

LAS6295
Latin American Business Environment

Dr. Mary Risner mriskner@latam.ufl.edu Office Hours: By appointment	Spring 2026 Module 4 March 2-April 24, 2026 Online 2-credits
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For any questions or concerns about the course, please e-mail Dr. Risner (directly or within the Canvas messaging system) to make an appointment to meet in Zoom. You can also post course-related questions to the Course Discussion Forum in Canvas. This course will be primarily asynchronous, but not self-paced. There are weekly assignments and deadlines that will be listed in the course overview and in Canvas. **There are four synchronous sessions when students and instructor meet featuring industry guest experts (Tuesday evenings).** The exact session dates will be listed early in the spring semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to the economic, political, social, and cultural characteristics of Latin America as they relate to the business context and will help students develop a foundational understanding of the region's business environment and its challenges and opportunities. The course is designed to contribute to the professional development of graduate students who are considering a career in business, government, or NGOs in or working with Latin America.

The overarching questions we will explore are: 1) How has its history influenced Latin America and its business practices today? 2) What makes the Latin American business environment unique? 3) What is the impact of e-commerce and digital platforms in the Latin American economy? 4) How can the region progress while considering social and environmental concerns addressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? 5) What are the challenges and opportunities for doing business in the region today?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- acquire a foundational knowledge of the economic, political, and social factors that have shaped the Latin American business environment
- learn to identify and assess the key drivers of business transformations in Latin American markets over time
- develop an understanding of the diversity of Latin American markets and consumers
- gain practical skills through activities that will help to critically assess market opportunities and growth while considering corporate social and environmental sustainability

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Spillan, J. E., & Ramsey, J. R. (2018). *Navigating Commerce in Latin America*. Taylor & Francis. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781351396561>
- Useche, P., McClendon, T.E., Avila, J. & Gendreau, B. (2025). *The Latin American Business Environment Report*. University of Florida Center for Latin American Studies. <https://www.latam.ufl.edu/program-highlights/latin-american-business-environment/publications/> (In press). PDF provided in Canvas.
- Other supplemental readings and web materials from various sources will be listed in Canvas.

Hardware and Software requirements:

- A computer with a headset (microphone and headphones) connected to the Internet
- A web browser (a recent version of Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer etc.)

Students' knowledge and operation of their own computer is their personal responsibility when taking an online course. Students are expected to have a headset or microphone and speakers during synchronous (online) sessions with the virtual guests.

COURSE GRADING/ASSIGNMENTS:

The course and assignments will revolve around five themes:

- 1) Overview of the Latin American region's history, geography, culture, society, and politics.
- 2) Marketing and the Latin American Consumer
- 3) Infrastructure Needs in the Region and Impact on Business
- 4) Latin American Businesses in Florida/the United States
- 5) Challenges and Opportunities of Doing Business with Latin America

Assignments will prompt students to critically assess and synthesize global business issues related to Latin America through research, readings, interaction with industry experts, and collaboration with peers. **Detailed information on assignment requirements will be available in Canvas.** A *Course Overview* document will also be available in Canvas to help prioritize due dates so students can manage their time accordingly.

1. Forum Discussion Posts (3 X 5 points= 15 points). Responses to peers and guiding questions based on readings.

2. Participation in Live Sessions (4 x 5 points = 20 points).

There are four live sessions with UF alumni, whose real-world expertise will serve as a supplement to readings and assignments. Sessions will be recorded for those with schedule conflicts, but attendance is encouraged to provide opportunities for engagement with speakers working in or with Latin America. Sessions will take place on Tuesdays from 6:30-7:30. Exact dates will be provided before the course starts.

3. Assignments (65 points).

a) **Interview Report with Latin American Industry Professional (15).** Based on readings and professional career goals, small groups of students will identify and contact a professional to interview by Zoom, develop a series of questions, and provide a written summary of the interview. Suggested points to cover will be provided.

b) **Presentation on Market Adaptation Strategies (15).** Students will choose a Latin American company of interest and investigate how it has entered and grown in Florida or the broader United States. Topics to include are motivation for expansion, strategic adaptations, successes and challenges in this market, and possible career pathways. They will prepare and submit a 10-12 slide deck of their findings.

c) **Synopsis on E-Commerce and Digital Platforms (10).** Based on guest speaker remarks, the interview report assignment, and readings; students will write a brief synopsis on the progress and obstacles of digitization in the region.

c) **Infographic on Sustainable Development/Infrastructure Issues and Needs (10 points).** After completing the assigned readings, students will locate 3 other articles from reputable sources about an infrastructure issue affecting the business environment in Latin America. The articles may be describing the problem or discussing solutions underway and should relate to any of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students will prepare an infographic on the issue to raise awareness of the issue.

d) **Reflection on business challenges and opportunities in the region (15 points).** Students will write a reflection synthesizing the various themes addressed in the course and how this learning and interaction with professionals can enhance their future career plans.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this preliminary syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Grading

The following grading scale will be used:

A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

Total points will be converted to grades according to the online catalog

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Assignments should be presented in a neat and concise manner. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students 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." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

AI Use Policy

- The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (ChatGPT, UF NaviGator, Copilot) can support learning and exploration, but should be used wisely and ethically.
- AI can be useful for brainstorming, but it can contain errors. Students are responsible for verifying all information using credible sources.
- It is not allowed to submit AI-generated writing as your own work.
- If you use AI in any part of your assignments, you must include a brief statement specifying which tool you used and how you used it ("Tool" was used to brainstorm key points or business articles).

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Campus Resources:

Health and 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.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu> 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)
Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources
E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Connections Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.
<https://career.ufl.edu/>

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.