Geography 3670-090
Geography of Latin America

This course meets the International (IR) requirement.

Instructor: Elizabeth Dudley-Murphy,
Ph.D., Adjunct Associate Professor,
Dept. of Geography
Phone: 801.581.8218 (Leave Message in Geography Dept.)
E-mail: bmurphy@egi.utah.edu
Prerequisites: None

General Education Status: IR (International Requirement)

Coursework:
Six lessons, six assignments, six online discussions, and two equally-weighted exams.

Description:
Much of the world still tends to view Latin Americans in terms of stereotypes. The popular image of the mustachioed bandito wearing a large sombrero and draped with cartridge belts has been replaced by the figure of the modern-day guerrilla. But the same essential image, of lawlessness and violence, persists. The reality of Latin America's multiplicity of cultures is, in a word, complexity. The Latin realm is made up of a variety of cultural imprints. The Europeans, Africans, and Native American Indians have all contributed substantially to these cultures. This course is designed to give students a greater understanding and appreciation for the culture of Latin America in all its immense diversity. Many students taking this class are taking other classes in Latin American Studies as well as Environmental and Sustainability Studies. A primary goal of this course is to provide students with a good background in Latin American culture and hopefully to create a desire to become involved in research projects or community outreach. The course is an interdisciplinary introduction to Latin America and the Caribbean, so there are many topics that will relate to other courses students are taking.

System Requirements:
This class can be attended from anywhere there is an Internet connection. All course work can be submitted electronically, including exams. Students must be able to use an Internet browser.

Materials:
Text: Latin America and the Caribbean by David L. Clawson (Fifth Edition) Oxford University Press.

Books may be purchased at the U Bookstore, or from the book vendor of your choice.

The text for this course was written primarily focusing on the geography of Latin America and the Caribbean, but is also a wonderful interdisciplinary introduction to the region. Latin America is so diverse, in its physical
geography, with massive mountain ranges, many among the highest, the driest desert, the highest waterfall in the world, tropical rainforests, hundreds of tiny islands in the Caribbean and miles of beautiful coastlines. Latin America is also incredibly diverse in cultural traits, from traditional slash and burn agriculture to modern high-technology manufacturing; from remote villages deep in the Amazon Basin, to huge metropolitan urban areas. The intent of this course is to enable students to recognize and appreciate the diversity within the region at many levels. Students from any discipline will be able to pull relevant information from that presented in the text, discussions and assignments.

Grading Policy:

Average Assignment Score 50%

Discussions 20%

Exams 30%

Your grade in this class will be based on the following scale:

94-100 = A   84-87 = B   74-77 = C   64-67 = D
90-94 = A-   80-84 = B-   70-74 = C-   60-64 = D-
87-90 = B+   77-80 = C+   67-70 = D+   Below 60 = E

Lessons:

The way the class is set up is that there are a number of lessons, assignments and discussions. The Assignments and Discussions can be accessed by clicking Assignments in the left hand column and the Lessons can be accessed by clicking on Modules and then Lessons. The Lessons are intended to be an introduction to a particular section of the text, they outline the chapters that are to be read for each assignment. Each Lesson corresponds to an Assignment - so you read the Lesson first, then the chapters outlined in the Lesson and move onto the Assignment with the same number. The lessons in some cases summarize important concepts in the chapters and at times they will provide information that is not found in the text.

Discussions:

To post to the discussions, click on Assignments in the left hand column and then click on Discussion 1 – there you will see a window that says “Reply”. Put your posting in the window and click on “Post Response” and it will be posted. This is an asynchronous discussion, you may not be logged in at the same time as other students in the class; however, you will be able to read other comments and add your own thoughts. You may participate in this discussion any time up to the due date. To answer the Assignment questions, you click on the Assignment number and it will take you to the Assignment and will let you begin to answer the questions.

The discussion topics may or may not follow the chapters in the text. Hopefully they will stimulate some interesting discussion and you can pull form the information you have learned thus far. I would like to see some impromptu discussions coming from those that I have set up. Please feel free to respond to your fellow students. Although this is not a traditional "chat" room hopefully, by reading other students comments you will want to respond, not only to the discussion topic, but to the student’s responses. If it takes us in another direction, that’s great. That is what discussions are all about. Have fun with it! I have activated the Chat tool, so feel free to use it.
For one of the discussions, there will be a required response to another student in the class, details about this will be posted in an announcement to the class.

**Written Assignments:**

There are six web-based assignments for this course. The lessons are related to the assignments and are a summary of the important points in the corresponding chapters. The chapters to be read for the lesson and assignments are identified in the lesson. Read the lessons first, then click on Assignments in the left hand column for the assignment and it will take you to the assignment questions. The calendar will show when the assignment is due as well as the list of due dates below. The written portion of the assignments consists of 1) Short Essays of one to two paragraphs each, and /or 2) online web-based research exercises. Refer to the text and web resources, if the question asks for this, to produce an answer that includes enough detail to make sure your answer is complete and easy to follow. It is advisable that you answer the assignment questions as you complete the readings. In most lessons you have more than one chapter included in the reading assignment. It is easier to complete the answers in each chapter as you complete the reading. You are able to save partially completed assignments and return to complete them as you wish. You should not lose any information. Just click the Save button and you can return as many times as you like.

