits from Latin American Studies or related field.

LATAM-395 Independent Study

Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8

The department

Instructor permission required.