

**HIST 525 001 / HIST 615 010**  
**Latin America and the United States**

T 7:20-10:00 PM  
Arlington: Founders Hall 476  
Spring 2013

Prof. Matt Karush  
Office: Rob B 339  
Office Hours: W, 12:30-2:30  
and by appt.  
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**Course Description:**

This course will examine the evolving historical relationship between the United States and Latin America. In recent years, an explosion of new scholarship has pushed our appreciation of this vital relationship beyond traditional diplomatic history and simplistic models of domination. Particularly important have been a new emphasis on cultural influence and exchange as well as new interpretive approaches that attend to transnational processes. We will explore the motives and meanings of U.S. imperialism, as well as the efforts of Latin Americans to both engage with and resist U.S. policies and to appropriate North American culture. We will examine some of the ways North Americans have remade Latin America and Latin Americans have remade the United States.

**Required Books:**

- Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870–1920* (Duke, 2000)
- Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Duke, 2005)
- Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City* (Picador, 2010)
- Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (Penguin, 2009)
- Jesse Hofnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, 2010)
- Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (Yale, 2000)
- Anthony Macías, *Mexican-American Mojo: Popular Music, Dance, and Urban Culture in Los Angeles, 1935–1968* (Duke, 2008)
- Gillian McGillivray, *Blazing Cane: Sugar Communities, Class, and State Formation in Cuba, 1868–1959* (Duke, 2009)
- Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (UNC, 2007)
- Louis Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (UNC, 2011)
- Micol Seigel, *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Duke, 2009)
- Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (California, 1999)

Note: All of these books are available at the campus bookstore, though you are free to access them in any way you prefer. For the week of April 9, we will be reading four articles, two of which are available through the library's databases (use the e-journal finder). I will make the Pilcher and Stern essays available to you.

**Course Requirements:**

1) Class Participation. The class will function as a seminar in which all students are expected to participate actively. If students fail to come to class prepared to discuss the required reading, the result will be torture for all of us. Therefore, your contributions to class discussion will constitute a significant portion of your final grade.

2) Blog. The blog for this course is at <http://latamus.wordpress.com>. I will invite each registered student to become a wordpress user; simply follow the link in the email you've received. Once you have joined, I will add you to the blog, and you will be able to post to it. Each week, students are required to make at least **two** posts to the class blog. These can be new posts or comments to posts made by classmates. These blog entries need not be long, nor formally written. But you will be graded on how substantively and creatively you engage with the material. Do NOT use the blog as a forum for voicing your preferences (ie – "I hate this book"). Feel free to share those opinions with me; I won't be offended. But the blog is for more substantive discussion. I will give you a midterm blog grade so that you know how you are doing.

3) Leading Discussion. Each student will be responsible for leading discussion once during the semester. This entails coming to class ready to summarize the overall argument of the book and with a series of topics and questions designed to elicit discussion around key themes.

4) Book Reviews. Students will write a short book review for **two** of the required texts, due in class on the date the book is to be discussed. Your review (around 5 double-spaced pages, submitted as an email attachment in Word) should focus on the following questions: What is the author's principal argument in the book? What kinds of evidence does the author use to support this argument? Are you persuaded by the argument and the evidence, and why or why not? "I didn't like this book because it was boring" or "This book is well-written" or "I don't know anything about Brazil" are not useful comments. Since you will in most cases only be discussing one book, formal footnotes are not necessary; parenthetical citations with specific page numbers will be sufficient. Note: You do **not** have to write blog entries for the weeks you are writing book reviews. You *may* write one of your book reviews during the week you are leading discussion.

5) Take-Home Final Exam. The exam will involve one or two essays (a total of 15-20 double-spaced pages) and will require you to discuss all of the course readings. It will be distributed in class on 4/30 and will be due (as a Word doc) in my email inbox on 5/7 at 5:00 PM.

Final grades will be determined as follows:  
Class Participation = 15%

Blog = 15%  
Book reviews = 30% (15% each)  
Discussion Leading = 10%  
Final Exam = 30%

**Class Schedule:**

1/22 Introduction

I. US Imperialism: Motives and Metaphors

1/29 Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*

2/5 Louis Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*

II. US Imperialism: Fantasies and Projects

2/12 Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders*

2/19 Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia*

III. Negotiating Imperialism

2/26 Gillian McGillivray, *Blazing Cane*

3/5 Eileen Findlay, *Imposing Decency*

[No Class 3/12: Spring Break]

3/19 Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*

IV. Mass Culture: Appropriation and Transnationalism

3/26 Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home*

4/2 Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis*

4/9 Mass Cultural Imports in Latin America:

Paulina Alberto, "When Rio was Black: Soul Music, National Culture, and the Politics of Racial Comparison in 1970s Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89:1 (2009), 3-39.

Valeria Manzano, "The Blue Jean Generation: Youth, Gender, and Sexuality in Buenos Aires, 1958-1975" *Journal of Social History* 42:3 (2009), 657-676.

Jeffrey Pilcher, "Mexico's Pepsi Challenge: Traditional Cooking, Mass Consumption, and National Identity," in Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, Eric Zolov, eds., *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940* (Duke, 2001).

Alexandra Minna Stern, "An Empire of Tests: Psychometrics and the Paradoxes of Nationalism in the Americas," in Ann Laura Stoller, ed.,

*Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*  
(Duke, 2006).

4/16 Micol Seigel, *Uneven Encounters*

V. Immigrants, Migrants

4/23 Jesse Hofnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*

4/30 Anthony Macías, *Mexican-American Mojo*

**Notes:**

Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) at 703.993.2474 or [ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): January 29

Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course): February 22