

Geography 27000/LACS 34363: Geography of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean

Department of Geography and Environmental Science

SYLLABUS AND COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor:	Ramiro Campos
Term:	Spring 2025
Office:	Office Number 1032N
Class Meeting Days:	Tuesdays, Fridays Class
Meeting Hours:	1:00 pm – 2:15 pm
E-Mail:	rcampos@hunter.cuny.edu
Class Location:	HN 1022
Office Hours:	Fridays, 12:00 pm – 12:50 pm; other times by appointment ONLY
Course Mode:	In person, assignments on Brightspace

Course Description

This course introduces learners to the region of Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Middle America) from a geographical perspective. The course will introduce students to the methods of geographical inquiry by focusing on the environments and societies of Middle America. This course will place special emphasis on the cultural and transnational geographies of Middle America as well as examine the cultural geographies, environmental histories, and environmental/social sustainability movements.

Course Overview

This course will introduce learners to look at the world from a geographical perspective. This means that concepts of space, place, location, scale, borders, and regions will shape our inquiry. In turn, these concepts will help learners describe major characteristics of natural environments, economies, and cultures of Middle America to identify the main challenges they face today on the path to sustainability and equity. Having a broad and integrative approach to understanding cultural, economic, political, and environmental phenomena will in turn allow students to develop the critical thinking and reflective skepticism that can lead to environmental and social sustainability.

Course Objectives / Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the BA in Geography

The course is designed to introduce learners to the region of Middle America (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean) from a geographical perspective. At the end of the course, learners will be able to

1. Gather, interpret, and assess geographic, demographic, economic, and public health data from multiple sources and points of view to understand Middle America from a scientific and natural world perspective as well as from the perspective of the humanities, economics, history, and the social sciences.
2. Critically evaluate the evidence for Middle America as a cultural region, as well as understand the racial, gendered, and indigenous legacies of the societies of Middle America. Students will analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
3. Produce well-reasoned written arguments using geographic, demographic, economic, and public health data. These data will help students analyze the historical, political, cultural, and economic relationships that Middle America has to the rest of the world.
4. Identify and apply the concepts of the Anthropocene, sequent occupance, cultural landscape, urbanization, migration, uneven development, and demographic transition as well as concepts found but not limited to public health, anthropology international economics and diplomacy, human rights, to critically analyze models of social and economic development in Middle America and how these have changed over time.
5. Analyze the cultural diversity of Middle America as a legacy of its pre-Columbian societies as well as the different experiences that the countries and ethnic groups within and throughout Middle America in the last several decades. These experiences will be analyzed from orthodox (liberal, World Bank) and heterodox (indigenist, Marxist, feminist, World-System Theory) perspectives.
6. Clearly and effectively communicate about issues associated with the historical development of Middle America. The historical development of Middle America will be analyzed from orthodox (liberal, World Bank) and heterodox (indigenist, Marxist, feminist, World-System Theory) perspectives.
7. Students will also analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies, in particular Marronage, Marxism, feminism, indigenism, and major orthodox movements such as public health campaigns.

Suggested Texts and Materials

1. Jokisch, Brad. 2023. *Latin America and the Caribbean, An Environment and Development Approach*. Rowman and Littlefield
2. Gallup, John Luke, et al. 2003. *Is Geography Destiny? Lessons from Latin America* Inter-American Development Bank/Stanford University Press. ISBN 0-8047-4927-2
3. Vitz, Matthew. 2018. *A City on a Lake: Urban Political Ecology and the Growth of Mexico City*. Duke University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0822370406
4. **Additional Readings: will be posted on Brightspace**

Buying the text is optional. If you are a Geography Major or a first-year student, I recommend acquiring this book to better follow my lectures. Copies of all texts will be left on Reserve in the Library or scans placed on Brightspace.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Honesty

All written assignments must be your own. Any passages not in your own words must be in quotation marks with the source cited. Provide references for all data, information and other people's ideas.

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. Plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating in any portion of the work required for this course will be punished to the full extent allowed according to Hunter College regulations. **It is your responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty, not for me to tell you after the fact.**

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

Mental Health:

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are resources available at Hunter College to assist you. The Counseling and Wellness Services division at Student Affairs offer free and confidential short-term counseling to students. Please visit their website for all contact information: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/cws/counselingservices/welcome>.

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect the implementation of student evaluation, this syllabus should be considered a guide for the course and subject to change with advance notice.

Change(s) to this syllabus will be announced via Brightspace.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College affirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationship. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College. a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, on contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444) b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) of Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

Basis for Overall Semester Grade.