**Study Guides:**

The study guides are comprehensive and contain all you need to know for the exams - they are located in the Modules folder in the left hand column in another folder called Study Guides. They are being updated at the moment, I will post an announcement when they are ready to be accessed.

**Study Suggestions and Assignment Preparation:**

Read the Lessons.

Complete the Reading Assignment.

Scan the questions in the Written Assignments.

Re-read the assigned material being careful to learn the correct meaning of important new words.

Close your books and answer the written assignment questions in your own words. Many of the questions can be answered at great length, but you should try to organize your answers so that they are both complete and succinct. Grading is based on quality, not quantity.

**Exams:**

All exams will be online and each exam is worth 100 points. The exams cover material from the lessons that immediately precede it; the second exam is not comprehensive. Each exam may consist of multiple choice, short answer or essay questions, matching, definitions, and possibly a map component, which will require location of specific points on a map. All of the concepts and definitions you need to know for the exams are in the text. The exams will be available for three days, from Friday morning until Sunday night allowing students with work schedules to be accommodated. The exam duration will be 60 or 90 minutes in length and I will let you know ahead of time which it will be. Due to the exam being online, it will be considered open book. However, if you are not familiar with the information prior to the exam, you will spend too much time looking up answers, so I highly recommend staying on top of the material in the class, i.e., the assignments and discussions. Many questions will be directly related. I MUST know prior to the exam if you won't be able to take it within the scheduled time frame. I will not give any make-up exams if notified after the exam date. All make up exams will be given in the Testing Center on campus and will be closed book.
All DUE dates for Discussions, Assignments and Exams are on the Calendar and below in the syllabus. It is a good idea to put the dates on a calendar, but if not, be sure to check the calendar on this page (see above) frequently. If you are taking more than one class in Canvas, you can click on the different classes to see the due dates, or if you see them together, they will be identified by different colors.

If you have any more questions, feel free to contact me at the e-mail address above, by clicking on People in the left hand column and send me an e-mail in Canvas, or by phone at my office.

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**Lessons**

**Lesson 1**

**Latin America**

Reading Assignment/Introducing Latin America

Text, Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4

LATIN = of or relating to Latium, an ancient country in Italy; of or relating to the peoples or countries using the Romance Languages. In this case of or relating to the people and countries of Latin America whose colonial influences come primarily from the Iberian Peninsula in Europe: Portugal and Spain.

**Chapter 1** – There are many issues that are in the news today that have to do with Latin America: 1. Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Guatemala several years ago and the devastation that it left in its wake that is still being felt. 2. The devaluation that occurred in Brazil and the effects not only felt by neighboring countries, but by the global economy as well. 3. Pinochet, his arrest a few years ago in England and the recent statement that now claims he is fit for trial. This could have significant impacts on all retired political figures from countries where similar situations exist, as well as the impact on the people in Chile (they say it has already caused divisiveness), as well as the relations between Chile and England, Spain, Italy, and all of the countries that have supported this arrest and trial. 4. The global concern about the destruction of the rainforests in Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, etc. 5. The resistance to integration and competition by the mostly Amerindian population in Chiapas in southern Mexico. 6. The drug problem in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and its effects on the society, political system, economic system. 7. Cuba and the U.S. relations with this island nation. 8. Elections in many Latin nations.

The book first examines many themes in systematic geography and then goes on to describe the different regions. All of the regions have distinguishing unique characteristics. 1. In Mexico, we will survey the different regions within the country, migration patterns, and NAFTA. 2. In the Caribbean we will discuss the mosaic of cultures that exist in this region and how this influences the overall integration of the area today. 3. In Central America, we will become familiar with the different countries that make up this realm and their similarities and differences. 4. In South America we will look at different regions within this continent, what they share in cultural characteristics, and how they are different. The issues facing Latin America today are many and among those most sensitive, seem to be environmental issues. This brings up the idea of sustainable development. This means: The use of resources in a manner that passes to future generations and environment that has not been degraded by species destruction, soil erosion, pollution, or any other means. Values included in Sustainable Development are biological diversity, protection of indigenous people, watershed protection, etc. to name a few. Other considerations would include: better distribution of wealth within the countries, less division between the have and have-nots, between the developed, developing and lesser developed countries.
Chapter 2 – Landform Regions: Latin America has more variation in climate and landform than most places in the world. There have been many “paradigms” in Geography over the years and one that stands out in my mind and that really has more meaning when studying this part of the world is that of: Environmental Determinism (Ellsworth Huntington 1876-1947). It states that the natural environment to a large extent dictates the course of civilization. One example where this is not the case is: 3 different civilizations that all had to overcome environmental obstacles such as tropical, low-lying plains and high mountain terrain. (Aztecs, Mayans and Incas). They used the natural environment to their benefit. A more recent way of thinking is one of: Possibilism - that states that man can adapt to the environment and make it work towards ones progress.

Latin American Realm Latin America includes everything from the U.S. Mexico border to the southern tip of South America. It is divided into Middle America and South America. Middle America is made up of: Mexico, Central America, Caribbean. South America is made up of the countries in South America. A large portion of this geographic realm lies within the tropic of capricorn and tropic of cancer. Middle America has population groups of African, European and Asian ancestry. The entire region has Native American groups with many countries where this culture dominates the society for example in Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, and the Indian culture has contributed strongly in Mexico.

