

Latin American Studies (LAS)

Course information contained within the Bulletin is accurate at the time of publication in June 2025 but is subject to change. For the most up-to-date course information, please refer to the Course Catalog.

LAS 0833. Race & Poverty in the Americas. 3 Credit Hours.

The transatlantic slave trade was one of the most brutal and momentous experiences in human history. Attitudes toward Latino, Caribbean, African, and Asian immigrants in the United States today can only be fully understood in the contexts of slavery and the "structural racism," "symbolic violence" (not to mention outright physical violence), and social inequalities that slavery has spawned throughout the region. Although focusing primarily on the United States, we will also study the present entanglements of poverty and race in Brazil, Haiti, and other selected nations of "The New World," placing the U.S. (and Philadelphia in particular) experience in this historical context. NOTE: This course fulfills the Race & Diversity (GD) requirement for students under GenEd and Studies in Race (RS) for students under Core. Students cannot receive credit for this course if they have successfully completed any of the following: ANTH 0833, LAS 0933, REL 0833/0933, or SOC 0833.

Course Attributes: GD, SI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 0854. Latino Immigration. 3 Credit Hours.

In order to examine Latino immigration today, it is necessary to understand the long-term, complex relations between the USA and Latin America. From this perspective, we analyze past and present immigration laws and policies and their impact on immigrants and their countries of origin; the changing push/pull factors involved in immigration; the immigration history and situation of Latino immigrants in Philadelphia and beyond; reactions towards Latino immigrants; the impact of immigration on every aspect of daily life. Students will discuss, compare and evaluate USA and Latin American news sources on current, often controversial, topics each week and will have the opportunity to learn about Philadelphia agencies that work with Latino immigrants. Course materials include analytical documents, case histories, films and literature by and about Latin American immigrants. NOTE: Students cannot receive credit for this course if they have successfully completed SPAN 0854.

Course Attributes: GG

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 0868. World Society in Literature & Film. 3 Credit Hours.

Learn about a particular national culture - Russian, Indian, French, Japanese, Italian, for example, each focused upon in separate sections of this course - by taking a guided tour of its literature and film. You don't need to speak Russian, Hindi, French or Japanese to take one of these exciting courses, and you will gain the fresh, subtle understanding that comes from integrating across different forms of human expression. Some of the issues that will be illuminated by looking at culture through the lens of literature and film: Family structures and how they are changing, national self-perceptions, pivotal moments in history, economic issues, social change and diversity. NOTE: This course fulfills the World Society (GG) requirement for students under GenEd and International Studies (IS) for students under the Core. Students cannot receive credit for this course if they have successfully completed any of the following: Arabic 0868/0968, Asian Studies 0868, Chinese 0868/0968, English 0868/0968, French 0868/0968, German 0868/0968, Hebrew 0868, Italian 0868/0968, Japanese 0868/0968, Jewish Studies 0868, Korean 0868, LAS 0968, Political Science 0868/0968, Russian 0868/0968, or Spanish 0868/0968.

Course Attributes: GG

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 0968. Honors World Society in Literature & Film. 3 Credit Hours.

Learn about a particular national culture - Russian, Indian, French, Japanese, Italian, for example, each focused upon in separate sections of this course - by taking a guided tour of its literature and film. You don't need to speak Russian, Hindi, French or Japanese to take one of these exciting courses, and you will gain the fresh, subtle understanding that comes from integrating across different forms of human expression. Some of the issues that will be illuminated by looking at culture through the lens of literature and film: Family structures and how they are changing, national self-perceptions, pivotal moments in history, economic issues, social change and diversity. (This is an Honors course.) NOTE: This course fulfills the World Society (GG) requirement for students under GenEd and International Studies (IS) for students under Core. Students cannot receive credit for this course if they have successfully completed any of the following: Arabic 0868/0968, Asian Studies 0868, Chinese 0868/0968, English 0868/0968, French 0868/0968, German 0868/0968, Hebrew 0868, Italian 0868/0968, Japanese 0868/0968, Jewish Studies 0868, Korean 0868, LAS 0868, Political Science 0868/0968, Russian 0868/0968, or Spanish 0868/0968.

