

**(PALAS 362) Latin American Cultures and Civilizations**

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Universidad de Belgrano

Program in Argentine and Latin American Studies

Course Syllabus 2019

**Course information**

T-Th 11:30 AM- 1.00 PM Room 10-7

Instruction in English

**Contact information**[alejandromanara@gmail.com](mailto:alejandromanara@gmail.com)**Course description**

Since its discovery until the present, Latin America has been imagined and conceived as the “New Continent”, a place for utopia, but also as a space of uneven modernity and extreme forms of violence. The course explores distinctive cultural aspects of Latin America by looking at the ways it has been represented in readings spanning from the diaries written by Christopher Columbus to the texts of the Cuban Revolution, the iconography of Peronismo, or the recent debates on Neoliberalism, Globalization and Populism. Drawing on essays, but also on short-stories, paintings, photographs, and films, the course addresses a set of questions that lie at the heart of how one thinks about Latin America. What is expected from “Latin America”? What were the different “ideas” that Latin America embodied? What are the forms of “Latin American” culture? How are the different “cultures” connected? The purpose of the course is threefold: to introduce students to problems central to Latin America, to familiarize students with a variety of non-fictional writings in Spanish, such as essay, chronicle, journalism and documentary films, and to sharpen student’s skills as analytical readers.

**Course requirements**

Following UB policies, students need a minimum of 75% of attendance to be in good standing for the final exam. Sliding the ID card is the only way to track attendance. Students are expected to do close readings, participate in class, and do one oral presentations in pairs or in groups of three.

During the semester, students will write two short (2-3 pages) papers. The requirements also include a midterm and a final comprehensive exam. In addition to this, each student will be expected to make a significant contribution to the classroom dialogue. As part of this, students will be asked to bring two specific comments regarding the required readings in order to discuss in class. Any student caught plagiarizing will be given a “no credit” for all courses taken in the semester. As part of the course requirements, the students will have to visit the Evita Museum in the assigned week (see academic calendar below).

## Grading Policy

Participation	10 %
Oral Presentation (1)	15 %
Midterm	20 %
Final Exam	35 %
Short Essay (2) (2 pages)	20 %

For a better understanding of the comparable table for grading: check the conversion table for the numerical scale (in orientation kit packet).

## Academic Calendar

Week 1: The “New World”: Accounts of the Discovery and the Conquest:

Tuesday, July 30:

The ideas of Latin America. Travellers & Discoverers  
Christopher Columbus. “Letter to Luis de Santangel”  
Amerigo Vespucci. Account of his first voyage.

Thursday, August 1:

Edmundo O’Gorman. *The invention of America* (selection)  
Tzvetan Todorov. *The Conquest of America* (selection 14-33)

Week 2.

Tuesday, August 6: Hernán Cortes. “The Second Letter” (excerpts).  
Bernal Díaz del Castillo. *The conquest of New Spain*. (selection).

Thursday, August 8: Film. *Cracking the Maya Code*. Documentary.

Week 3. Colonial Encounters and its Consequences

Tuesday, August 13: Great pre-Columbian civilizations. Thomas Merton:  
The Sacred City. ”The Curse of Cortez” by Álvaro Enrigue, NYRB, 18may  
2018

Thursday, August 15: J.H. Elliott. “The Uncertain Impact”. “Cortés and  
Montezuma” John Hemming, “Atahualpa & Pizarro”

Oral presentations will be assigned.

Week 4. Revisiting the Conquest

Tuesday, August 20: Bartolomé de las Casas. *A short account of the  
destruction of the Indies*. **Oral presentation** on Bartolomé de las Casas.

Thursday, August 22: Werner Herzog. *Aguirre, the wrath of God*.  
First short paper / Prompt by email.

Week 5.

Tuesday, August 27: Poma de Ayala *Nueva Crónica del Buen Gobierno*

Thursday, August 29: *Yo, la peor de todas*, film by María Luisa Bemberg,  
based on Octavio Paz’ book on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Week 6.

Tuesday, September 3: Simón Bolívar. “Letter of Jamaica”.

José Martí “Our America”. **Oral presentation** on Simón Bolívar and José  
Martí. **Short Paper is due**

Thursday, September 5: Domingo F. Sarmiento. *Facundo. Civilization or  
Barbarism* (Selection). Lucio V. Mansilla “A Visit to the Ranquel Indians”  
(146-153) **Oral presentation.**

Week 7

Tuesday, September 10: *Far away & long ago*, (Chapter 7) W.H. Hudson and *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Charles Darwin (Chapter 6) **OP on English Travelers.**

Thursday, September 12:

“The Pampas Indians” & “The Town of Buenos Aires” from *Rough notes taken during some rapid journeys across the Pampas*, by Francis Bond Head.

Week 8.

Tuesday, September 17: Carlos Fuentes. “Land and Freedom: The Mexican Revolution” Juan Rulfo. “Tell Them Not to Kill me”, & “No Dogs Bark”. **Oral presentations** on Mexican Muralists / Rulfo/

Thursday, September 19. Alejo Carpentier: *The kingdom of this world*

Week 9.

Tuesday, September 24; Midterm Exam

Thursday, September 26: Fidel Castro. “History will absolve me” (excerpts).

Miguel Barnet. “Biography of a Runaway Slave” (58-64)

*Salut les cubains* (Agnès Varda. 1963) (27min film) Third Cinema: Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema” (458-65)

Week 10. The aesthetics of Peronism

Tuesday, October 1: Daniel Santoro, *Manual del niño peronista*

Julio Cortázar, “House Taken Over”. **Oral presentation** on Cortázar.

Thursday, October 3: J.M. Taylor: “The Myth of the Myth”. “Queen of Hearts” documentary. Rodolfo Walsh, “That Woman”. Visit to the Evita Museum. Research and write a short paper on Evita. **Oral presentation** on Walsh

Week 11. Dictatorships in the Southern Cone

Tuesday, October 8: Fernando Solanas. *The hour of the Furnaces* (Argentina, 1968) /discussion.

Thursday, October 10: Patricio Guzmán. *Nostalgia of the Light* (Chile, 2010) Repression in Chilean Dictatorship.

Week 12.

Tuesday, October 15: Andres Di Tella. *Montoneros* (Argentina, 1998) / screening in class. **Short paper on Evita is due**

**Thursday, October 17:** Finnegan: *Silver or Lead: The drug cartel La Familia gives local officials a choice: Take a bribe or a bullet.* Ejército Zapatista. “Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle”

### Week 13.

**Tuesday, October 22:** “The Brutal Rise of El Mencho” By [Josh Eells](#). July 11, 2017 **Thursday, October 24:** *Even the Rain*, film by Iciar Bolain... about the Water War in Bolivia.

### Week 14

**Tuesday, October 29.** “The Maquiladoras”, William Langewiesche. Film: Lourdes Portillo, *Señorita extraviada*. Discussion. **Oral Presentation** on the Zapatistas & Maquiladoras.

**Thursday, October 31.** Review in class. Each student should bring a subject she/he feels strongly about.

### Week 15

**Tuesday, November 5: Final exam.**

**Thursday, November 7:** “Final Grade Sheet and signature of Hoja de situación (attendance is mandatory)”.

### **Bibliography**

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