The book divides the area into landform regions – in South America – The Eastern Highlands, The Central Lowlands, and The Western Alpine System and physiographic regions of Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean.

Chapter 3 & 4 – Weather and Climate and Natural Regions: A general description of the climate of Eastern South America is warm and moist around the equator, giving way to subtropical and temperate climate. The equatorial region of the continent is warm and moist and has sufficient rainfall to support rain forest. The tropical and subtropical areas north and south of the equatorial zone have wet summers and dry winters. During the wet months, vegetation is lush changing to dry, dusty and brown in the dry period. South America north of the equator is all in the tropics. South of the equator you extend into the temperate subtropical area. It is here that you find the Gran Chaco region. It is semiarid with drought resistant trees called quebracho trees. Agriculture is possible only in certain areas. South of the Chaco you find the Pampas, a temperate grassland region with warm summers and cool winters. Rainfall decreases to the west as distance to the Atlantic increases. South of the Pampas is the Patagonia, windswept and treeless except in sheltered valleys. It is a land of grassland and grazing for sheep and cattle. In the valleys that run east/west, you do find farming and orchards. The climate in this region is cool temperate.

The Western Alpine System, which includes the South American Andes, the highlands of Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. As with any mountain range, the Andes displays altitude zonation of climate and vegetation. As you ascend in elevation, the air cools and the vegetation grows closer to the ground. Here you find the well-marked zonation introduced by Alexander Von Humboldt (1769 – 1859). Altitudinal Zonation: tierra caliente – coastal lowlands and low-lying interior basins, tropical agriculture. Sea level to just over 3,000 ft. Templada: temperate land 3,000 – 6,000ft Fria: cold country of higher Andes 6,000-12,000 Helada: (freezing) above upper limit of tree growth south of the tropics you find grasslands in the Andes, except along the coast of Southern Chile where you have enough rainfall to support coniferous forests. It is similar to the coast of northwest U.S.

The west coast of South America is heavily influenced by the air masses that lie on the ocean. North of the equator, the Pacific Ocean, on the coast of South America, is warm, tropical sea (along the Colombia and Ecuador coast). The winds that blow from the west are warm and moist, and when they are forced upward onto the flanks of the Andes Mts., heavy rainfall results. Vegetation is predominantly tropical rainforest. South of the equator, the west coast climate is dominated by the cold Humboldt or Peru Current which originates in the waters of the Antarctic. This current flows north bringing cold water into temperate and sub-tropical latitudes. There are many anomalies associated with this. Penguins in the Galapagos and on islands off the coast of Peru and Chile, guano deposits from seabirds that follow the fish and it serves to supply one of the largest fishing industries in the world, that of Peru (except in El Niño years). The anchovies are turned into fishmeal and fertilizer. This phenomenon occurs when warm water from the equatorial region flow south, warming the normally colder currents from the south. The coast of Chile has lower temperatures than places at comparable latitudes on the west coast of North America. The central Valley of Chile has a Mediterranean type climate (dry, warm summers and cool, moist winters. However, the temperatures are still cooler than Mediterranean Europe.
The land along the coast in northern Chile and southern Peru is dry and quite barren. It is in fact part of the driest desert in the world, the Atacama. It is necessary to understand air mass when describing the conditions along the Atacama Desert.

**AIR MASSES** – An air mass is a huge body of air greater than 100 km across and at least 3km thick, characterized by homogeneous properties such as temperature and water content. Air masses are named for the area in which the air originates. There are four basic types: 1. Polar, 2. Arctic, 3. Tropical, and 4. Equatorial. They are further defined as to whether they are maritime or continental. They cannot be a combination of the two. In the Southern Hemisphere there is a high pressure system that lies off the West Coast of northern Chile and southern Peru at about 30 S. This stable air system increases the influence of the Peru current. The air above the ocean current is cooled as a result of contact with the cold water. When the cool air comes ashore, it encounters a land surface that is warmer, and the air starts to warm. Because warming air absorbs moisture, it does not yield rainfall. Thus, you have one of the driest deserts in the world. This desert is interrupted occasionally by lush valleys that even yield subtropical fruit and flowers.

In the Latin America we can make the following generalizations: Rainfall Distribution: Along the equator we find the zone of maximum precipitation. North and south of the equator we find regions of rainfall seasonality in which there is a wet season in the summer and a dry season in the winter. Storms that occur in the mid-latitudes are related to cold air masses moving into areas usually dominated by warm moist air. Snow is common in the high latitudes and high altitudes. Dry zones are in areas dominated by high pressure and on the leeward sides of mountains. Surface Water: Where rainfall is plentiful water occurs as lakes, streams and rivers. In Mexico, more specifically, in the Yucatan, you find cenotes; cenotes are depressions in limestone bedrock that fill with rainwater. They provide supplies of fresh water for animals and small settlements. Ocean Water: In the Caribbean you have hurricanes that form off the coast of West Africa and travel across the Atlantic. Many islands have suffered major damage due to hurricanes, as well as Central America and the Yucatan in Mexico.