Course Attributes: GG, HO

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2001. Introduction to Latin American Studies. 3 Credit Hours.

Interdisciplinary examination of social change in Latin American societies. Provides historical context and includes changing approaches to economic development, class and ethnic issues, religious traditions, art, music, and literature. Note: This course was formerly known as LAS 1001 Perspectives on Latin America. This course is cross-listed with HIST 2011. Students will only receive credit for one iteration of this course: either LAS 1001, HIST 2011, or LAS 2001.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2010. Topics in Latin American Studies I. 3 Credit Hours.

Course topics vary each semester and may include the media in Latin America, Latin American music, race and ethnicity, and social movements. NOTE: Students can obtain a description of the current version at the Latin American Studies Center.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 2020. Topics in Latino Studies. 3 Credit Hours.

Course topics vary and may include the study of Latino migration to the United States, Latino communities in the United States, and Latino political and cultural movements. NOTE: Students can obtain a description of the current version at the Latin American Studies Center.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 2040. Special Topics. 4 Credit Hours.

Topics vary each semester. Please consult with the instructor and/or check the course schedule for specific topic.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 2072. Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia. 3 Credit Hours.

This course looks at the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States in the 20th century, a group that is the second largest Hispanic group in the country. It examines the specific community of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia and its relationship with other racial and ethnic groups and the social, political, and economic situation of Puerto Ricans in the city. NOTE: Students will earn credit only once for either LAS 2072 or AMST 2072.

Course Attributes: SI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2097. Writing Seminar I. 3 Credit Hours.

Course topics vary each semester and may include the media in Latin America, Latin American music, race and ethnicity, and social movements. NOTE: Students can obtain a description of the current version at the Latin American Studies Center.

Course Attributes: WI

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 2098. The Legacy of Mesoamerica. 3 Credit Hours.

The course briefly reviews the nature of Prehispanic Mexico and Central America by examining its earliest manifestations in the Pre-Classic Period through the Late Post-Classic Period, right before European contact. Cultures examined will include the Maya, Nahua, Tarascan, and Mixtec among others. We will then study the Spanish Conquest of the region and how the indigenous peoples adapted to Spanish rule during the Colonial period. Following independence from Spain, indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica dealt with a new sort of adaptation. Specifically, that of integration into the new nation-states of Mexico and Guatemala will be examined. Modern Mesoamerica will also be discussed, particularly in terms of how the indigenous peoples have adapted to a new "globalized" world.

Course Attributes: WI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2101. Latin America through Film and Fiction. 3 Credit Hours.

Economic and political change; role of institutional forces including the military and church. Cultural and intellectual traditions and trends, past and present. Multi-media approach.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2169. Archaeology of South America. 3 Credit Hours.

A survey of prehistoric cultures of South America. Concentrates on (1) the initial entry and spread of human populations into South America and the West Indies, (2) origins of tropical and highland agriculture, (3) the rise of urbanism, civilization, and the state in the Andes, and (4) the impact of prehistoric cultures on the environment.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2173. Ancient Mesoamerica. 3 Credit Hours.

Ancient Mesoamerica is a general survey of the pre-Columbian cultures of Mexico and Middle America before the Spanish Conquest of the Aztec Empire in A.D. 1521. In this course we will examine the long history of Mesoamerica beginning with the first peopling of the Americas at least 15,000 years ago and ending with the Spanish Conquest and the creation of "Latin America."

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2220. Special Topics - LASS Seminar. 2 to 3 Credit Hours.

Arranged each semester. Please consult with the instructor and/or check the course schedule for specific topic. NOTE: Given in Spanish as part of the LASS program.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 2231. Comparative Political Systems in Latin America. 3 Credit Hours.

A comparative consideration of selected Latin American political systems. NOTE: Students will receive credit only once for either LAS 2231 or POLS 2231.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2361. Peoples of Latin America. 3 Credit Hours.

