

INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (LAS2001)
Fall 2025 Class No. 12933



INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Luis Felipe Lomeli

CONTACT INFO: Grinter Hall 319F, email: luisgomezlomeli@ufl.edu

CLASS SESSIONS: Little Hall 0207, Tuesday 10:40 – 11:30 am & Thursdays 10:40 am– 12:35 pm.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Wednesday & Friday: 11:00 am – 12:40 pm. Tuesday: 11:45 – 2:20 pm. Thursday: 12:40 – 2:20 pm. You can email me to arrange a more convenient time to meet, either via zoom or in person.

OBJECTIVES: This course offers a panoramic introduction to that astonishingly immense variety of cultures and societies that we—mysteriously—group together under the concepts of “Latinx” and “Latin America.” Using topics such as food, clothing, music, and art as a pretext, we will explore historical, cultural, political, socioeconomic, and other relevant issues in this region of the world. Throughout the semester, we will read articles, passages of books, and engage in conversations with invited guests. **At the conclusion of this course you will:**

1. Gain a panoramic understanding of fundamental topics, shared characteristics, and distinctions among the variety of societies that live in “Latin America” to develop global and cultural awareness.
2. Examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize contemporary Latin America.
3. Acquire a deeper understanding of the trends, challenges and opportunities that inspire your own academic interests in “Latin America.”
4. Conduct discussion-based seminars and critically engage with key theoretical, historical, political, and socioeconomic issues and concepts to identify, describe and explain Latin American social institutions, structures and processes.
5. Learn and/or improve research skills and methodologies to examine the processes and means by which Latin American individuals make personal and group decision.
6. Exercise public speaking, communication, and presentation skills.
7. Develop a “critical eye” to unveil and unwrap the hidden and intertwined histories, causes and effects, that construct a particular cultural phenomenon or product.
8. Practice the ability to understand and articulate diverse points of view for a single event.

*Santiago de Chile, Skyline. Photograph by Marianna Ianovska.

Instructional materials for this course consist of only those materials specifically reviewed, selected, and assigned by the instructor(s). The instructor(s) is only responsible for these instructional materials. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

COURSE FORMAT: Due to our unique schedule (50 min. on Tuesdays and 115 min. on Thursdays) our course will have a mixed format. Our short sessions on Tuesday will usually have a **lecture** format with lots of participation from your part. This means that I will rarely arrive with a Power Point presentation, and I will never talk uninterruptedly for 40 minutes. Instead, we will build the class together. I will be asking questions to you and you will be discussing—with the whole class or in small groups and aided by assigned readings—the pros and cons of possible answers and approaches to the topic of the day.

On our long Thursday meetings or **workshops**, the session will be usually divided in two. We will have several guest speakers. In our sessions with guests, during the first half we will have an informal conversation with our guest: sometimes they would be sharing an article in advance with us and sometimes they would just arrive to chat with us and answer our questions. During the second half it would be your turn on the stage. We will have short or mini-presentations (the time lapse of these will depend on the number of enrolled students) where you will present your research, data, and thoughts on a particular topic and engage in a critical discussion with your classmates. Accordingly, if we don't have a guest, workshop sessions will have longer presentations and we will dedicate some time to conduct research during class time. Thus, our workshops will cover the three main branches of academic research: 1) discussion with experts, 2) research presentation and discussion, and 3) teamwork research. Details for each workshop will be posted on Canvas.

Why will we have so many presentations? Because there are so many different societies in that thing we call "Latin America" and the best way to cover most of them is working together and sharing our knowledge (i.e. if each student specializes in one country, and we are 20 in the classroom, at the end of the semester we will all know, at least, about 20 countries). Thus, research/presentations and participation in class comprise the largest share of your final grade. The two other components will be the midterm "essay" and the final "essay."

Finally, some readings and topics on this syllabus may change according to the interests of the group and the availability of our possible guests.

