

HIS 3931
Modern Central America
Spring 2022 / FLI 0119 / MWF 11:45am-12:35pm



These images may reflect what comes to your mind when you think about Central America. What else comes to mind? Why, do you think?

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Office hours: Tues. 11am – 1pm (Zoom), Weds. 1pm – 2:30pm (In person), and by appointment

This topics course addresses key themes in Central America from the eve of independence from Spain in 1821 to the corruption scandals of the 2010s and 20s. We will discuss land, labor, U.S. intervention, dictatorship, revolution, counterrevolution, and civil war through traditional historical sources and works of literature, music, and art.

The course material is organized into six chronological units: 1) Introduction and Colonial Roots, 2) U.S. Imperialism Part I, 3) Caudillos and Dictators, 4) Reform and Revolution, 5) Civil War, and 6) Ir/Reconciliation.

In general, Mondays and Wednesdays will be lectures. Fridays will be discussion days.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, you will:

- come to understand a number of key social, political, economic, and cultural changes in Central America from independence from Spain to the present
- recognize how these changes affected Central America lives over time
- identify and explain the diverse and interconnected histories of Central America's many nations and their inhabitants
- explain the endurance of colonial patterns and identities over time
- understand the role of the history of Central America in relationship to the United States and Latin America, in terms of labor, migration, law, religion, and more
- recognize and be able to analyze primary sources, including newspapers, speeches, diaries, music, photographs, films, and other visual sources
- improve your critical thinking skills & your thesis-driven writing skills

Readings

As this is a 3000-level class, you can expect to read around 60-70 pages per week (although some weeks will exceed 70 pgs.), and usually a combination of primary and secondary sources (including scholarly articles and

book chapters). As you know, not all reading is created equal and some texts will be harder than others, though they appear shorter at first glance. Be sure to allocate adequate time for reading.

Many of our readings will be primary sources that are available as PDFs on Canvas. You will also purchase three books for this class.

Required books:

- W. George Lovell, *A Beauty that Hurts*
- Joan Didion, *Salvador*
- Manilo Argueta, *One Day of Life*

Optional reference texts:

- Héctor Pérez-Brignoli, *A Brief History of Central America*
- James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Central America*

For those of you who read in Spanish, there are many excellent Spanish-language sources; see me if you are interested.

Assignments:

1. Attendance/Participation – 200 points
 - a. Your participation in class is crucial to our and your success. I will take attendance during every class period. But you will grade your own participation on a scale of 0-10 once every two weeks. You are expected to participate actively in class by answering questions, asking questions, and taking notes. I reserve the right to modify the grade, either up or down, and will inform you on a biweekly basis of these modifications. If you are sick, please use caution and take care of yourself and your classmates by staying home. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presents new hardships to which we are all attempting to adapt. If you need to discuss an attendance concern, feel free to reach out to me. Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>
2. Weekly Reading Quizzes –100 points
 - a. There will be 12 (nearly) weekly 10-point quizzes administered on Mondays across the semester worth 10 points each. I will drop the 2 lowest grades. The quizzes will be based on the readings.
3. Midterm paper – 150 points
 - a. This paper will be an analytical paper based on primary and secondary sources. You will respond to this prompt: Discuss the limitations on political expression in late 19th – early 20th century Central America, focusing on one country. Your paper should be at least 2500 words in length.
4. Debates – 50 each, 150 total points
 - a. Three times during the semester, we will have an in-class debates on important questions in the history of Modern Central America. You are responsible for participating meaningfully and actively in these debates. There are a variety of ways to contribute, which we will discuss.
5. Final Paper – 200 points
 - a. This paper will be a synthesis essay about one of the units of the course. Your paper must include an adequate number of secondary and primary sources to support your argument. You should use assigned readings and outside sources. Your paper should be at least 2500 words in length.
6. Group Podcast or Website – 200 points
 - a. Working in groups of about 2-4 people, you will research a topic in Central American history since 1821 that we may or may not have touched upon in class. You will engage theories of history, secondary materials, and original primary sources. You should try to include one interview. What you research is largely up to you, but it should in some way reflect the entirety

of the semester, as this assignment is in lieu of a final exam. With this research, you will create a podcast. Your podcast should be at least 20 minutes long and it may be in English or Spanish (or Spanglish). You will share your podcasts with the class during the last week of class. You can also choose to create a website, which should include photographs, other primary sources, audio, and analysis.

Total: 1000 points

Note: You will submit assignments on Canvas and I will enter grades there, too; you are responsible for monitoring your own grade by adding the points you earned on assignments by the points you could have earned.

Course Policies

Accessibility and accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 or www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which should be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

We will work together proactively to improve accessibility in this classroom and syllabus. I will seek opportunities to make assignments, discussion, the classroom itself, and technologies more accessible. Please let me know how I can support you.

Cell phones, etc.

Cell phone use during class is distracting. Please also refrain from computer use that is not directly related to the course, which distracts you and your classmates. Of course, I understand that emergencies do arise.

Honor Code & Pledge

In 1995 the UF student body enacted an [honor code](#) and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

The Honor Pledge

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

UF Policies & COVID-19 Precautions in our Classroom

In accordance with UF policies, I expect that you will wear a mask while you are in class. This class will not have a Hy-Flex option unless I decide it is expedient to change the policy. At this time, I will not audio record my lectures, but I will make slides available for review. Absences related to COVID-19 infection will be treated like other illnesses in accordance with UF's attendance policy.

Office hours will be available to you in in-person and Zoom modalities (see pg. 1 of this syllabus). You are free to choose which you would prefer. Masks are expected during office hours.

Please review UF policies regarding quarantine and isolation here: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/screen-test-protect-2/information-for/students/student-isolation-and-self-quarantine/>.

Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

[Note: I may update the syllabus if necessary through the course of the semester. If changes are made, the updated syllabus will be announced in class and on the course Canvas site.]

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