**Lesson 2**

Reading Assignment/Cultural Patterns
Historical Geography/Political Change/Race and Ethnicity
Text, Chapters 5, 6, & 7

The history of this diverse area is based on history, culture and physical make-up, producing one of the most ethnically and culturally rich areas of the world. The islands in this area all share a history of slavery and most shared sugar plantation agriculture. The European colonists introduced domestic animals and plants such as peanuts, beans, tobacco, avocado, and pineapple. During the time that colonists were exploiting the riches of the mainland area, the islands served as provision grounds supplying meat and hides.

The Caribbean was defined as a region by John Augelli when he proposed a Mainland – Rimland division of Middle America that sought to differentiate culture realms. His definition was the following:

The Mainland consists of Mexico and most of Central America. The Rimland consists of the Atlantic margin or coast of Central America and all the islands of the Caribbean. The Rimland was further defined as the Coastland and the Islands.

His distinction was based on some strong differences which include physical environment, crops grown, European influence, population make up, climate, and percent of the population that is made up of indigenous groups and slave labor imported to work the land.

Living on the islands turned out to be destructive to the indigenous populations. They had limited refuge areas, and were vulnerable to European warfare, enslavement, labor practices, deportation, and diseases. The indigenous peoples were virtually eradicated from the islands. However, most of the Latin American Indian populations were depleted, but not eliminated.

The islands are small and consequently the most densely populated region of the Americas. They do face economic problems such as land shortage, limited variety of environmental and natural resources.

**COLONIALISM**

Meso America: In mainland Middle America, there were major Indian civilizations – here lay one of the world’s cultural hearths (a source area from which cultural traditions are transmitted). Here agricultural specializations developed, urbanization occurred and transport networks matured.
Lowland Middle America
Maya 200-900AD – In the Yucatan peninsula one finds a tropical climate, but it may not have been so hot in the past. The Mayans were successful in integrating a very large geographic area. Evidence of their architectural feat can be seen in huge pyramids, intricate stone carvings, impressive murals. They also possessed knowledge of calendars, astronomy, and math. Their involvement in trade reflects a high degree of organization.
In 1519, the Spaniards under the leadership of Hernan Cortez pushed their way into the Valley of Mexico and looked with wonder and amazement upon the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, as it glittered in the high, thin mountain air. Their first impressions were recorded in a book by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, “Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1956”.
“During the morning, we arrived at a broad causeway and continued our march toward Iztapalapa and when we saw so many cities and villages built into the water and other great towns on dry land and that straight and level causeway going toward Mexico, we were amazed that it was like the enchantments they tell us of in the legend of Amadis, on account of the great towers and cues and buildings arising from the water and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things we saw were not a dream”.
The amazement of the Spaniards increased as they entered the city and were received with true regal splendor by the emperor Montezuma in full regalia. But it was a sad event, for the Aztecs’ way of life was no longer to follow its own course. An alien world had come to impose its views upon these people and their civilization.
Alfonso Caso – The Aztecs.
Hernan Cortez did not single-handedly overthrow the Aztec authority, he brought on a revolt, a rebellion and was aided by peoples who had fallen under Aztec domination and whose relatives had been sacrificed to Aztec gods. These Indians fed and guarded Spanish soldiers. The Spanish were ruthless colonizers; they enslaved the Indians, introduced new diseases that the Indians had no immunity for such as small pox, measles, and typhus. They destroyed Tenochtitlan and built their city in the same place and changed the whole way of living. The Spanish relocated Indians to villages where they imposed their rules and collected taxes. They recruited for laborers, especially in mines. Today there are about 1 million Aztec-Nahua speaking residents of Mexico.
The new towns were laid out in same everywhere the Spanish went; the “GRIDIRON PATTERN”. Characteristics include the plaza in the center with the church, government offices, and stores around it. This facilitated tight control over local Indians who were converted to Christianity. After ransacking the riches of the Indian kings, priests and nobles, the Spanish wanted to organize this wealth for their own benefit and they began mining the riches that lay in the area. The Spanish prospectors were successful in finding lucrative deposits of silver and gold and mining became the mainstay of colonial Middle America.
COLONIZATION of the CARIBBEAN
The Arawaks and Caribs are indigenous to the Islands. the Arawaks were found in the Greater Antilles and formed farming communities. They were a docile peaceful group and raised root crops. The Caribs were found in the Lesser Antilles and were characterized as fierce and cannibalistic. They challenged the Arawaks, as the Arawaks challenged the Ciboney, another smaller group.
The indigenous peoples of the Caribbean failed to adapt to rigors subjected to by Europeans and perished by the thousands or fled. Runaway slaves joined them and the pure Caribbean native peoples disappeared forever. Our knowledge of them is derived primarily from the limited writings of early explorers and archeological findings. The primary reason of the first Spaniards in the Antilles was to look for gold, but found very little. Hostility grew among the Indians because they were forced into hard labor in the mines. Following the depletion of gold sources, the cultivation of sugarcane became the next economic basis.
The Portuguese in Brazil first built large-scale sugar cane plantations. Sugar in Europe was an expensive luxury. When the Dutch merchants began to supply sugar from Brazil at much better prices, sales expanded. The Portuguese monopolized the market until the Dutch occupied northeastern Brazil. They remained for 30 years and learned the trade well. When they were driven out, they occupied the Guiana coast and the Lesser Antilles and passed on what they had learned to the French and British. The center of sugar production shifted from Brazil to Antilles in late 17th C.
Black slaves from Africa were brought over to work the plantations. During the early mid late 1800’s slaves were given their freedom but in many cases had to continue working on the plantations because that was the only source of work. In Haiti, in 1804 the slaves established independence after staging a revolt. In many
countries sugar production collapsed after the slaves fledd into the interior and settled as squatters. In Barbados, there was no place to go, so sugar production actually increased and slaves were paid wages efficiency improved.