COURSE MATERIALS: There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will be available on Canvas or in "reserve" at the library.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

- Participation: 10%
- Reading comprehension assignments (Memes): 20%
- Workshops/Presentations: 45%
- Midterm "Essay": 10%
- Final "Essay": 15%

Assignments align with [SLOs designated areas](#) of Humanities, Social Science, and International. **Content:** Through participation, reading comprehension assignments (Memes), Workshops, Presentations, and Midterm and Final essays, students will demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories of the Humanities and Social Sciences applied to the Latin American context. **Critical Thinking:** both during the seminar ("lecture") and workshop sessions, as well as with the midterm and final essays, students will analyze social science's texts and cultural products from multiple perspectives, using arguments and counterarguments as the main methodology of qualitative analysis (Social Sciences SLO) to identify the key elements, biases and influences (Humanities SLO) that shape cultural, economic, political, and social expressions and processes in Latin America (International SLO). **Communication:** through presentations and essays students will improve their skills to clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning in written and oral forms.

Additional guidelines and rubrics for each one of the above-mentioned items will be provided on Canvas.

Evaluation: Final grades will be assigned on the following scale (based on percentage points out of the total):
A: >93% **A-:** 92-90% **B+:** 89-87% **B:** 86-83% **B-:** 82-80% **C+:** 79-77% **C:** 76-73% **C-:** 72-70% **D+:** 69-67%
D: 66-63% **D-:** 62-60% **E:** 59% and below.

Attendance and Make-Up Work: Because this is a discussion-based course, students' attendance and active participation is required for the course's functioning and the mutual enrichment of all its participants.

Requirements for class attendance and coursework are consistent with university policies found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#illnesspolicytext>

Assignments will be subject to the following reduction of points if turned in late: within 24 hours of the posted date and time, the assignment will be docked 25% of the total possible points; 24-48 hours late will result in 50% loss of total possible points. Assignments will not be accepted beyond 48 hours past the due date. Let me know as soon as possible if you need to miss an assignment due date for any reason (e.g., conference, illness, family emergency).

Note on Make-Up Work: If you are not able to present on the assigned date because our guest speaker took more class time than expected or because any other of our in-class activities took longer than expected, but you did arrive to class with your finished work, we will arrange another time for your "missing presentation" and no points will be deducted from your grade.

UF ACADEMIC POLICIES & SUPPORT SERVICES

- **Academic Honesty:** As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: *"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."* You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment"*. It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.
- **Services for Students Requiring Accommodations:** The Disability Resource Center (0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. ***I want you to do well in this class and will gladly work with you to implement any necessary accommodations.***
- **Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via www.ufl.bluera.com/ufl/.

- **Student Privacy:** There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the Notification to Students of FERPA Rights.
- **Campus Helping Resources:** Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.
- **Food Insecurity.** The Pantry is a resource on the University of Florida campus committed to eradicate food insecurity (<https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu/>). Food insecurity is not having a reliable access to nutritious foods for yourself on a regular basis. If you, or anyone you know is experiencing food insecurity, the Pantry is a resource to visit.
- **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.
- **Sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated in this course:** UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>
- **Gender Equity Statement.** Gender-based discrimination and violence are antithetical to the university's mission and values, violate university policies, and may also violate federal and state law. The Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity is here for anyone who has been affected by gender-based discrimination and violence. If you or someone you know has experienced gender-based discrimination or violence, please contact the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity to get support and information about your rights and reporting options. You can learn more about university protections, supportive resources, response processes, and prevention efforts by visiting www.titleix.ufl.edu The University Title IX Coordinator is located in the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity and is responsible for providing support to anyone affected by gender-based discrimination or violence. If you would like to report gender-based discrimination or violence affecting our community, please contact Russell Froman, Assistant Vice President for Accessibility and Gender Equity and ADA and Title IX Coordinator at (352) 273-1094, or by e-mail at rfroman@ufl.edu. You can also submit a report using the online portal: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofFlorida&layout_id=20
- **Video or Audio Recording of Class Lectures.** Students may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the University, or as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation delivered by faculty (including any individual hired or appointed by the University to conduct classroom, teaching activities) or guest lecturer, as part of a University of Florida course, intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the faculty or guest. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, or leaflet. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
- **University Counseling & Wellness Center:** 3190 Radio Road, (352) 392-1575, www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/ (Counseling Services, Self-Help Library, Groups and Workshops, Training Programs, Outreach and Consultation, Community Provider Database).
- **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS):** Student Health Care Center, (352) 392-1161.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

- **E-learning technical support:** (352) 392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.
- **Career Resource Center:** Reitz Union, (352) 392-1601. www.crc.ufl.edu/. Career assistance and counseling.
- **Library Support:** <https://uflib.ufl.edu/find/ask/> Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- **Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> General study skills and tutoring.
- **Writing Studio:** 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

WEEKLY CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Subject to change based on the research interests of students enrolled in the course and the availability of invited speakers

Week 1: What is “Latin”? What is “America”? Why did they put these two words together?

