LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Director, Professor Ben Fallaw
Appointment in Latin American Studies: Professor Ben Fallaw
Affiliated Faculty: Professors Patrice Franko (Economics and Global Studies), Luis Millones (Spanish), and Jorge Olivaes (Spanish); Associate Professors Betty Sasaki (Spanish) and Winifred Tate (Anthropology); Assistant Professors Rebeca Hey-Colón (Spanish), Lindsay Mayka (Government), and Bretton White (Spanish); Visiting Assistant Professor Michael Martinez-Raguso (Spanish); Post-Doctoral Fellow Marcos Perez (Sociology)

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) 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). Students 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
  • 247 Colombian Politics through Film
  • 361 Militaries, Militarization, and War

Economics
  • 214 Economic Policy and Performance in Contemporary Latin America

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 History of the Maya from 200 B.C.
• 373 Religion and Unbelief in Modern Latin American History
• 378 U.S.’s “Back Yard”
• 473 Seminar: Historical Roots of Violence in Modern Latin America

Spanish
• 135 Introduction to Literary Analysis
• 231 Advanced Spanish
• 264 Uncovering Tradition: Introduction to U.S. Latino/a Literature
• 265 The Short Novel in Spanish America
• 267 Family/History/Nation: Latina/o Genealogies
• 273 Contemporary Spanish-American Short Story
• 276 U.S. Latina/Chicana Women Writers
• 278 Narratives, Artifacts, and Monuments of Pre-Columbian Civilizations
• 338 The Diasporic Imagination: Cubans beyond Cuba
• 341 Cities, Bodies, and Nations in Caribbean Literature
• 354 Detectives and Spies: Popular Culture in Spanish-American Fiction
• 371 The Colonial Experience: European and Amerindian Responses

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 nationalisms. 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

[LA236] Illegal Drugs, Law, and the State Listed as Anthropology 236. Four credit hours.

[LA242f] Anthropology of Latin America: City Life Listed as Anthropology 242. Four credit hours. TATE


[LA247] Colombian Politics through Film Listed as Anthropology 247. Three credit hours.

[LA253] Introduction to Latin American Politics Listed as Government 253. Four credit hours.

[LA264] Challenges to Democracy in Latin America Listed as Government 264. Four credit hours. S, I.
LA265f  The Short Novel in Spanish America  Listed as Spanish 265.  
Four credit hours.  L.  OLIVARES

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 Getúlio 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]  History of the Maya from 200 B.C.  
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.

LA297j  Into the Archive: The Politics and Practice of Archival Research  Listed as History 297A.  
Three credit hours.  H.  MACK

LA338s  The Diasporic Imagination: Cubans beyond Cuba  Listed as Spanish 338.  
Four credit hours.  L.  OLIVARES

LA361s  Militaries, Militarization, and War  Listed as Anthropology 361.  
Four credit hours.  S.  TATE

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

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.  FALLAW

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

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.* FACULTY