CULTURES OF LATIN AMERICA (ANTH 3702)  
DR. ERIC B. ROSS  

(W, F, 2:20-3:35pm)  

COURSE OVERVIEW:  
The course explores the nature and significance of the cultural diversity that characterizes Latin America and, in so doing, considers its relationship, on the one hand, to geographical and ecological conditions and, on the other, to historical forces, both pre-Colombian and post-Conquest, during the colonial and post-colonial eras. In the end, the principal aim is to demystify the origin of the varying degrees of marginality and deprivation found across the region and to better understand the nature of the different development strategies that have emerged across the continent in recent times.

COURSE OUTCOMES:  
Students will acquire an historically-grounded understanding of the cultural and social variability that has characterized the populations of South America, from the pre-European period; they will generally appreciate the nature and scale of the different transformations and associated consequences that they have undergone through the period of colonization and its aftermath; and they will be able to situate their discussion and analysis of contemporary events and developments in the region in a comparative and historical framework. Above all, students will leave the course with a richer, more critical perspective on the cultural realities and social contradictions, tensions and potentials, of the development process in the different parts of South America and be able to contribute an informed understanding of the internal and external, historical and contemporary forces shaping current events to on-going policy debate.

REQUIRED READINGS:  
I have refrained from requiring any specific books. Weekly readings generally will consist of articles or, occasionally, book chapters that I have made pdf copies of and posted on Blackboard.

I do, however, highly recommend your trying to obtain a copy of Eric Wolf and Edward Hansen’s *The Human Condition in Latin America*. While it is out-of-print, many cheap copies are usually available through Amazon.

*Weekly Reading, unless available on the Internet, will be available on Blackboard.*

ASSESSMENT:  
*Exams:* There is no final exam, but there will be a take-home mid-term exam.  
*Papers:* A 10-12 page paper, the topic for which is open to the student *in consultation with the Lecturer.*
The paper will count 70%, the mid-term exam 30%, of the final grade.

SYLLABUS

1. (Aug. 31) COURSE OVERVIEW

2. (Sept. 2, 7) THE PRE-COLOMBIAN LANDSCAPE
   The course begins with an introductory overview that will acquaint students with the distinctive nature of the diverse cultural landscape that preceded the arrival of Europeans and their project of colonization.

   Reading:
   Denevan, William The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492.
   http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~alcoze/for398/class/pristinemyth.htm


   Harris, Marvin Patterns of Race (Chapter 1, “Before Columbus”)

3. (Sept. 9) DISCOVERY, CONQUEST, AND EARLY COLONIZATION
   With this section, students will become familiar with the general pattern of European conquest, the nature of its initial impact on indigenous lives and culture, and its enduring legacy for contemporary Latin American development.

   Reading:


   Harris, Marvin Patterns of Race Chapter 2, “Race, Culture and Manpower”
Crosby, Alfred 1972 *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492.* (Chapter 2, “Conquistador and Pestilencia”)


**NOTE: I AM AWAY IN ENGLAND THE WEEK OF SEPT. 12TH**

4. (Sept. 21, 23) **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AMAZON CULTURAL DIVERSITY**
While, in some ways, outside the mainstream of Latin American society, the Amazon represents a large part of the Latin American region and one in which the global forces of development have long affected the autonomy and sustainability of a rich diversity of indigenous cultures, in pursuing

*Reading:*

[http://www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/Textos/FergusonAE.pdf](http://www.ifch.unicamp.br/ihb/Textos/FergusonAE.pdf)

**FILM: The Feast** (T. Asch)

5. (Sept. 28, 30) **THE WEALTH OF LABOR: THE MAKING OF LATIN AMERICAN PEASANTRIES**

*Reading:*

Bolton, Ralph 1979 *Guinea Pigs, Protein, and Ritual* *Ethnology* 18(3): 229-252.
Harris, Marvin *Patterns of Race*, Chapters 3 (“The Highland Heritage”) and 4 (“Plantation Heritage”)

**Brook thomas**


7. (Oct. 5, 7) THE ECONOMIES OF EXTRACTION (HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PROLETARIANS)

*Reading:*


B. Traven. orig. 1936 *Rebellion of the Hanged* (extract)
8. (Oct. 12) COLONIES OF GOD: MISSIONARIES AND THEIR MISSIONS

Latin American history is a constant story of a struggle over resources between the agents of the world market and the cultivators of the land. In that struggle, European religion was not extraneous to the main action but, on the contrary, played a central strategic role in organizing the extraction of profit.

Reading:

USA Today 2008 Missionaries Accuse Brazil of Allowing Infanticide. Sept. 23. 


Reading:


Adrian Cowell 1973 The Tribe That Hides from Man
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhAvuPlhdNA

FILM: BANKING ON DISASTER (Adrian Cowell)

10. (Oct. 21) A PROCESS OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT: POVERTY AND DEATH IN BRAZIL’S NORTHEAST
Reading:


11. (Oct. 26, 28) THE UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF BOLIVIA AND GUATEMALA: ALTERNATIVE CONTEMPORARY TRAJECTORIES

Reading:
Public Citizen nd Water Privatization Case Study: Cochabamba, Bolivia


FILM: COCALERO

12. (Nov. 2) THE GREEN REVOLUTION IN CONTEXT: CAPITALIST AGRICULTURE AND PEASANT MARGINALIZATION IN MEXICO

Reading:
13. (Nov. 4) THE VIOLENCE OF DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF COLOMBIA

Reading:


14. (Nov. 9, 11) THE FAILURE OF LAND REFORM: LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT DURING THE COLD WAR

Reading:


Video: “So That Men Are Free” (CBS 1963)
http://courses.cit.cornell.edu/vicosperu/vicos-site/cornellperu_page_1.htm#stmaf
http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Periodicals/De/pdf/69_02_07.pdf

**THANKSGIVING RECESS**

15. (Nov. 30, Dec. 2) REBELLIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS: THE ON-GOING STRUGGLE FOR LAND AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

While emphasizing recent national developments in Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, this section also focuses on regional resistance to neo-liberalism such as the Zapatista uprising of Chiapas in southern Mexico.

*Reading:*

Burbach, Roger Roots of the Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas  


http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090817/farthing


http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5832390545689805144

*Video:* *A Place Called Chiapas* (Youtube), 
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKYL_GNQNa4&feature=related OR 
http://documentarystorm.com/a-place-called-chiapas/
FILM: ZAPATISTA

16. (Dec. 7, 9) SUMMING UP