

Latin American Studies

The major and minor in Latin American studies are administered by the Latin American Studies Committee: Professors Gudmundson (Latin American studies), Márquez (Latin American studies), Morgan (anthropology), Paus (economics), Sarzynski (Latin American studies).

Contact Person

Dawn Larder, *senior administrative assistant*

Latin American studies is an interdisciplinary program that emphasizes 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 program studies 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.

Requirements for the Major

Credits

- A minimum of 40 credits
- At least 20 credits at the 300 level

Courses

- Latin American Studies 180, Introduction to Latin American Cultures
- At least one advanced (300-level) course on Spanish American or Brazilian literature taught in the language
- At least one course 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

- 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.
- At least two courses outside the primary area of interest

Other

- A command of Spanish or Portuguese. An elementary knowledge of the other language (Spanish or Portuguese) and study abroad are strongly recommended for all majors.

Spanish language and Spanish American literature instruction are offered at Mount Holyoke College, and Portuguese is available through Five College registration at Smith College or the University of Massachusetts. Programs for study abroad can be arranged throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin American studies is an interdisciplinary major. Students who pursue an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the College's "outside the major" requirement (see p. 8).

Latin America was traditionally defined as only those areas colonized by Spain and Portugal. In practice, however, virtually all of the Western Hemisphere except the United States and Canada have tended to fall within courses taught under the heading of Latin American studies in the United States. Thus, the region and peoples we study are heterogeneous, and their historical definition is also tied to U.S. or "American" actions and self-definition.

The study of Latin America, as with most world area studies, began with a basis in literature and the humanities. However, this often limited the perspectives available to both students and researchers. As both self-defined by language or culture and unique in the world,

area studies often failed to attract social science theorists and comparative study. Similarly, prospective majors often bring with them a narrow thematic interest or disciplinary background. To ensure a broader knowledge of the area and its peoples, all majors complete at least two courses outside their primary area of interest, broadly defined as culture and society and political economy orientations (see course listings below). A course of study for the major should begin with Latin American Studies 180, as well as language instruction as needed. Thereafter, course work at the 200 level offers more challenging introductions to either discrete, national/regional experiences or more specific, narrow topics treated region-wide. Examples of the former include courses on the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, Brazil, the Andean area, the Southern cone (southern Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile), and Hispanic/Caribbean peoples abroad. Examples of the latter include Economic Development, Latin American Political Systems, Spanish American Literature, the Social and Intellectual History of Spanish America, and Slavery in the Americas. Finally, course work at the 300 level offers in-depth studies of particular problems employing specialized bibliography and research materials, the background and contextual knowledge for which the major will have acquired in her earlier course work. Examples include courses on various topics and special problems in Spanish American Literature, Seminar in Economic Development, Anthropology of Economic Development, and Post-modernism and Latin America. Independent research, which may lead to honors work, is available via Latin American Studies 395, for which the major should prepare by the end of her junior year. Course work should be planned in close consultation with the major advisor, who is chosen from among the program faculty upon declaration of the major.

Courses in culture and society include Latin American Studies 170, 180, 274, 277, 373, 376, 388, and, depending on content, 287 and 387; Spanish 219, 235, 237, 331, 341, 351, 361; and Anthropology 202 and 203. Courses in political economy include Latin American Studies 175, 260, 275, 276, 288, 289, 386, 389,

and, depending on content, 287 and 387; Economics 213, 314; Politics 214; Anthropology 202, 226; and, depending on content, International Relations 240, 301, 312, and 314.

Requirements for the Minor

Credits

- A minimum of 20 credits

Courses

- Latin American Studies 180, Latin American Cultures
- At least one course at the 300 level
- One higher-level Latin American studies course

Courses in the student's major field may not be used to fulfill the requirements of the minimum minor.

Course Offerings

*170f Readings in Caribbean Literature

Features comparison of selected readings in the literature of the Spanish-, French-, and English-speaking Caribbean. Introduces the literary personality of the area, the transformation of the material of Caribbean social life into formally crafted and effective literary statement, and characteristic thematic and broader cultural preoccupations. Asks primary questions, such as "How does a novel - or poem - work?" and addresses similar issues related to forms of critical thinking and literary analysis. Readings and discussion in English.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

*R. Marquez
4 credits*

*175 Historical Emergence of the Caribbean

The historical development of the Caribbean from the Conquest to the mid-twentieth century. Patterns of conquest, colonization, and settlement by European nations; the rise of plantation-dominated society; the process of insular and interregional differentiation; the emergence of American imperial designs; and the rise of anticolonial, nationalist movements. Comparative reviews of the experience of Haiti, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico

highlight broader regional trends and the ways the Caribbean's major language zones have responded to the challenge of their shared history.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

R. Márquez

4 credits

180f Introduction to Latin American Cultures

(Same as History 180f) 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.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Gudmundson

4 credits

***275s Paradigms of New World Thought**

This course is devoted to the work of commanding figures of Latin American and Caribbean thought at various times and different places. Thinkers whose work may form its basis in various offerings include among others: Columbus, Bartolomé de Las Casas, José Martí, J. C. Mariátegui, C.L.R. James, etc. Their lives and work exemplify the diversities, varying regional settings, social contexts, and shifting historical coordinates of major epochs of transition. Their assessment of a myriad of key issues has made each a touchstone of continuing authority and influence extending beyond their particular locale, time, or region. Why this should be so is among the many questions we will address.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

R. Marquez

4 credits

***278f The Fiction of History: Historical Truth and Imaginative Invention in the Latin American Novel**

Examination of the scope, reach, and limits of the Latin American variant of the histori-

cal novel as a narrative form. The variety of ways in which it fictionally strives to re-create "certain crisis in the personal destinies of a number of human beings [which] coincide and interweave with the determining context of an historical crisis," the historical vision each writer brings to the work, will be given particular attention.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

R. Márquez

4 credits

287fs Topics in Latin American Studies

Designed for students who have had an introduction to Latin America through Latin American Studies 180 or 181 or a course on Latin America in some other discipline (anthropology, history, literature, or politics, for example), 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.

