The Latin American Studies Program enables students to deepen their understanding of this fascinating, complex region of the world through an interdisciplinary approach. Majors explore both historical and contemporary social, political, and economic issues, tensions, and inequalities that challenge the area, while attaining an awareness of and appreciation for the rich cultural diversity of Latin America. Study abroad, the biannual Walker Symposium, internships, independent research, and visits by scholars, artists, and activists enhance formal classroom learning. Latin American studies graduates emerge as active global citizens capable of analyzing and articulating central issues defining the region.

Requirements for the Major in Latin American Studies

A total of 11 courses, including Latin American Studies 173, 174, Spanish 135 and 231 (both to be taken before study abroad), two Latin American literature courses at the 200 level or above, three courses on Latin America at the 200 level or above in at least two disciplines in the social sciences, and either a fourth course in the social sciences of Latin America at the 200 level or above (no more than two in the same discipline total) or a Latino/a literature course at the 200 level or above, and one senior seminar or senior project.

Students must receive a grade of C or better for a course to count toward the major. No major requirements may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory. The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses taken to fulfill the major.

Majors are required to spend at least one semester in Latin America matriculated in a program that offers university-level courses (not in a language acquisition program). In exceptional cases, the board will consider petitions to waive this requirement. All course work abroad must be conducted in either Spanish or Portuguese. All study-abroad plans must be approved by the director of the Latin American Studies Program. Programs not on the pre-approved list will be considered through our own petition process (apart from that of Off-Campus Study). Majors may count up to four semester courses of foreign study credit toward the major if they study abroad for an entire year, but only up to two semester courses if they study abroad for just one semester. Students with transfer credits should be advised that four semester courses, combining study abroad and credits from other institutions, is the maximum total permitted to count toward the Latin American studies major. A minimum grade point average of 2.7 is required for permission to study abroad. Prerequisites for study abroad include the completion of Spanish 135 and Spanish 231 (may be taken concurrently) with a grade of C or better.

Note: Students wishing to fulfill the advanced grammar requirement in Portuguese must enroll, after securing the approval of the director of the Latin American Studies Program, in either a one-semester language program abroad (which will not replace the study-abroad requirement) or in an intensive summer language program that certifies advanced proficiency.

Honors in Latin American Studies

Students majoring in Latin American studies with a 3.7 major average or better and 3.3 overall GPA at the end of their fifth semester (including course work done abroad) may apply for admission to the honors program by May 30 of their junior year. Permission of the program director and faculty sponsor is required. The honors program involves a yearlong independent research project that replaces the senior seminar requirement. Students must successfully defend their proposal before fall break, their first chapter (or equivalent) before the end of the first semester, and their thesis before the end of the academic year. Successful completion of the work of the honors thesis and of the major will enable the student to graduate with “Honors in Latin American Studies.”

Courses Approved for the Major in Latin American Studies

Anthropology
- 236 Illegal Drugs, Law, and the State
- 242 Anthropology of Latin America: City Life
- 361 Militarities, Militarization, and War
- 365 Space, Place, and Belonging

Economics
- 214 Economic Policy and Performance in Contemporary Latin America

Global Studies
- 397 Topics in Latin American Economic Policy
Government

- 253 Introduction to Latin American Politics
- 264 Challenges to Democracy in Latin America
- 456 Seminar: Civil Society and Social Change in Latin America

Latin American Studies

- 173 History of Latin America, 1491 to 1900
- 174 Introduction to Latin American Studies
- 272 Mexican History: Justice, Rights, and Revolution
- 275 Strongmen and Populism in Modern Spain and Latin America
- 277 The Maya
- 373 Religion and Unbelief in Modern Latin American History
- 378 U.S. in Latin America: Intervention, Influence, Integration
- 473 Seminar: Historical Roots of Violence in Modern Latin America