Workshop: Introduction, main concepts, syllabus review and modifications, and discussion on what makes America unique?

Objectives: Each student will propose a working definition of “Latin America.”

Week 2: The Americas as utopia.

Lecture: What makes America unique?

- a) **Read:** Fuentes, Carlos. *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1999, Chapter 6.
- b) **Optional reading:** O’Gorman, Edmundo. *The Invention of America: An inquiry into the historical nature of the New World and the meaning of its history*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1961.
- c) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: Art! (as utopia... and resistance to others’ utopias).

Possible Guest: Nicolás Paris.

- a) **Guidance reading:** Camnitzer, Luis. *On Art, Artists, Latin America, and Other Utopias*. Austin, U. of Texas Press, 2009, pp.-63 – 75.
- b) **Homework:** Choose a Latin American country from the list and write your name after it (no more than one student per country). Explore a (Latin) American plastic artist or movement: artistic and social ideals, works, and impact. Select one artistic piece from that artist to present/discuss with the whole class (use Camnitzer’s text for guidance).

Objectives: Discuss the concept of utopia as a singular feature of Latin American societies. Explore how art explores and challenges the concepts of utopia in Latin America.

Week 3: The arrival(s) to (Latin) America and the new socioeconomic order.

Lecture: The invention of capitalism, Part I.

- a) **Read:** Moore, Jason W. “The Capitalocene Part I: On the nature and origins of our ecological crisis.” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2017, pp.- 594 – 630.
- b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: Food intertwining.

- a) **Guidance reading:** Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York, W.W. Norton, 1997, pp. 85-92.
- b) **Homework:** Choose a Latin American country from the list and write your name after it (no more than one student per country). Select one culinary dish. Investigate its history, geographic origin of the ingredients (use Diamond’s text for guidance), technological features of its preparation, cultural value, and/or any other interesting issue you may want to address to underline this early globalization phenomenon turned into “tradition.” Short presentation.

Objective: Analyze how “capitalism” transformed the societies, food habits, and nature of an entire continent.

Week 4: Conflict management in the Americas.

Lecture: Community forest management in the Amazons.

Possible guest: Karen Kainer.

Read: To be determined.

Workshop: Conflict management.

Possible guest: Jon Dain.

Read: To be determined.

Objective: Analyze and discuss contemporary Latin American responses to historical processes that have shaped Latin American societies and conflicts.

Week 5: The construction of (Latin) America.

Lecture: The Pacific Ocean and the Americas: The Invention of “Capitalism,” Part II.

a) **Read:** Mann, Charles C. *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created*. New York, Knopf, 2011, pp.- 118 -163.

b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: The translators.

a) **Guidance reading:** Dodds Pennock, Caroline. *On Savage Shores: How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe*. New York, Knopf, 2023, pp.- 74 – 93.

b) **Homework:** Choose a native (Latin) American culture and study its language, history, territory, and worldview. Prepare a short presentation.

Objective: Discuss the causes and effects of the Americas’ historical role as bridge between Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Week 6: Latin American communities.

Lecture: Being “Latino”: Law & performance.

Possible guest: Ariadna Tenorio.

a) **Read:** Hooker, Juliet. *Theorizing Race in the Americas*. Oxford University Press, 2017, pp.- 5-11.

Workshop: Does language shape our worldview?

a) **Read:** Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Great Britain, James Currey, 2011, pp.- xiv- 33.

b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Objective: Explain the historical processes, cultural implications, and performance of traditional and contemporary self-fashioning across (Latin) America. Discuss how a multiplicity of languages presents challenges and advantages to Latin America.

Week 7: Wrap-up and midterm.

Lecture: Wrap-up session and general discussion on final projects.