Everywhere that sugar and slavery took hold in the West Indies the population changed:
1. The total population as well as the ratio of blacks to whites increased rapidly. 2. Miscegenation (mixing of races) gave rise to a mixed-blood group that stood apart both from their maternal black and paternal white racial heritage. 3. Pop became concentrated on the coastal plains and other lowlands where sugar was cultivated and settlements took the form of black slave villages grouped around the great houses.

In Barbados, which is a good example of the region in general, was the first territory to experience the sugar revolution. To give you an example of how this changed the population ratio: In 1640 the population was 43,000, 37,000 white and 6,000 black. In 1678 the population had changed to approximately 20,000 white and 40,000 black. By 1809 the total population was 84,685 and blacks outnumbered whites 5 to 1.

The decline in the European population resulted in the departure of small farmers who could not compete with the large cane planters for land or with slaves for jobs.

The population structure changed socially as well. The importance of the Mulatto group came from the intermediate socioeconomic position it occupied. The position of a lighter skin in a society obsessed with a black slave tradition gave mulattoes a higher status. Degrees of rank, depending on the exact mixture of race, developed and society took careful note of the individual’s composition. Light skin became the badge of the European and of racial superiority and high status, while dark skin was associated with slavery, fieldwork and low status.

In Trinidad, there was plenty of available land and because there was a shortage of labor from Africa, they imported laborers from India. South Asians became an important segment of the population.

In the early 20th C, Cuba became a world leader in sugar production. A new technique for extracting the juice from cane emerged and changed the technology.

**SOUTH AMERICA**

Here we find a unique pre-Hispanic civilization. Incas built their civilization in the Andean intermont basins and from there established authority north to Quito (an Inca capital) and south to central Chile.

Hiram Bingham, an American explorer, first reached Machu Pichu in 1911. He had been told of Inca ruins by a local farmer and set off in search of a city called Vilcabamba. When he climbed to the mountain ridge called Machu Picchu, he found a noble city that had been built by the Inca’s. Modern theory describes it as a place of worship for a people who saw gods in sun and mountains.

The Incas conquered territory north and south, extending their influence. They were highly recognized for their irrigation engineering abilities. Besides potatoes and “quinoa” they supplemented their daily staples with Llama meat. They domesticated the llama, alpaca, and vicuña (all in the Camel family). The residents of the high Andean mountains, used and still use these animals to carry goods and the wool of the alpaca and vicuña is used for spinning and weaving.

Communication in this region was a tremendous feat – you can still see today the “Inca Trail” used by runners that would carry news from one village to another as well as small goods for trade and paying “taxes”. They were a very rich empire and quite a bit of gold and gems have been found in burials.

Their history has mostly been reconstructed from the Quipos – a system of story-telling based on knotting strings of different colors.

The Spanish (Francisco Pizarro) overthrew the Incas between 1531-1533. Inca citizens who were used to taking orders readily accepted their new leaders. Diseases introduced by the Spanish assisted in decimating the population.

**Lesson 3**

Reading Assignment/Overview
Text, Chapters 8 and 9 – Culture Regions

The information in this lesson is beyond what is in the text and outlines some general cultural concepts of the realm. It also breaks down the regions within Latin America, something that the text does not do in hopes that it may help you understand the Latin American Realm a bit better.
Middle America

Middle America is a truly diverse cultural region, but its major characteristics represent both a clash and a partial blending of three major cultural influences: 1. European Spanish, French, and English, 2. Black African, mostly West Africa, and 3. Native American Indian. Contact between the three groups has not been uniformly distributed over the area, however.

Present day cultural diversity in Middle America can be divided into two basic culture regions, which are called the Mainland and the Rimland. They differ in their racial characteristics and basic economic activities. The Mainland (Mexico and Central America) is characterized by European-Indian racial-cultural mixes and the self-sustaining, local market-oriented hacienda. The Rimland consists of the islands and the eastern coastal areas of the mainland and is differentiated by European-African racial-cultural mixes and the world-market oriented plantation.

Mainland Middle America: Mexico and Central America

Pre-Hispanic Legacy: The Mayan empire flourished in the Guatemalan Highlands at sites like Tikal between A.D. 250-600. They later diffused into the Yucatan region and established smaller settlements that were overtaken by the Spanish. Many Yucatecos still speak Mayan and practice daily life much as their ancestors did.

The Aztecs were in Mexico City flourishing when the Spanish arrived in 1519.

Physiography: From the border with the U.S., to the isthmus of Tehuantepec, a major physiographic element of Mexico is the Mexican Plateau, which occupies most of the width of the country. Two major physiographic parts of Mexico include the Central Plateau and the eastern and western coastal lowlands. Elevations of intermountain basins range between 3000 - 8000 ft. and mountain ranges rise about 3000 f.t above this to 18,000 ft. Plateaus are cut by few deep canyons.