Spanish

- 135 Introduction to Literary Analysis
- 231 Advanced Spanish
- 237 Conquest and Resistance in the Americas
- 239 Latin America at the Movies
- 254 Aquí estamos: U.S. Latinx in the 20th and 21st Centuries
- 264 Uncovering Tradition: Introduction to U.S. Latino/a Literature
- 273 Contemporary Spanish-American Short Story
- 275 Strongmen and Populism in Modern Spain and Latin America
- 276 U.S. Latina/Chicana Women Writers
- 278 Narratives, Artifacts, and Monuments of Pre-Columbian Civilizations
- 346 Race, Rights, and Land in the Americas
- 376 Narratives, Artifacts, and Monuments of Pre-Columbian Civilization
- 498 Seminar: Abia Yala: Indigenous Resistance, Revolution, and Deconloniality

Note: Additional courses, often taught by visiting faculty, may be available from time to time as temporary offerings and may be counted toward the major with permission of the Latin American Studies Program director. Up to two courses from a semester of study abroad and up to four courses from a year of study abroad may be counted toward the major with permission of the program director.

Course Offerings

LA173f  History of Latin America, 1491 to 1900  To understand the historical roots of Latin America's enduring tensions and conflicts, students analyze and discuss sources (especially primary ones), and write short historical essays. Themes include the first American civilizations, the Conquest and construction of colonial hierarchies, independence, liberalism and conservatism, neocolonialism and nationalism.  Four credit hours.  H, I.  FALLAW

LA174s  Introduction to Latin American Studies  Cross-disciplinary, historically grounded introduction to modern Latin America. We analyze and discuss politicians and ideologies, socioeconomic structures, environmental features, and cultural production (including art, music, and a novel). Major historical themes include the promise and problems of progress c.1850-1930, populism and nationalisms, the Cuban Revolution, Cold War dictatorships, and neoliberalism and neopopulism.  Four credit hours.  H, I.  FALLAW

LA214s  Economic Policy and Performance in Contemporary Latin America  Listed as Economics 214.  Four credit hours.  I.  FRANKO

LA221j  Crime, Violence, and Security in Latin America  Through the examination of three cases - Mexico, El Salvador, and Brazil - students will explore the various manifestations of crime and violence occurring in Latin America and the diverse responses to it by states, citizens, and private entities. Some of the major themes and issues covered in the course include the significance of weak and corrupt state institutions; historical legacies of authoritarianism, inequality, and racism; the role of U.S. domestic and foreign policies; the upsurge in organized crime and street gang membership; and the emergence of private security. As part of the course, students will break into groups and create their own anti-crime and violence organization for one of the countries under study. Previously offered as LA297A (Jan Plan 2020).  Three credit hours.  PUCK

LA227s  Social Movements  Listed as Government 227.  Four credit hours.  U.  MAYKA

LA236f  Illegal Drugs, Law, and the State  Listed as Anthropology 236.  Four credit hours.  TATE
LA237s  Conquest and Resistance in the Americas  Listed as Spanish 237.  Four credit hours.  L, I.  MILLONES

LA239f  Latin America at the Movies  Listed as Spanish 239.  Four credit hours.  A.  ALMEYDA-COHEN

[LA242]  Anthropology of Latin America: City Life  Listed as Anthropology 242.  Four credit hours.

LA244s  Bad Women and B-Films in Contemporary Latin America  Listed as Spanish 244.  Four credit hours.  A.  ALMEYDA-COHEN

LA253fs  Introduction to Latin American Politics  Listed as Government 253.  Four credit hours.  MAYKA

LA254s  Aqui estamos: U.S. Latinx in the 20th and 21st Centuries  Listed as Spanish 254.  Four credit hours.  L, U.  RAMOS FLORES


LA272f  Mexican History: Justice, Rights, and Revolution  From the Aztec era to the disappearance of 43 students in 2014, struggles over justice and rights have defined Mexican history. To better understand the conquest, independence, the liberal reform, and the revolution, we focus on how notions of justice and rights differ over time and across cultures (indigenous, colonial, liberal, revolutionary, and neoliberal).  Four credit hours.  H, I.  FALLAW

[LA275]  Strongmen and Populism in Modern Spain and Latin America  Interdisciplinary history of Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, the rise of Getulio Vargas's Estado Novo in Brazil, the role of Zapata as an agrarian warlord in the Mexican Revolution, the failure of the Spanish Republic, and the emergence of Franco's regime.  Three credit hours.  H, I.