Assessment	Percent of Final Grade
1. Class participation	20%
Participation will not only be assessed by frequency but also by how much you contributed to the learning environment during the semester. Each Friday we will begin the session with a short discussion around a set of videos or a short reading to familiarize you with the topic. PLEASE PARTICIPATE. Please refer to the rubric for more detail.	
2. 8 quizzes	40%
You will be responsible for 4 low-stakes multiple-choice quizzes of 40 questions each as well as 4 map-based quizzes of 10 questions each.	
3. Reflection Papers (10 pts each)	
You will be responsible for two 1000-word reflection papers. Please refer to the rubric for more details.	20%
4. Midterm and Final Exam (10 points each)	20%
Total	100%

Grade Dissemination

All grades will be posted on Brightspace promptly. Delays to your grades might occur in cases where I may give an extension (to the whole class) or a weather emergency, etc.

Examination Policies

1. Exams will cover all material that has been covered in lecture, in-class discussions, and Brightspace.
2. Study guides will be available on Brightspace for each of the exams. If an exam date changes during the semester (e.g., due to inclement weather, or even slower pacing of the course because of great discussions in class), it is the responsibility of the student to be informed about such changes.
3. ***Make-up exams will be allowed only under extenuating circumstances such as a documented illness or medical emergency on the day of the exam.***
4. All emergencies should be brought to my attention within 24 hours of a scheduled exam.
5. Please e-mail me a photo of your medical documentation **before** returning to class. The note MUST be from an MD attesting that you were **too ill** to attend classes on the exam day.
 - a. A note from a medical officer saying that the student was seen or complained of a certain illness will not be accepted as a reason for missing an examination.
 - b. Without proper documentation, a student will receive a zero point for a 'no-show' exam.
6. Students who miss the final exam, even with a valid doctor's note, still need to contact me before the exam and they will only be given a make-up exam within two weeks of the beginning of the *following* semester.
7. *The penalty for document fraud is course failure, and the student will be reported to the Provost.*

Course Policies: Grades

There are no individual extensions for assignments, quizzes, or the final exam UNLESS in the case of a documented medical emergency.

Extra Credit Policy: There will be no extra credit assignments given for this course. I might be lying.

Grades of "Incomplete": No incomplete grades will be given except in cases of extreme circumstances.

Pass/No Credit Option: You have the option to request a grade of Pass/No Credit for this course. To receive this grade, you must submit the request for a Pass/No Credit grade by completing the form linked to the registrar's website (<https://hunter.cuny.edu/students/registration/register-for-classes/credit-no-credit/#instructions>). The form must be submitted by 11:59 pm the day before the last day of classes. The decision is irrevocable. To qualify for a Pass/No Credit grade, you must complete all the requirements for the course, including attendance, assignments, exams, and the final exam. To Pass, you must earn at least a D. If you stop attending, stop submitting assignments, and/or do not take the final exam, you receive a grade of WU (Unofficial Withdrawal), which cannot be converted to Pass/No Credit, and may affect your financial aid status.

Email: Please e-mail me **ONLY** after you have checked Brightspace for any announcements. My e-mail address is rcampos@hunter.cuny.edu.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

Rubrics will be used to grade your Brightspace assignments and class/seminar participation

Please check Brightspace for the different rubrics used for the different assessments used in this course.

1. Most of the papers will require a substantial amount of reading, and much of it is from supplemental texts. Please make every effort to read the supplementary materials. Copies will be placed on reserve in the Library.
2. The online quizzes will be placed on Brightspace at the end of each chapter/topic during the first half of the semester. They are meant to assess your learning. They will be based primarily on text material and lecture notes.
3. The mid-term and final exams will be based on supplemental texts and in-class discussions. Please pay attention to how the instructor and your peers discuss the issues presented in the course material.
4. Although the syllabus indicates that the course will go into depth of three subregions of Middle America in the final three weeks, please rest assured that throughout the semester we will be examining the entire region. **Student interest and participation can, of course, lead the discussions and course material to other areas of the region!!!! Just ask!!!!**
5. You should consider yourself a scholar in this course, not just a student. You will be expected to learn how to produce knowledge, not just receive it. Any lecture period can develop into a seminar format at any time. I encourage you to ask questions and I expect you to answer other students' questions. We always learn best from our peers.
6. Should you need to contact me, please email me at rcampos@hunter.cuny.edu, with GEOG 27000 in the subject line and sign your name as it appears in CUNYFirst. I will do my best to respond within 48 hours, except for weekends, when I might take longer.

Preferred Gender Pronoun

I affirm all forms of gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to inform me about your preferred gender pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun. All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify

pronouns with which we would like to be addressed...I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

Professor Acknowledgements

1. I acknowledge the stress, anxiety, and depression of the post-pandemic (which disproportionately affect female and BIPOC students) and these may translate into:
 - Limited Technology
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Food Insecurity
 - Unemployment

Please feel free to meet with me individually about challenges and I will recommend or investigate resources.