Central America

Central America is a fascinating region due to its physiographic setting. It is a long narrow strip of land that is made of up coastal lowlands with the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean to the east. There is a central range that runs down the middle and here you find high mountain lakes, snow caped volcanic peaks and majestic mountain peaks.

Central America is made up of seven independent nations, most sharing a common Hispanic background. Belize is the exception as it was a British Colony and only gained independence in 1981. The other countries are: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras and Panama. They are sometimes referred to as "banana republics" because of their economic dependence on one or two export crops, among which bananas is one of the most important. Though most of the Central American nations share a similar background with Mexico due to the influence of the Spanish, Mexico is NOT part of Central America and it must be made clear, that the Mainland part of Middle America is composed of Mexico and Central America.

The Caribbean

The Caribbean part of the Rimland, is made up of the Greater and Lesser Antilles. It is a region of poverty and in many cases of unrelenting misery. It is considered by many to be the most densely populated part of the Americas.

The only two Greater Antilles islands that are exceptions to this rule are Puerto Rico with its affiliation with the U.S. and communist Cuba. The Mainland/Rimland concept is not discussed in great detail in the text, but is presented here as a way of describing two distinct culture regions in Middle America that are strongly tied to their physical environment.

South America

South America is made up of Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and the Guiana’s. Two main culture groups, the Spanish speakers and the Portuguese speakers dominate the South American continent. These two groups cover all the continent with the exception of small English, Dutch and French speaking areas in the Guiana’s.

Even though Spanish speakers dominate Spanish South America, it is in reality an area of cultural clash between Europeans and Amerindians. Based on the degree of mixing or lack of mixing between those two groups it is possible to divide Spanish South America into three regions. The northern Andean countries of Venezuela and Columbia are basically mestizo (mixed European and Amerindian ancestry) with some Europeans and very few Amerindians. The central Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia are mainly
Amerindian although politics and economics are dominated by the few Europeans who live there. The southern “cone” of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay are essentially European. They are not all the same, however. Paraguay is racially more Amerindian but with a European style culture, while the people of Uruguay and Argentina are almost entirely European and include many non-Spanish European immigrants. Chile occupies an intermediate position.

**Andean America and the Southern Cone**
South America is another realm with much physical diversity, the northern Andean countries, Colombia and Venezuela border the Caribbean (Colombia has coasts on both the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean to the west) and they share similar economic activities based on plantation economies and the development of minerals and petroleum industries. The Andean nations to the south Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia have coastal regions along the Pacific Ocean, mountainous regions within the Andes Mountains and an Amazonian region, giving way to the Amazon Basin. Even Peru has an Amazonian region with a port city Iquitos on a tributary to the Amazon river. Bolivia is the exception as it is land-locked.

The Southern Cone is made up of Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Chile has three very prominent regions, the coastal lowlands (not at all tropical as its neighbors to the north), the central valley’s where the agricultural areas are located and the high mountain areas in the Andes. Argentina has the Patagonia in the south, which is sparsely populated due to the harsh conditions, the central bread basket area where the major urban areas are located and major agricultural areas and the Andean region. In the north Argentina is quite arid. Uruguay which is considered a "compact" nation in shape is largely agricultural. Paraguay is also land-locked and is mainly composed of the semi-arid "Chaco". The eastern part is the most developed, with forest products and some industrial crops being exported.

**Portuguese Speaking South America**
On a continent with so many Spanish-speaking countries, how is it that Portuguese speakers dominate half the area politically? One reason stems from a division in 1494. The Pope divided the new discoveries around the world into Spanish and Portuguese regions. A Spaniard, the Pope thought he was awarding all of the Americas to Spain. Then, Portuguese sailors who determined that it was on the Portuguese side of the Pope’s dividing line, thus a Portuguese foothold in the Americas, discovered the eastern bulge of Brazil. Portuguese territory was expanded later by exploration, settlement, purchase and conquest.

In area, Brazil is one of the largest countries in the world. Only four countries are larger: Russia, Canada, China and the U.S. (counting Alaska and Hawaii). Brazil’s population is about the eighth largest in the world. Because people of the United States know very little about Brazil, they tend to regard the country as of minor importance. But with vast size, large population and burgeoning industry (Brazil now produces more automobiles than the former republic of the Soviet Union) Brazil could eventually become one of the world’s great powers. Brazil is the largest Roman Catholic country in the world as well as the largest Portuguese speaking country. Brazilian culture has received important influences from a variety of sources. Today its culture represents several different cultures coexisting in the same area as well as a fusion of various cultural elements. The source cultures include indigenous peoples, only a few of who remain today, the Portuguese conquerors and Africans (over six million were “imported” as slaves). Other Europeans, especially Germans and Italians in the south and Asians, most especially Japanese, have had an influence far beyond their relatively small numbers.

**French Speaking South America**
The Guiana’s are composed of three units: Guyana, which became independent from Britain in 1966; Suriname, which gained independence from the Netherlands in 1978; and French Guiana, an overseas department of France. They represent an area of increased cultural diversity within the overall diversity of South America.
Many of the people of the Guiana’s are East Indian Hindus and Muslims and most of the rest have African ancestry.

Lesson 4
Reading Assignment/Overview
Text, Chapters 10 & 11

Economic Patterns
The Caribbean: The Spanish settled the Caribbean area looking for gold. Little was found, but they developed successful towns. On the island of Hispániola, Santo Domingo was founded in 1496 and is the oldest city of Americas. Many towns were lost to natural disasters, others were destroyed and rebuilt. Mexico and Central America: Spanish discovered Aztec empire and built their cities on same site. Other important towns in Mexico include Taxco, known for its silver mines and Guadalajara, Puebla and Oxaca in mid-1500’s were agricultural towns settled in fertile areas already densely populated. Many smaller towns were founded for administrative centers, religious congregations, where the Spanish could convert the indigenous, and became pools for agricultural or mine workers. Other cities were way stations along the lowland Pacific. Central America: Similar to Mexico – settlements were established as mining centers and agricultural colonies. After the conquest of Mexico exploration of South and Central America became a support area in terms of port, supply and defense roles.

Land Tenure
A major influence the Spanish had was that of land tenure – once established, they initiated several different tenure systems:
HACIENDA: a Spanish institution, ownership of a large property by the Spanish providing social prestige and economic security. Workers were primarily Native American workers that lived on the land, which may once have been their land, and they were taken care of. They had plots where they could grow their own subsistence crops. This practice is still visible in mainland Middle America and South America today.
PLANTATION: Conceived by the Europeans and is a large estate owned by an individual, family or corporation to produce a cash crop. Almost all plantations in tropics produce single export crops (which is what the term “Banana Republic” refers to). The dominant characteristics are foreign ownership, profit dominated, seasonal labor is often imported.
ENCOMIENDA: much like the Aztec system of tribute – the Spanish exploited the labor of the Indians. The Spanish took over or were granted large parcels of land and the Indians inhabiting the land became their laborers and had to pay tribute to the Spanish “lord”.
EJIDO: A land holding agrarian community occupied primarily by people of Indian descent. It is a rural peasant community, a farm village consisting usually of less than 100 families. Each family works a small plot of land, which is treated as private property, but it cannot be sold and if a family moves away the land is reinstated into the Ejido. It is organized politically with an executive committee. The government furnishes technical assistance, and education. This system, still in use, produces will over half of certain crops, but production is still below private farms due to lack of skilled labor.

Andean Lands
Similar settlement pattern – dependent on the discovery of mineral wealth. North - south linkages had been established by the Incas and after colonization, east – west routes were established between inland towns and Pacific ports. In Chile the Spanish settled the central valley for agricultural and eventually administrative centers and moved south setting up outposts as they advanced towards the hostile Araucanian Indians.

The Economy:
Before 1900, agriculture and mining dominated the economies of Latin America and during the twentieth century, the pace of economic change quickened. By the end of the 1970’s, Latin America was industrializing and modernizing and the economies of most countries were diversifying. Prior to the 1900’s most of the population lived in small towns and agricultural centers, by the mid 1900’s people were moving into urban areas with over half of the work force working in cities. Agricultural products in tropical regions included sugar and tobacco until late 1800’s and as Latin American trade increased globally the demand for tobacco, coffee, cacao, cotton, bananas and rubber increased. In some
cases the production of the goods was owned and operated by a large foreign company such as the United Fruit Company, which started as a shipper of bananas in Jamaica, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Columbia. This growth gave way to “regional specialization” where some regions had become dependent on the sale of specific crops such as coffee in Colombia, sugar in Cuba and meat, wool and grain in Argentina. The depression era of the 30’s brought the successful agricultural export economy to an end, what followed were attempts at diversification and import substitution (the effort to substitute domestic manufactured goods for imported goods). This in turn stimulated the manufacturing industry, which is still the most dynamic sector of the Latin American economy. This is not to say that the importance of agriculture has diminished, in fact the traditional products of coffee, sugar, bananas, and cotton remain leading generators of foreign exchange earnings.

Increases in total food production have occurred in nearly every country. However this has been overshadowed by population increases. In some countries though, such as Brazil, Chile, Columbia and Costa Rica, performances in terms of food production have been so high, that as a whole Latin America has kept pace with population growth as it modernizes but one obstacle is the land holding system, land reform is essential.

Lesson 5

Text, Chapter 12
Urbanization - The Latin American City

Urban places, towns and cities have always been at heart of LA’s economic, political and cultural development. Stages of Urban Development:
1. Urban framework related to interests of colonists
2. Adjustment of early colonial urban network
3. Early modern period, when newly independent Latin American countries established ties to market and industrial nations of Europe and the US
4. Large scale rural to urban migration, with national capitals and port cities being the center of growth. These cities turn into very large metropolitan areas with nearby surrounding smaller cities.

The Settling of Latin America
The Caribbean: The Spanish settled the Caribbean area looking for gold. Little was found, but they developed successful towns. On the island of Hispañola, Santo Domingo was founded in 1496 and is the oldest city of Americas. Many towns were lost to natural disasters, others were destroyed and rebuilt. Mexico and Central America: Spanish discovered Aztec empire and built their cities on same site. Other important towns in Mexico include Taxco, known for its silver mines and Guadalajara, Puebla and Oxaca in mid-1500’s were agricultural towns settled in fertile areas already densely populated. Many smaller towns were founded for administrative centers, religious congregations, where the Spanish could convert the indigenous, and became pools for agricultural or mine workers. Other cities were way stations along the lowland Pacific.

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Modeling Urban Development
Urban development in Latin America can be described in four stages: 1. Exploration 2. Initial Settlement 3. Expansion of the network 4. Infilling of the network

In Latin America the urban system was linked to Iberian mercantile (initial trade, political ties) policies more than to local factors. At the same time they were also important to their own developing regions and growth of local markets.

Urban development varied widely throughout the region.

Morphology of the Colonial City
Gridiron Pattern: as response to royal instruction All cities and towns have specific layouts and land uses. There is a clear separation between certain activities (see gridiron pattern on page 167).

Evolution of the modern Latin American city: In Mexico we find growth due to the development of trade, industry, tourism, and politics. Mexico City was the largest city in Latin America, recently surpassed by Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In Central America one city usually dominates – the capital city. Cities grow from company towns and agricultural centers. The cutting of hardwoods led to growth of some small towns.

In the Caribbean, the major towns of colonial period remain the dominant focus of the area. In Andean America, the older major cities have remained the economic, social and cultural centers as well as political capitals for the most part. Mining towns also gave rise to new settlements.

**Population**

As Latin America modernizes their population has grown. Population growth has resulted from an excess of birth rates and an excess of immigration over emigration.

Some population characteristics:
The elite: who are culturally “white”. The city dominates their social and cultural horizons. For them the world of the Indigenous is unimportant. They are the business people, absentee landlords, and professionals.
The Disadvantaged: Those who have moved from poverty stricken rural areas in search of economic opportunity. Many are self-employed as peddlers or independent crafts people. Most live on edge of poverty. In all capital cities in Latin America, the lower sector people seek help and sustenance from the more advantaged: a type of “compadrazgo”. They form economic and social alliances.

Private landowners expand at the expense of smaller landholdings, or plots in rural areas become divided into plots so small, subsistence farming was no longer possible. For example, in El Salvador most of the land is privately owned and is devoted to raising cotton and coffee crops for export or cattle farming. There is not enough land to provide crops for a population that has grown at one of the most rapid rates. There are no empty lands left to occupy. Many Salvadorians have moved to the city, while others have crossed into neighboring countries. In the 1960’s thousands moved to Honduras and population movements like this cause a refugee problem.

**Lesson 6**

Reading Assignment/Overview
Text, Chapter 13
Development and Health
Latin America is facing many issues today:
1. Restoring diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba
2. Mauricio Macri, who took office as Argentina’s president in December and how the past economic and political turmoil in Argentina has affected neighboring nations.
3. Recent changes in Venezuela – a year after the death of Hugo Chavez.
4. The resistance to integration and competition by the mostly Amerindian population in Chiapas in southern Mexico, Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala
5. The ever present drug problem in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and its effects on the society, political system, economic system.
6. The global concern about the destruction of the rainforests in Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, etc.

Among the issues facing Latin America today and perhaps the most sensitive, seem to be environmental issues. This brings up the idea of sustainable development, which means:
The use of resources in a manner that passes to future generations an environment that has not been degraded by species destruction, soil erosion, pollution, or any other means. Values included in Sustainable Development are biological diversity, protection of indigenous people, watershed protection, etc. to name a few. Other considerations would include: better distribution of wealth within the countries, less division between the have and have-nots, between the developed, developing and lesser developed countries.

Latin America has many different environments, the tropical lowlands, the highlands, urban centers, and rural areas and each of these environments have certain unique health risks. As development increases in the realm, it
becomes easier to deal with the health risks, but they are still very much a part of the culture. Also, the entire region faces natural hazards, that include volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, and erosion due to El Niño and each of these situations impacts the infrastructure of the countries. In spite of the volatility of environments, economies, currencies, and politics, much of Latin America is going through a modernizing transformation and one of the most important factors that plays a critical role in this trend and in the continuing development of the realm, is education.

Another contrast in Latin America is that of the urban and rural environments. Many of the cities in Latin America are quite modern with improved infrastructure at all levels and the rural areas are still underdeveloped, with many people living in shanty towns. In most shanty towns (favelas in Brazil), there is no running water and people are forced to use the water in irrigation ditches for washing clothes and dishes. Lack of potable water, sanitation and health care leads to many health risks. Latin American cities are among the fastest growing cities in the world and in nations such as Mexico, you have a well-defined migration pattern, to the cities in search of a better education, employment and housing. Slowly the outskirts of the cities develop from squatter settlements to extensions of the metropolitan area as infrastructure is extended out to the periphery to include the satellite populations.
A squatter settlement in San Salvador, El Salvador.

Credit: David L. Clawson

Belmopan, Belize is another example of a new, planned administrative city.

Credit: David L. Clawson
Poverty is the greatest of all health threats and in order for many of the Latin American nations to decrease the numbers of inhabitants in this category, they will need to spend their monies wisely and improve infrastructure and provide education to all. Latin American nations are well endowed with natural resources and they must have government officials who know how to take advantage of these resources in a way that all are able to reap the benefits. This is a global issue.