Starting in 1492, Native American isolation from Europe and Africa ended in the region of the Americas that became Latin America. Despite five hundred years of colonial and nation-state domination, indigenous peoples in Latin America continue to assert their basic human right to resist cultural hegemony. Not only have indigenous populations survived, they are also growing. Today they constitute a majority in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru and a substantial plurality in Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. The focus here is on this remarkable struggle for physical and cultural survival. Attention will be given to the lived experiences of people struggling for human dignity on the lowest strata of regional class structures. Issues of land rights, environmental, health, political, and economic self-determination will be examined.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2362. Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean. 3 Credit Hours.

Shaped by conquest and colonial transnational desires, first of sugar and then of tourism, the Caribbean has been wrought since its very inception by the displacement of people, goods and ideas from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, presenting a challenge for the anthropological study of socio-cultural change through time and space. In this introductory course on the Caribbean we will critically examine "creolization" processes at social, religious, political, economic, and artistic levels as they were driven by various groups, from pirates, privateers, maroons, exiles, to tourists, in the context of colonialism, nation building, and globalization. Examining specific sites such as music, display events, folklore, and religion we will ponder about, for instance, the effects of European revolutions on the creation of elites in the Caribbean, and the impact of slave cultures and peasantries on the formation of creole religions. How has the image of the sensuous/threatening mulatta evolved since the plantation? On what kind of histories and emotions do "zombies" feed upon? Why did Reggae and Merenge succeed on the global stage? How does the display of national icons in Trinidadian carnival reflect on their socio-political conflicts? How is the colonial past re-packaged for global consumption? Format: Seminar with short lectures, class presentations, video screenings and class discussions.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2502. Fundamentals of Latin American Business. 3 Credit Hours.

This course is designed to give students a solid basis to face a job assignment related to business in a Latin American country and to develop your ability to perceive the importance of cultural diversity and how it influences business activities across Latin American countries. Specifically, this course will help you understand the specific challenges of doing business in Latin America and enable you to perceive and understand the differences in the business environment, business customs, and business practices between countries of Latin America and of the rest of the world.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2512. Mexican Migration to the United States. 3 Credit Hours.

Illegal immigration remains a volatile and divisive question for the United States. Most discussions in the political system and in the mass media ignore the extensive history of Mexican migration to the United States. We will examine the pervasive influence of that history upon the present as well as the tight connections that exist between Mexican labor migration and phenomena that most US citizens prize -- the spread of American culture and influence abroad, international political stability, reliable domestic economic growth, and the availability of inexpensive goods and services. Instruction takes place through discussion, lecture, film, and computer projection. Readings include both primary documents stemming from historical events themselves as well as secondary academic studies. Note: Students will receive credit only one time for either LAS 2512 or HIST 2512.

Course Attributes: SI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2514. Historical Continuity and Social Change in Latin America. 3 Credit Hours.

Overview of Latin American history from a social change/social problems perspective. Some of the historical themes addressed include: social inequality and unequal exchange, cultural domination and resistance, racial minorities and indigenism, the role of women in Latin American societies, political imposition and democracy, and national independence.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2515. Civilization and Modernity in the Caribbean. 3 Credit Hours.

This course surveys post-Emancipation Caribbean history, regarding it as a complex process dominated by notions of "civilizing" and "modernizing." We will address the significance of both terms, exploring what they have meant for the diverse peoples inhabiting the region. What did civilizing mean for the labor practices and religious expressions of free blacks and indentured Indians in the late 19th century? What did modernizing mean for concepts of peoplehood, cultural production and representation in the 20th century? Who have been the primary agents of "civility" and "modernity"? And how have others responded to - resisted, embraced, negotiated - their efforts and ambitions? In answering these questions, we will turn to a range of disciplines including history, anthropology, literature and political science. NOTE: Students will receive credit only once for either LAS 2515 or HIST 2515.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2522. Spanish Conquest of the Americas. 3 Credit Hours.

