Landscapes of Mexico and Caribbean America

Course numbers: GRG 341K / LAS 330.2
Unique numbers: 40365 / 43685
Meeting time: MWF 1100 – 1150
Meeting room: CLA 0.128
Prerequisite: Upper division standing or consent of instructor

Instructor: William E. Doolittle
Office: CLA 3.704
Hours: By appointment made via email
Email: dolitl@austin.utexas.edu
Website: www.utexas.edu/courses/wd/

Teaching assistant: Jillian Ames
Office hours: By appointment made via email
Email: jillianames@gmail.com

Course Overview:
This course focuses on the geographical differences that exist within the lands between the continental United States and South America. Although “Middle America” as it is sometimes called, is our immediate neighbor to the south, “Americans” or perhaps more appropriately “estadunideses,” often have an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of this land. The region is in some respects like a tapestry or mosaic. For example, in reference to one very large portion of it—México—Lesley Byrd Simpson titled his book Many Mexicos. In this course, the region is studied systematically by unraveling or breaking it into 12 sub-regions. Each is discussed in the context of its: (1) biophysical environments, (2) the ways in which people have adapted to and transformed it historically, and (3) the current economic, political, and cultural landscape.

The course is intended for all advanced students, presumably with a modicum of critical-thinking skills, regardless of their specific interests. It is designed to introduce the region to those students with little or no knowledge of it, and to help students familiar with the region to understand better its geographical attributes.

It is approved as carrying a Global Cultures flag.
Grading Policy:
The final course grade will be based on three criteria as follows.

Three exams comprised of 33 multiple choice questions each (value: 30% each for 90% of the course grade).

One exercise-based quiz involving 20 fill in the blank questions, and two short answer questions (value: 10% of the course grade).

Class participation based largely but not exclusively on attendance. The course grade based on the three examinations and the exercise test will be dropped one letter for 4 unexcused absences, two letters for 7 unexcused absences, three letters for 10 unexcused absences, and four letters for 13 unexcused absences. Students who participate enthusiastically in class by asking questions, offering constructive comments, providing new information, and proffering intelligent opinions will be rewarded with extra points.

Plus and minus grades will be used for the final course grade.

Laptops and Tablets:
The use of personal computers in class is highly encouraged. Copies of all PowerPoint slides presented in class are also available in PDF through Canvas. Students should convert them using OCR or some other program and use them in class to assist in taking notes.

Textbooks:
There is NO text book for this course. Instead, 1 to 2 readings for each class meeting are available in PDF through Canvas.

Final Exam:
There is NO “final exam,” meaning a comprehensive examination, for this course. The third exam, although not weighted any heavier than the first two exams, will be administered during the scheduled final exam period.

Students with Disabilities:
Such students may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/ 512.471.6259.

Academic Dishonesty:
Students are expected to be knowledgeable of, and conform to, UT’s Honor Code. http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html
Religious Holidays:
According to UT policy, students must notify professors of their pending absence at least 14 days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. Students missing a class or examination because of a religious holy day will be given an opportunity to make-up missed work.

Security and Emergency Evacuation:
Students are expected to be knowledgeable of UT’s recommendations about campus safety and security www.utexas.edu/safety/ and emergency evacuation routes and procedures www.utexas.edu/emergency

The most direct route out of the building (CLA) from our lecture hall (room 0.128) is through either of the two doors at the rear of the room and then turning left once in the hallway.

Tentative Schedule, Fall 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August</th>
<th>27 W</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 F</td>
<td>Landscapes and Regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1 M</td>
<td>Holiday: No class meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 W</td>
<td>Lesser Antilles: Trade Winds</td>
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<td>5 F</td>
<td>Lesser Antilles: Colonialism</td>
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<td>8 M</td>
<td>Lesser Antilles: Demography</td>
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<td>10 W</td>
<td>Caribbean Cool</td>
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<td>12 F</td>
<td>Greater Antilles: Karst</td>
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<td>15 M</td>
<td>Greater Antilles: Infrastructure</td>
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<td>17 W</td>
<td>Greater Antilles: Urban</td>
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<td>19 F</td>
<td>True Caribbean Pirates</td>
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<td>22 M</td>
<td>Caribbean Central America: Tropics</td>
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<td>24 W</td>
<td>Caribbean Central America: Bananas</td>
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<td>26 F</td>
<td>Caribbean Central America: Canals</td>
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<td>29 M</td>
<td>Caribbean Central America: Panorama</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>1 W</td>
<td>First Exam</td>
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<td>3 F</td>
<td>Pacific Central America: Dry Forests</td>
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<td>6 M</td>
<td>Pacific Central America: Tenure</td>
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<td>8 W</td>
<td>Pacific Central America: Devulneropility</td>
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<td>10 F</td>
<td>Sales On, Sails Up: Its Dia de la Raza</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 M</td>
<td>Yucatan: Flat</td>
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15 W Yucatan: Maya
17 F Eastern Mexico: Hydrology
20 M Eastern Mexico: Ranching
22 W Eastern Mexico: Texas Competitor
24 F Food as Geography
27 M Southern High/Low Lands: Fragility
29 W Southern High/Low Lands: (In)accessibility
31 F Second Exam

November
3 M Mesa Central: Basins
5 W Mesa Central: Ancient Accomplishments
7 F Mesa Central: Haciendas
10 M Mesa Central: “The” City
12 W El Bajio and the West
14 F The Mexicans: Through Their Eyes
17 M Mesa del Norte: Mining and Forestry
19 W Mesa del Norte: Cityscapes
21 F The Northwest: Hot and Dry
24 M Exercise Quiz
26 W Reality Check: No class meeting
28 F Holiday: No class meeting

December
1 M The Northwest: Serrana & Lost Hat Weavers
3 W The Northwest: Breadbasket?
5 F One River One Country
11 Th Third Exam (not a comprehensive “final”), 9-Noon

19 August 2014