

Latin America: Cultures, Environment and Development



GRG 395D / LAS 388
Unique Numbers 37700 and 40790
Fall 2014
Meets in CLA 2.606, Monday 7-10 pm

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Office hours Wednesdays 12-1 and by appointment

Course Description:

This seminar is designed to help Latin Americanist students perform academic research on human-environment relationships, as well as to work for and to critique development agencies, businesses and non-governmental organizations. The class explores the ideas and methods of a number of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields including cultural and political ecology, ecological anthropology, environmental history, development studies, sustainability studies, and cultural geography. The course will address a range of issues of sustainable development,

cultural and political ecology, cultural identity and territory, gender, the smallholder/ householder focus of production, adaptive tactics and strategies, food and farming, environmental impacts of traditional land use, conservation strategies, and the changing impacts of markets and the state on local economies and land use. Topics and readings are developed in part on the basis of input from students.

Prerequisites:

Graduate standing and some knowledge of rural Latin America or the Caribbean. Knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese is desirable but not necessary. **THIS COURSE IS RESTRICTED; YOU MUST OBTAIN INSTRUCTOR'S PERMISSION TO REGISTER.** To obtain permission, email the instructor with a brief description of your research area and Latin American academic and field experience.

Course Characteristics:

Each class will consist of (1) short lecture(s) by the instructor; (2) proctored discussions of the week's readings, co-chaired by two students who have, in consultation with the instructor, prepared a strategy for addressing the readings and student essays (which may include splitting into smaller groups); and (3) a food break providing for more informal discussion of the topics.

Reading Assignments

There is no textbook. Course readings and other materials will be posted on Canvas. Readings vary widely across topics and disciplines and include, for example, Arturo Escobar, Maria Elisa Christie, Anthony Bebbington, Juanita Sundberg, Karl Zimmerer, Eric Wolf, Maria Belen Norona Salcedo, Thomas Sowell, Charles Hale, Paul Robbins, Diane Rocheleau, Kendra McSweeney, James Scott, Diana Liverman, and Eduardo Gudynas.

Summary of Grading:

Grades will be assigned on the plus and minus scale (A-, B+, and so forth), as follows:

93-100 A

90-92.99 A-

87-89.99 B+

83-86.99 B

80-82.99 B-

77-79.99 C+ and so forth.

Weekly written commentaries, attendance, and participation 45%. Most weeks, a topic will be assigned for a written commentary or short presentation. Keep within the assigned word count lengths (200 to 300 words). These must be posted on Canvas by 5 pm Sunday prior to the class; use formats as provided in class. These may be shared with the weekly proctor (s) and other students. 3-4 points per week for 13 weeks.

Proctoring 20%. Each student will normally co-proctor one or two classes during the semester. The two proctors should join in a brief presentation giving an overview of the readings as a whole in relation to the topic and the relation to previous readings and discussions. Plan for 10 minutes (5 minutes each). Write out notes for your presentation unless you have outstanding presentation skills. Proctors will then develop activities for about two hours of discussion (including a break for food halfway through the class). Get advance permission for any videos. Proctors

will develop a strategy to involve students with wrestling with the questions of the week. Strategies must include some peer reviews of discussion papers. Proctoring should strive to be innovative and challenge "models" of routine involvement; to this end, at the end of every class students will be asked to evaluate the classroom experience of both the professor and proctors. The professor will begin and end each seminar with lectures on the topic.

Paper 1, due OCTOBER 20 15%. Three pages (900 words). In this paper you will be discussing issues of agency, identity, and participation in a particular development context in Latin America. This may be your project site, or you may choose a case example from the readings. The paper should be framed in terms of one or two guiding questions from this course. You may use the questions provided for our class to guide your paper, or come up with your own questions. You will present your paper topic in class with a brief powerpoint (5-10 minutes)

Paper 2, due DECEMBER 1 20%. Six to ten pages (1800 - 3000 words). In this paper you will be exploring a particular trajectory of development or conservation in a local setting in Latin America. Again, you may use your own project or take a case example from the readings. The paper should again be framed in terms of one or two guiding questions.