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue and ... either discovered or destroyed America, depending on your point of view. By 1542, Spain had claimed most of the Americas and Lopez de Gomara, the private secretary of Hernan Cortes, wrote, "The greatest event since the creation of the world." Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, both Adam Smith and Karl Marx would make the same claim in their writings. From the very beginning, not only the magnitude but also the meaning of the Conquest of the Americas has been a point of controversy and acclaim. In this class, we will examine the Indigenous societies of the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula on the eve of their cataclysmic encounter, the processes by which the Spanish Conquistadors overran Indigenous territories, the ways in which each of these distinct societies impacted one another, and the hybrid societies that emerged on the other side. DUPLICATE CREDIT WARNING: Students can receive credit only once for either HIST 2522, ANTH 2522, or LAS 2522.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 2525. Maya Language and Culture. 3 Credit Hours.

This course will introduce students to the language and cultures of the Maya area of Mesoamerica. Students will acquire basic conversational elements of one of the Maya languages, study Maya culture, including the indigenous literature of the area where applicable, and generally gain a deeper understanding of this diverse part of Latin America.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3010. Topics in Latin American Studies II. 3 Credit Hours.

Course topics vary each semester and may include the media in Latin America, Latin American music, race and ethnicity, and social movements. NOTE: Students can obtain a description of the current version at the Latin American Studies Center.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 3020. Topics in Latino Studies. 3 Credit Hours.

Course topics vary and may include the study of Latino migration to the United States, Latino communities in the United States, and Latino political and cultural movements. NOTE: (1) Students can obtain a description of the current version at the Latin American Studies Center. (2) This course can be used to satisfy the university Core Studies in Race (RS) requirement. Although it may be usable towards graduation as a major requirement or university elective, it cannot be used to satisfy any of the university GenEd requirements. See your advisor for further information.

Course Attributes: RS

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 3101. Latino Identity in the United States. 3 Credit Hours.

Latino Identity in the U.S. is a general survey of the cultural-historical experiences of Latinos in the United States from pre-colonization to the present with concentration on the time period of the civil rights movement to the present. The course will explore the impact of Latinos in U.S. cultural-history and artistic expressions, across all disciplines; specifically on how this impact has reflected itself in the development of Latino identity formation and how Latinos fit within race/ethnic/gender cultural politics in the United States. Note: Students will receive credit only once for either LAS 3101 or AMST 3101.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3229. Latin American and Latinx Philosophy. 3 Credit Hours.

This course surveys central ideas and debates in the Latin American and Latinx philosophical traditions. We will pay special attention to the impact of European colonialism in the production and reception of philosophical ideas in Latin America and Latinx communities in the US. This survey ranges from pre-colonial indigenous philosophy to the present. We will discuss classical and contemporary Andean and Mesoamerican indigenous philosophies and why they are often not treated on par with Western forms of knowledge. We will also cover philosophical debates in colonial and post-colonial Latin America. We will examine how the colonial experience shaped Latin American philosophers' ideas around race, gender, nationhood, education, progress, and authenticity. We will also reflect on aspects of the lived experience of Latinxs in the United States, such as immigration and the controversies around Latinx identity. NOTE: Students may receive credit for only one of the following: PHIL 3229 or LAS 3229.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3267. Sociology of Music: Nation, Race, Class and Gender in Argentina and Brazil. 3 Credit Hours.

The initial developments of the sociology of music were linked to the work of scholars who played pivotal roles in the history of sociology, such as Max Weber and Theodor Adorno. The sociology of Latin American music usually followed the theoretical developments occurring in the industrialized countries of the West, but, at the same time, it was characterized by a peculiar twist in the way it understood the complex relationship between music and society. In this course we delve into this important literature and grapple with the social and cultural foundations of music, with particular emphasis on the relationship between music and society in Brazil and Argentina. Due to the complex social organization of these two countries in terms of race, ethnicity, regionalisms, class, gender and religion, the course will explore the articulation of that complexity in the way people use music in their everyday life to understand who they are and what to do in the context of an ever changing social reality.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3561. History of Brazil. 3 Credit Hours.