[LA277]  The Maya  Multidisciplinary (archaeology, anthropology, literature, and history) study of the Mayan past from the first known Mayan writing to recent conflicts in Mexico and Guatemala.  Four credit hours.  H, I.

[LA278]  Narratives, Artifacts, and Monuments of Pre-Columbian Civilizations  Listed as Spanish 278.  Four credit hours.  L.

LA346f  Race, Rights, and Land in the Americas  Listed as Spanish 346.  Four credit hours.  I.  RAMOS FLORES

[LA361]  Militaries, Militarization, and War  Listed as Anthropology 361.  Four credit hours.  S.

LA365f  Space, Place, and Belonging  Listed as Anthropology 365.  Four credit hours.  TATE

[LA371]  The Colonial Experience: European and Amerindian Responses  Listed as Spanish 371.  Four credit hours.  L.

[LA373]  Religion and Unbelief in Modern Latin American History  How did faith and resistance to faith shape and reflect the enduring tensions and inequalities that defined Latin America over the past two centuries? This pro-seminar seeks to understand the history of religion (formal Catholicism, African and indigenous syncretism) and disbelief (anticlericalism, free thinking, scientism, atheism) in postcolonial Latin America through critical reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources and writing. Prerequisite: A W1 course.  Four credit hours.  H, W2, I.

LA376f  Narratives, Artifacts, and Monuments of Pre-Columbian Civilization  Listed as Spanish 376.  Four credit hours.  L.  MILLONES

LA378s  U.S. in Latin America: Intervention, Influence, Integration  To understand the diverse ways the United States has shaped modern Latin American history, we critically read primary and secondary sources (scholarly monographs, articles from academic journals) and write a substantial research paper. We consider how U.S. influence has evolved historically, ranging from military interventions to the export of ideas (scientific racism, neoliberalism) to economic integration. We also explore geographic variations in U.S. presence across the hemisphere, ranging from the U.S.'s “Back Yard” of Mexico and the Caribbean to South America.  Four credit hours.  H, W2, I.  FALLAW
[LA456]  Seminar: Civil Society and Social Change in Latin America Listed as Government 456.  Four credit hours.  S, I.

[LA473]  Historical Roots of Violence in Modern Latin America We examine the historical roots of persistent violence in Latin America from interdisciplinary perspectives: social, political, and cultural history, as well as anthropology, sociology, political science, and psychology. Topics include social and ethnic conflicts, domestic violence, torture, insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, dirty wars, and genocide. This seminar is writing-intensive, including two drafts of a substantial (approximately 25-page) research paper. Prerequisite: A previous course on Latin America and permission of the instructor.  Four credit hours.  H.

LA483f, 484s  Senior Honors Thesis A year-long research project for senior majors resulting in a written thesis to be publicly presented and defended. Students may register either for two credits in the fall, January, and spring terms or for three credits in the fall and spring terms. Prerequisite: a 3.3 or higher major average at the end of the junior year and permission of the Latin American studies advisory committee.  One to four credit hours.

LA491f, 492s  Independent Study An independent study project devoted to a topic chosen by the student with the approval of an advisor. Only independent studies taken with a Colby faculty member and approved by the director of the Latin American Studies Program may count toward fulfilling major requirements.  One to four credit hours.

LA498s  Seminar: Abia Yala: Indigenous Resistance, Revolution, and Decoloniality Listed as Spanish 498.  Four credit hours.