Citation Style

Please use a consistent citation style, such as the APA parenthetical citation style and bibliography format.

Classroom Policies

Online course materials may not be copied or distributed without prior permission. Students are expected to arrive on time to class exactly at 7 pm as a courtesy to others. No matter how interesting the discussion, classes will terminate by 10 pm in courtesy to those who need to catch a bus.

Accommodations for Special Needs

The University makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students can find UT Austin's policies

and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Academic Integrity

Everyone is expected to show respect toward others. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Using other person's work without appropriate citation is plagiarism.

Schedule of Topics

(Tentative; Subject to Change). Reading assignments will be provided as the semester proceeds, including "classics," recent theoretical debates, and case examples. All readings will be placed on Canvas.

Week 1 September 8 Introduction

No readings; we get to know each other. Brief lecture on definitions and theories of development and modernization.

Week 2 September 15 Development: Alternative Definitions and Theories; Modernization; Capitalism; Post Development

Questions for essay: Did Smith and Godwin have alternative visions of human nature that are relevant to our policy and politics today? What are some alternative ideologies or definitions of development and who determines the prevailing definition? How has development or its absence been explained? Is development (in the sense of modernization) even desirable?

Readings for this and future weeks will be provided on Canvas as the course proceeds.

Week 3 Sept 22 Cultural and Political Ecology, Methods and Theories.

Questions: what methods and theories and stances are appropriate to understand complex human-environment interactions in the real world? What can specialists or activists offer to help solve real world problems?

Week 4 September 29 Smallholders, Householders, Livelihoods

Questions: What is "smallholder" farming and what are the organizational advantages of smallholder/householder units over other forms of agricultural organization? How do the concepts of livelihood, gender, and "tactics" provide both organizational principles and a challenge for understanding rural activities and empowering local people at the local scale?

Week 5 Oct 6 Identity and Territory

What "traits" or markers, locations or behaviors have been important in defining identity groups in Latin America? What information exists about these markers and can they be mapped? What uses or abuses might such maps be subject to? What role might ethnic, racial and/or gender territoriality play in economic development? In maintaining group access to resources?

Week 6 Oct 13 Local Groups and Participatory Development.

Questions: What are some techniques of participatory development and rapid rural appraisal, and what relationship if any do these have with infrapolitics or the politics of scale? How might the theater of development or international education support community development?

Week 7 Oct 20 Issues of Agency and Participation (First Paper Due)

No readings; students present papers; provide Greg with one or two pictures for projection during each six minute talk.

Week 8 Oct 27 Population and Resources

Questions to consider: How severe is population pressure on resources, and how might people adapt to use resources more efficiently? Does a tragedy of the commons require privatization? Does modern population growth require mutual coercion mutually agreed upon? What factors are causing birth rates to drop everywhere in Latin America and in most other countries in the world?

Week 9 Nov 3 Neoliberalism and the Environment: Forests and Conservation

Questions: How has neoliberalism affected the environment, and what new research is needed? Compare market based and state approaches to conservation. Who benefits and how from the new paradigms of conservation and the commodification of nature?

Week 10 Nov 10 Mining

Questions: Can extractive industries overcome the "resource curse" and be harnessed for wider social good? What challenges do the readings explore to this end? To what extent are post-neoliberal policies or offshore development of resources helpful for local populations and environments?

Week 11 Nov 17 Food and Food Commodity Chains

Questions: If we are what we eat, who are we and how/why is this changing at various scales? How does the relationship between consumption and identity inform politics (dominant politics and/or politics of resistance) of food consumption at these scales?

Week 12 Nov 24 Agriculture

Question to consider: To what extent are smallholding strategies still relevant in the context of the changing scale of

global agriculture? What challenges are created by ranching, plantation crops, nontraditional export crops, and soybeans?

Week 13 December 1 Conclusions; Second Paper Due (No readings)