This course examines the geography of one of the most important regions of the world in relation to the United States, and particularly New York City – South America. We will explore the region’s diversity as influenced by the physical environment and its indigenous and colonial past. We will also consider how the region has been shaped by internal, intraregional, and international politics; immigration, emigration, and transnationalism; and economic dependency and neoliberalism. This course meets Group A of the Pluralism and Diversity Requirement. The goal of this course is to give you an understanding of the region and continent of South America—its physical, historical, cultural, economic, and political geographies—and to understand the region in today’s globalized economy and polity.

Class Hours: Monday, Thursday 9:45-11:00
Location: HN 1022
Instructor: Prof. Ines M. Miyares
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website: www.geo.hunter.cuny.edu/~imiyares

Office and Advising Hours: Mondays 1:00-3:00 or by appointment


Grading: Two exams – each worth 30% of your grade
Written response to “The Mission” – 10%
Three 5-page papers – each worth 10%

Attendance is expected, even when attendance is not recorded. No grade will be given for attendance – you are adults and have paid to be here. Lecture notes will not be posted on my web site. All information covered in class or assigned as readings are fair game for exams. When reading Clawson chapters that give descriptions by country (i.e., Ch. 6), focus your reading and study on South American countries.

The research papers will address the sections of the course. Research papers can be detailed case studies of a single country or comparative studies of two or more countries. They must have a clearly defined conceptual framework, appropriate in-text citations, and a bibliography. They will be submitted via SafeAssign on Blackboard for plagiarism checks. Plagiarism of any kind will result in an automatic “F” in this course and disciplinary action by the college.

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.

Paper 1: Physical or Environmental Geography of South America Due February 25
Paper 2: Historical Geography of South America Due April 8
Paper 3: Contemporary issue in the Human Geography of (economic, cultural, social, population, political, etc.) Due May 17

I do not give incompletes except in cases of legitimate emergency. I do not give paper extensions except in the case of legitimate emergencies. Early is always okay. Plan ahead!

Topics and readings are listed by week:

Week 1-2  Introduction to regional geography, South America. Landforms. Landform regions of South America. Clawson Ch 1, 2

Week 3  Weather and Climate. Weather and Climate regions of South America. Clawson Ch 3

Week 4  South American biodiversity. Clawson Ch 4

Monday Feb 15—no class President’s Day


Week 6  Colonial era economies, governance, social class. Colonial power and conflict. Clawson Ch 8, 9

“The Mission”

Week 7  Geography of the independence movements. Intra regional conflicts. Clawson Ch 6

Thursday March 25  First Exam

Spring Break March 29-April 5

Week 8-9  Urbanization, Latin American primate cities. Clawson Ch 12

Week 10-11  Economic development 1: Agriculture and Agrarian Reform. Clawson Ch 10

Week 11-12  Economic development 2: Mining, Manufacturing, Tourism. Clawson Ch 11

Week 13-14  Economic development 3: Debt, Dependency, Neoliberalism, Economic restructuring. Clawson Ch 13

Week 15  Non-Iberian South America. Country Studies: Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana

May 17  Last day of class.

May 20  Final exam 11:30-1:30