Modern and contemporary Brazilian themes including democracy, globalization, and nationalism, cultural and ideological dissent, and popular social movements. Course materials include Brazilian writings, documents, and films. NOTE: Course title prior to fall 2009: "Contemporary Brazilian Scene."

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3562. Contemporary Mexico. 3 Credit Hours.

Over the past several years, Mexico has become increasingly integrated with the United States economically, socially, and culturally; a phenomenon that has presented new challenges to both countries to organize this irreversible process constructively. We will look at the present-day questions between the United States and Mexico through the experience of Mexico's history since 1940. This period includes decades of industrialization, city growth, labor migration to the United States, cultural flourishing, political restlessness, the emergence of narcotics trafficking, and incorporation into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This course concludes with some speculative considerations about the future. Instruction takes place through discussion, lecture, film, computer projection, and readings from the new historical scholarship that has emerged on post-1940 Mexico.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3563. Puerto Rican History. 3 Credit Hours.

This course explores particular issues related to the political, economic, and social development of Puerto Rico with special emphasis given to the 19th and 20th centuries. The course will not only address historical paragons but also questions of interpretations. In each class a combination of readings, discussion, lectures, and videos will be used to view the various issues in a comprehensive manner.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3566. Race, Gender, and Empire in the Iberian World. 3 Credit Hours.

Latin America is a culturally rich and diverse region. Its complex and fascinating history is the product of different worlds and cultures coming together in the 16th century. In this course we will analyze this encounter and its consequences by looking at two main topics: race and gender. Following a chronological order that starts with the conquest of the Americas by Spaniards and Portuguese in the 16th century and ends with the breakdown of the Spanish empire in the early 19th century, the course will explore the ways in which different peoples have interacted. We will discuss the various roles men and women assumed in these societies and the significance of race. In so doing, we will attempt a deeper analysis of the social dynamics of Latin America in the past that will give us a better understanding of its present and future. Note: For history majors, this course is in the "Global/Comparative" category.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3601. "Other Voices" in Latin American Literature. 3 Credit Hours.

This course looks at race, color, and gender in Latin American creative literature. The literature explores key cultural dimensions of the Latin American society and psyche. Focus is on the presence of Afro-Latinos, the role of Indigenous peoples, and feminist perspectives in the different Latin American societies.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3602. Caribbean Literature and Culture. 3 Credit Hours.

The Caribbean is an immensely rich, virtually untapped cultural matrix for most North American students. This confluence of many old world cultures really is the brave new world, home of four Nobel laureates and a vast multi-lingual literature that runs in deep currents through our own national psyche. This course will focus on Caribbean artists and social movements that have had a major impact on modern culture, especially in the United States.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 3801. African Culture in Brazil. 3 Credit Hours.

This course is an interdisciplinary examination of the cultural history of Africans and their descendents in Brazil. Particular attention will be paid to the northeastern state of Bahia - the earliest and most important point of entry for Africans transported to Brazil during the Atlantic slave trade. Special focus will be paid to Bantu-Kongo culture of West Central Africa and to the Yoruba and Fon cultures of Western Africa transferred to Brazil from the late 16th through the 19th centuries.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 4082. Independent Study. 1 to 9 Credit Hour.

Independent research on a specific topic related to Latin America. This course will enable undergraduate students the option of taking an independent study through the Latin American Studies Center.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

LAS 4097. Latin American Studies Seminar. 3 Credit Hours.

This course serves as the capstone for the Latin American Studies major. Students write a substantial research paper (20-25 pages) dealing with the general theme selected for the semester. This course is open to non-LAS majors with permission of the Director of Latin American Studies. Should be taken in the fall of the senior year. NOTE: Fulfills the Capstone writing course requirement for the Latin American Studies major. Special Authorization required for all students.

Course Attributes: WI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

LAS 5001. Process and Change in Latin America. 1 to 9 Credit Hour.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.