Fall 2009

287f(01) U.S.-Latin American Relations

(Same as History 287fs) This course examines the modern history of U.S.-Latin American relations, questioning the nature and context of what many scholars and politicians have labeled "U.S. imperialism." We will discuss classic cases of U.S. intervention in Latin America and of Latin American cases of anti-Americanism. The course employs a cultural approach to other instances of U.S.-Latin American relations to challenge the idea that all relations fit neatly into the classic dichotomy. Students will conduct primary source research on U.S. periodicals and government documents to produce a final research paper.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

S. Sarzynski

4 credits

Spring 2010

287s(01) The Amazon: From Cannibals to Rainforest Crunch

(Same as History 287fs) From the time of the conquest, the Amazon has been imagined as

an exotic and savage terrain: mysterious, dangerous, and cascading in untouched natural resources. This course examines the Amazon as a historical narrative in popular culture and political struggles. We will read explorers' narratives, examine representations of the Amazon and its people in film and literature, discuss labor and the rubber industry, and analyze the environmental movement and other recent social movements.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

S. Sarzynski

4 credits

288f Modern Mexico

(Same as History 288f) 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.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Gudmundson

4 credits

*289s Slavery in the Americas

(Same as History 289s) 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. *Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement*

L. Gudmundson

4 credits

295fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

1-4 credits

*373s Studies in Comparative Caribbean Culture: Contemporary Caribbean Writers

A sustained comparative study of the developing canon of three major contemporary writers—Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad), and Maryse Conde (Guadeloupe)—from the Caribbean, representing the region's Spanish-, English-, and French-speaking cultural zones. Examines the evolving content, contours and scope of each writer's work and unique perception of the New World, as well as its distinctively Antillean "structure of feeling," participation in modern debates about Caribbean culture, and distinctive contributions to the development of the novel in the contemporary Caribbean.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

R. Márquez

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or related field, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

*386f Central America: Reform, Reaction, Revolution

(Same as History 386f) 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.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Gudmundson

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or related field, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

387fs Special Topics in Latin American Studies

This course offers advanced students an opportunity for intensive study of a problem with careful attention to research methods and to presenting their work in oral and written form.

Fall 2009

387f(01) *The Era of the Cuban Revolution*

(Same as History 387fs) The course familiarizes students with the history of the Cuban Revolution and its global significance in terms of culture and politics. We examine the relationship between the Cuban Revolution and anti-colonial/anti-imperialism social movements, guerilla activism, Third Cinema, Black Power movements, and other armed conflicts in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The course incorporates history with film and literature to provide an alternative view of Cold War politics that arose from the so-called Third World.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

S. Sarzynski

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or related field, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

Spring 2010

387s(01) *Memory, Politics, and Identity in Latin America*

(Same as History 387fs) The course examines ways that Latin Americans remember and commemorate their pasts, taking into account the political and cultural struggles that accompany acts of remembering and forgetting. The “hall of mirrors” of memory requires an examination of multiple sources and topics including oral history, visual culture, performances, museums, slavery and Africa, religion, revolution, and the politics of dictatorships and truth commissions.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-A requirement

S. Sarzynski

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or history, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

388s Postmodernism and Latin America

(Same as History 388f) For many the “discovery” of America opened the modern era. Its closing may also have been foretold in Latin America’s confounding of diverse theories of modernization and development in recent times. This seminar will introduce the student to a number of both classic and more recent works on Latin America (in English) that advance along postmodernist lines, ranging from cultural contact and conflict, language, meaning, and power in the sixteenth century, to the invention of national identities in the nineteenth century, to discourses of ethnicity, class, gender, and reason in the twentieth century.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Gudmundson

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or related field, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

***389s Agrarian America: Sugar, Cotton, Coffee, Wheat**

This course explores the structure and variety of societies generated in North, Central, and South America by four widely distributed export crops. Although not bound by rigid chronology, our focus will be primarily on the period 1750-1950. Principal concerns of the course are variations by time and place in each commodity’s technologies, labor systems, farm sizes, and social structure; the political dynamics associated with each type of farming; and the problematic features of capitalism in agriculture, or, how and when do peasants become farmers and farming agribusiness? Readings in English on cases drawn from throughout the Americas.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Gudmundson

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in Latin American studies or related field, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

395fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement
1-8 credits

Related Courses in Other Departments

See department listings for course descriptions.

Economics

- 213s Economic Development
- 314f Economic Development in the Age of Globalization

Politics

- 243f Latin American Politics

Spanish

- 219f U.S. Latino/a Literature
- 221f Introduction to Spanish and Latin American Film
- 235f Introduction to Latin American Literature I
- 237s Introduction to Latin American Literature II
- 341f Contemporary Latin American Writers: Skins of a Woman; Afro-Latina and Afro-Latin American Women Writers
- 351f Latin American Thought: Latin Music in the U.S.: From Doo-wop to Hip-Hop and More
- 351s (Gendst 333-02) Latin American Thought: Beyond Logocentrism
- 362s Seminar in Spanish Studies: Global Quixote: Reading Cultural Imperialism and Resistance in Comparative Context