2. I acknowledge my own set of privileges: lighter-skinned, US-Born, Native English speaker, male, upper-middle-class, cis-gendered, able-bodied, and that this may translate into perceived
 - Inconsiderateness while discussing religion, migrant status,
 - Interrupting students while they speak
 - Dismissal of ideas that are novel or obsolete
 - Normalizing ideas that may be obsolete/violent/exclusive/discriminatory

Other Policies

1. You are responsible for everything covered in class (and readings), including any lectures you may have missed. If you miss a class, make sure that you CHECK BRIGHTSPACE LMS and copy notes from your classmates.
2. It is your responsibility to check your Hunter email for messages from me. I may send emails to you regarding your individual performance in class or regarding important class announcements.
3. This course is not a glorified high school course in geography. It will be difficult at times and will demand more time than some of your other courses. Please understand that if you do not devote at least 4-5 hours of study for this course a week, and especially if you fall behind on the coursework, you will receive the grade your effort reflects.
4. You should consider yourself a scholar in this course, not just a student. You will be expected to learn how to produce knowledge, not just receive it.

Absences for Religious Observances

Any student wishing to take a holiday for religious observance must notify me by email before the third week of the semester. In that email, you must provide all the dates that you wish to be excused from class during this semester and details of the religious observance. Religious observance cannot be used as an excuse for late submission of assignments. If you miss an exam or a map test due to religious observance, arrangements must be made to take a make-up test/exam on the day that you return to class. This arrangement must be made prior to being absent.

Course Outline

All Dates Tentative

WEEK SUBJECT Concepts Explored: READING(S)

Week 1	<u>Introducing Latin America</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regions • Site/Situation • Anthropocene • Diffusion • Development • Social Movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 1 • Gallup pgs 1-8 • Please see Brightspace for additional material
Week 2	<u>Cultural and Historical Geography</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperialism • Cultural landscape • Hinterland • Sequent occupance • Columbian Exchange • Atlantic World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 3 • Vitz Ch 1 • Gallup pgs 14 -27 • Please see Brightspace for additional material
Week 3	<u>Cultural and Historical Geography (continued)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercantilism vs Liberalism • Say's Law • Comparative Advantage • Epidemiology • Post-Victimology • Caste • Urban Morphology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 4 • Gallup pgs 28-67 • Please see Brightspace for additional material • <u>Paper 1 Due: 2/21</u>
Week 4-5	<u>Economic Geography</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agro-commodity chains • Gini Coefficient/ Robin Hood Index • World-Systems Theory • Neoliberalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 5 • Vitz Ch 2
Week 6-7	<u>Economic Geography (continued)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis' Model of Growth • Import Substitution • Anticommunism • Modernization Theory • Uneven Development • Altitudinal Zonation • Monoculture • Petrodollars and Austerity • Foreign Direct Investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 5 • Gallup pgs 131-134 • <u>Paper 2 Due: 3/14</u>
Week 8	<u>MIDTERM EXAM</u>	<u>March 18</u>	<u>IN-CLASS SHORT ESSAY EXAM</u>

Week 8-9	<u>People and Society</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population Patterns • Smallholder agriculture • Urbanization • Demographic Transition • Urban to rural Migration • International Migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 6 • Encarnacion Ch 1 <p>Please see Brightspace for additional material</p>
Week 10	<u>People and Society (continued)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Roles • Gender Inequality • Microfinance and Gender • Gender behavior vs Identity • Queer Latin Americans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 7 • Encarnacion Ch 2 • Please see Brightspace for additional material • Paper 3 Due: 4/4
Week 11	<u>Changing Physical Environments</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric and ocean patterns • Climate Zones • Regional Plate Tectonics • Biomes • Pristine Myth • Agroforestry • Escaping the Malthusian Trap • Myth of the Tragedy of the Commons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 2 • Please see Brightspace for additional material
Week 12	<u>Changing Physical Environments</u> <u>(continued)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extractivism • Aquaculture • Environmental Movements • Hazards vs Disasters • Climate Change • Epidemiological Transition • Public Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 2, 9 • Vitz Ch 4 • Please see Brightspace for additional material
Week 13	<u>Urban Words</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanization theories • Urban governance • Urban morphology • World City Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 8 • Vitz Ch 6 • Please see Brightspace for additional material
Week 14	<u>Urban Worlds</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban poverty • Haussmannization • Gentrification • Peripheral Squatters • Sustainable and Green Cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokisch Ch 7 • Gallup pgs 140-147 • Please see Brightspace for additional material • Paper 4 Due: 5/8
Week 15		FINAL EXAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD