

**HISTORY 1224**  
**INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICA**  
**Core Curriculum Writing Intensive and Area 7 course.**

Spring 2009  
TTH 3:30-4:45  
Major Williams 434

Linda Arnold, redtape@vt.edu, 1567  
2:00-3:00, after class, and by appointment  
Major Williams 404

Your professor developed this course to provide lower division students a modest social science introduction to Latin American studies and to encourage students to pursue further upper division social science course work in Latin American content courses. Building on the interests and strengths of this university, this course explores the intersection of the environment, technology, and culture in Latin America from remote times to the present (because your professor is an historian). Brief informational sessions (short lectures), enlightening documentaries, discussions, and several fine books frame the content of this course. Students are expected to attend class - because no one can take notes on documentaries for another individual and because evidence of **all** the documentaries for each unit is required in your papers. Students are expected to think for themselves. And students are strongly encouraged to humor the professor who is genuinely fascinated by virtually all topics, themes, issues, and matters pertaining to Latin America.

**The Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course in so far as it does not interfere with collaborative development and mutual learning. All written work submitted shall be considered graded work, unless otherwise noted. All aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor System. Any suspected violations of the Honor Code will be promptly reported to the Honor System.**

**BOOKS**

J. Timmons Roberts & Nikki Demetria Thanos, **Trouble in Paradise: Globalization and Environmental Crises in Latin America**

Helen Collinson, **Green Guerillas: Environmental Conflicts and Initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean**

David E. Stuart, **Anasazi America**

Joe Kane, **Savages**

Benjamin Dangl, **The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia**

**REQUIREMENTS**

30% - Three comprehensive take home critical essays based on the material presented in class, readings, and the documentaries in each unit. [1000-1500 words, 4-6 pages, typed double-spaced in clear, concise, well-organized, English prose] (10% each - 3)

5% - One 500-750 words, 2-3 pages, original, critical documentary review of **The Chaco Legacy** based on Stuart's **Anasazi America**

10% One 500-750 words, 2-3 pages, comparative documentary review **Trinkets and Beads, Flames in the Forest, The Oil Curse,** and **Ecuador: Divided Over Oil** based on Kane's **Savages**

10% One 500-750 words, 2-3 pages, comparative documentary review of **Amazonia: Voices for the Rainforest, The Fires of the Amazon, Yanomami: Keepers of the Flame,** reflecting on the Benjamin Dangl's perspective in **The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia.**

45% - Nine scheduled class discussions (5% each)

**GRADING : ALL PAPERS ARE DUE ON THE ASSIGNED DATE. The standard for evaluating written work will be the professional standard.** You will be graded on organization, grammar, content, clarity of thought and expression, originality, accuracy, your grasp of the dynamic of time, and an appreciation for human agency. A = 93 and above, A-=90-92, B+=89-88, B=83-87; B-=80-82, C+=79-78, C=77-73, C-=72-70, D+=69-68, D=67-63, D-=62-60, F=59. Students are encouraged to discuss readings and dialogues with one another. Students should review the material handed out in class concerning plagiarism and take care not to plagiarize. Students may discuss but not collaborate on the take home essays as they are designed to discern what each individual student is learning and each individual's writing.

### **BASIC INSTRUCTIONS AND ADVICE**

The reviews and comprehensive essays will be DUE the day on which the class discussion takes place. Do consult the Writing and Presentation links via my homepage. Students who need assistance learning how to proofread should consult a tutor at the Writing Center (Shanks Hall).

Comments and helpful hints: Your final grade depends greatly on patient persistence - the chief hallmark of which is class attendance. Your participation in discussion will only be enhanced by your paying close attention to the reading and listening carefully. You are encouraged to take notes; they will be of great value in writing your reviews and essays.

**Second and third drafts usually get better results than first drafts. Your professor does not enjoy reading first drafts.** Your professor does admire organization (papers that have introductions, bodies, and conclusions), clarity of expression, brilliant analysis, exceptional familiarity with the content of this course, exquisite command of English grammar and vocabulary, reflective thought, and a sense of humor. Students are encouraged to begin to think about the legitimacy of difference and the distinct trajectory of the Latin American past, present, and future. Students are also encouraged to remember that Latin American is not the United States. The most practical suggestions that I can offer you as you develop your reviews and essays are:

1. REMEMBER that your professor is an historian. History is not **THE** past but the **STUDY** and **ANALYSIS** of the change over time. Historians – much like scholars in most disciplines - ask questions, search for evidence, report, interpret, and analyze on the basis of the evidence and their own considered opinions.
2. Read the assigned material.
3. Identify the thesis, main point, and/or purpose in each reading. (Hint: The author usually will tell you this information in the introduction.)
4. Identify the kind of evidence the author used. Did the author consult other books and articles? Newspapers? Letters, reports, or data from archival documents? Did the author interview subjects? Did the author participate in the process of change? (Check the footnotes and bibliography.)

5. Identify general statements made by the author that support, modify, or contradict comments made in the documentaries an/or by your professor.

6. There are 250 words per page in Courier New, 12 point font. Do not play with margins and fonts thinking you will lead your professor to believe that 300 words are actually 500 words.

### **POINTS TO PONDER WHILE WATCHING THE DOCUMENTARIES**

1. What seems to be the filmmaker's main purpose? To educate? To critique? To establish the truth? To persuade?

2. Who is its intended audience?

3. What is the main focus or subject matter of the documentary?

4. What are the principal points, conclusions, contentions, or questions?

5. What patterns or categories did the filmmaker use to structure the subject matter? Who are the people in the documentary? Are the people portrayed as subjects or as exercising agency?

6. What is new, different, or controversial about the documentary in terms of your knowledge of the subject based on your general awareness or the texts?

7. How would you summarize your evaluation of the documentary as a teaching tool?

8. How can you place the documentary into a context--that of the course or your own experience, in terms of the issues the documentary addresses.

9. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the documentary, referring to scenes or series of scenes to illustrate those strengths and weaknesses.

10. Evaluate the work by discussing it in terms of what you have learned about the subject.

11. What research question or two that might further broaden and deepen your understanding of the issues raised by the docuemntary? In essence, respond to the question: What questions would one need to ask, research, and answer to understand more fully the issues and topics presented in the documentary.

## THE CALENDAR

**JAN 20 Introduction and Your Professor's Interpretive Perspective**, begin reading Stuart

### UNIT 1 – From Past to Present

JAN 22 Before the Incas

Read: Collinson, 1-6, 34-39, 47-50 (before class)

Documentary: *Mysteries of Peru*, Video 4302/1 (50 min.)

JAN 27 Before Columbus

Read: Stuart (the entire book before class)

Documentary: *The Mystery of Chaco Canyon*, DVD 137 (56 min.)

Jan 29 – **Discussion, documentary review due**: Stuart & *The Chaco Legacy*. The assignment: write a 500-750 word critical review of documentary *The Chaco Legacy* based on Stuart's *Anasazi America*

Feb 3 The Colombian Exchange

Read: Collinson, 40-46, 51-60; Roberts & Thanos, 1-33

Documentary: *The Colombian Exchange*, Video 5514 (58 min.)

FEB 5 Technology and Toxins

Read: Roberts & Thanos, 35-63

Documentary: *Borderline Cases* (65 min.)

FEB 10 Crises to the South

Read: Collinson, 8-19, 20-32

Documentary: *Burning Rivers: Guatemala's Environment and Social Crisis* (28 min.)

Documentary: *Between Two Futures, Guatemala: Challenges in the Petén* (28 min.)

FEB 12 **Review discussion**: *Anasazi America*, *Green Guerrillas*, *Trouble in Paradise*, documentaries, and material presented in class. Come prepared to discuss the intersection of themes, issues, and content in **all** readings, documentaries, and lecture material

FEB 17 **Discussion, first comprehensive essay due**

**OPTIONAL THESIS STATEMENT**: From remote times to the present ordinary people have confronted, sometimes without success, extraordinary ecological and environmental challenges.

UNIT 2: **Indigenous Peoples and Urban Demands**. Begin reading Kane

Feb 19 The Shuar and Achuar

Read: Roberts & Thanos, 165-191

Documentary: *Flames in the Forest* (52 min.)

Feb 24 Indians and Politics

Read: Collinson, 61-73

Documentary: *Ecuador: Divided Over Oil* (28 min)

Feb 26 Rainforest Peoples

Read: Kane (the whole book before class)

Documentary: *Trinkets and Beads* (53 min.) Video 6857

Mar 3 Pursuing Recourse  
Documentary: *The Oil Curse* (60 min.)

Mar 5 **Discussion, comparative documentary review due.** The assignment: write a 500-750 word comparative documentary review of the documentaries *Flames in the Forest, Ecuador: Divided Over Oil, Trinkets and Beads*, and *The Oil Curse* based on Kane.

MARCH 10-12 Spring Break

Mar 17 The Chocó and the Peoples of the Chocó  
Read: Collinson, 74-81  
Documentary: *Secrets of the Chocó*, Video 8102 (60 min.)

MAR 19 Urban Worlds  
Read: Read: Roberts & Thanos, 95-127; Collinson, 196-239  
Documentary: *The Urban Explosion*, Video 7103 (57 min.)

MAR 24 No Class

Mar 26 The Lure of the Urban  
Read: Collinson, 196-239  
Documentary: *Mexico City: The Largest City* (25 min.)  
Documentary: *In Good Hands: Culture and Agriculture in the Lacandon Rainforest* (27 min)

MAR 31 **Review Discussion** - *Savages, Green Guerrillas, Trouble in Paradise*, documentaries, and material presented in class. Come prepared to discuss the intersection of themes, issues, and content in **all** readings, documentaries, and lecture material

Apr 2 **Discussion, second comprehensive essay due**

**OPTIONAL THESIS STATEMENT:** Ordinary people strive to preserve and improve their cultural ways of life in the face of constant change.

**UNIT 3:** People, Resources, Challenges, Solutions? Begin reading Dangl

APR 7 Peopling Remote Regions  
Documentary: *Amazonia: Voices from the Rainforest*

APR 9 Globalization and Social Challenges  
Read: Roberts & Thanos, 129-163  
Documentary: *Yanomami: Keepers of the Flame* (58 min.)

Apr 14 Burning the Forests  
Read: Collinson, 84-108  
Documentary: *Ashes of the Forest*, Video 2981, pt. 1 (60 min)

APR 16 Amazon Basin Changes  
Documentary: *The Fires of the Amazon* (44 min.)

APR 21 **Discussion, comparative documentary review due:** a 500-750 word comparative review of *Yanomami: Keepers of the Flame*, *Amazonia: Voices From the Rain Forest*, and *The Fires of the Amazon*, reflecting on the perspective in Benjamin Dangl, **The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia.**

APR 23 Solutions: Hydropower?

Read: Collinson, 168-177; Roberts & Thanos, 65-93

Documentary: *Large Dams, False Promises* (36 min.)

Documentary: *Voices of the Patanal* (16 min.)

APR 28 Solutions: Biospheres Reserves?

Read: Roberts & Thanos, 193-211

Documentary: *Biosphere Reserves in Tropical America* (25 min.)

Documentary: *Return to Tambopata* (28 min.)

APR 30 **Review discussion:** *The Price of Fire, Green Guerrillas, Trouble in Paradise*, documentaries, and material presented in class. Come prepared to discuss the intersection of themes, issues, and content in **all** readings, documentaries, and lecture material

MAY 5 **Discussion, third comprehensive essay due:** *Green Guerrillas, Trouble in Paradise, The Price of Fire*, documentaries, and material presented in class.

**OPTIONAL THESIS STATEMENT:** People intent on creating a culturally and ecologically sustainable future must recognize and solve complex problems that have local as well as global implications.