Midterm: Visit to the Harn Museum of Art and take-away midterm “essay.”

Week 8: Conservatives vs liberals.

Lecture: National struggles during the 19th century (and beyond).

- a) **Read:** Galeano, Eduardo. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1997, pp.- 173-204.
- b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: Independence fighters and national models during the 19th century.

- a) **Homework:** Study the life, ideals, and accomplishments of a (Latin) American independence fighter. Get into character. Present yourself in class as if you were that historical person.

Objective: Analyze and classify the different national models proposed by the independence movements.

Week 9: (Latin) American modernity.

Lecture: What does it mean to be “modern”?

- a) **Read:** Gallo, Rubén. *Mexican Modernity: The Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005, pp.- 169-200.
- b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: Latin American Revolutions (Mexican Revolution’s case).

- a) **Homework:** Select a Mexican revolutionary figure from the list and find a) ideals and/or political/economic agenda, b) geographical range of military operations, c) armies he fought against, d) death (killed by...) Get into character. Present yourself in class as if you were that historical person.

Objective: Answer the questions What is “modernity”? And, what about "postmodernity"? Have we ever been "modern"? Analyze, classify, and explain the origins, goals, and aftermaths of the diverse revolutionary movements across Latin America in the 20th Century.

Week 10: To laugh and to cry in Latin America.

Lecture: Is there evil in Latin America?

- a) **Watch:** “Coco” (2017), Walt Disney Studios.
- b) **Guidance reading:** Entry on Antonio Caso in *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Jorge J. E. García (Ed.), pp. 41-52.
- c) **Homework:** Make a meme about the movie or the reading.

Workshop: Expressing our emotions in Latin America.

Possible Guest: Salenka Chinchin.

- a) **Homework:** Ask your parents/grandparents/guardians about the weirdest place or moment where they have laugh, and about the weirdest place or moment where they have cried.

Objective: Reflect on the particularities of Latin American socialization of emotions and metaphysics.

Week 11: Politics & fashion in Latin America.

Lecture: Intro to Latin American politicians' self-fashioning.

- a) **Read:** Milanesio, Natalia "A Man Like You: Juan Domingo Perón and the Politics of Attraction in Mid-Twentieth-Century Argentina." *Gender & History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, April 2014, pp.- 84 – 104.
- b) **Homework:** Make a meme about the reading.

Workshop: Clothing & politics.

- a) **Guidance reading:** Lipovetsky, Gilles. *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*. Princeton, Princeton UP, 1994, pp. 203-225.
- b) **Homework:** Choose one country from the list, select one of its current or former politicians, and analyze their self-fashioning. In particular, focus on their clothing and accessories, and the possible political meaning of those garments and accessories. You can also address the clothing's and designs' origin, cultural value, and technological features. Make a short presentation.

Objective: Analyze Latin American politicians' self-fashioning and their impact on national imaginaries.

Week 12: Music across the Americas.

Lecture: Music and propaganda.

- a) **Read:** Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. *Music on the Move*. United States of America, Univ. of Michigan Press, 2020, Chapter 5: "Music and Media in the Service of the State."
- b) **Homework:** Choose one Latin American song and reflect about how that song—and the genre or artist of your choice—reflects cultural variety, and its intertwining across history, in that country.

Workshop: Musical flows and complexity.

Possible guest: Welson Tremura.

- a) **Read:** Reflections on Bossa Nova, An Ageless Musical Style, by Welson Tremura.

Objective: Discuss the musical dimension of politics and cultural intertwining of Latin America.

Week 13: Literature + History + Science.

Lecture: No class. Holiday.

Workshop: Latin American fiction (and beyond).

Possible guest: Meg Weeks.

- a) **Read:** "The Cane," by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, and "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," by Gabriel García Márquez.

Objective: Use (Latin) American short stories to reflect on natural, social, and ideological processes.

Week 14: Free topic to be decided.

Lecture: To be decided.

Workshop: To be decided.

Week 15: No class.

Week 16: Final discussion & exhibit.

Morning: What can the world learn from Latin America?

Afternoon: Exhibit of your final projects at the Center for Latin American Studies.

No textbooks are required to buy for this course.

luisgomezlomeli@ufl.edu

[Webpage info](#)