

**History/Women's Studies 355**  
**Cultural Conflict and Social Change in Latin America:**  
**The Central American Context**

*"We are what we know and when what we know changes, we change" - James Burke*

**Augsburg University General Education Requirements**

This course meets a Humanities Liberal Arts Foundations (LAF) requirement at Augsburg College. It is also course cross-listed as a Women's Studies (WST) course and a History (HIS) course, so you may register for credit in either discipline.

**Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation Statement**

This Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation will help you explore the range and possibilities of human experience. Depending on the course, you may investigate the diversity of human nature and culture, our forms of communication and persuasion, our powers of reason, sympathy, and imagination, our needs as individuals and roles as citizens, and our relationship to the beautiful, the transcendent, and the divine. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has written, however, all Humanities disciplines have something in common: they help students use reason and imagination to enter broader worlds of cultures, groups, and ideas.

Augsburg's Humanities departments are Communication Studies, English, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, and Religion. These six disciplines engage human experience from different perspectives using different modes of discourse, but they share a common goal of rigorous inquiry into the ways written and spoken language can record, discover, and creatively express the truths of human experience.

**Introduction and Course Description**

The study of history traditionally aims to examine the past in order to better inform the present context and future decisions. However, the question posed by acclaimed historian Howard Zinn, i.e. "What is our responsibility now?" approaches history from the perspective of the active historian. The primary purpose of this course is to explore the history of conflict and social change in Central America by examining the social, political and economic dynamics of the region since the 1900's. The course will explore the impact of United States foreign policy on Central America from the perspective of the active historian. It will also examine women's distinct voices in Central American history through the application of feminist analysis.

This course provides a historical introduction to issues of conflict and social change in Central America giving special emphasis to the frequently undocumented and forgotten role of women. US expansionism, national resistance, and identity will be studied in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You will have the opportunity to examine primary and secondary sources as well as oral histories.

The course includes five units: I) Introduction to conflict and change; II) US expansionism, occupation and Sandino; III) the Somoza period; IV) the emergence of revolutionary movements, the Sandinista Revolution and US Foreign Policy; V) Lessons in the post-war period. You will explore the roles that women played in each historical period in and their efforts to challenge the gender roles ascribed to them while defining their own place in history.

### **Educational Goals**

1. Trace the historical development of gender, class-based and racial oppression in Central America
2. Apply a feminist lens in the of critique historical documents
3. Describe the impact of U.S. interventions in Central America on peasants, women, indigenous peoples, and people of African descent.
4. Explain the inequities that have resulted from occupation and intervention
5. Compare and contrast divergent perspectives in specific periods of Central American history.
6. Identify key moments in the history of resistance by women and other marginalized groups in Central America.
7. Develop the critical thinking skills necessary to analyze and interpret historical events
8. Reflect on your own role as a historical actor and potential agent of social change.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Effective class participation (10%) includes a demonstrated effort to dialogue with speakers, ask probing questions, relate assigned reading to class discussion topics, student-led class discussion for Unit II and III, or V (10%)
2. One essay of approximately 1500 words (25%)
3. Group Presentations on UNIT IV (poster board, power point or a critical analysis paper (25%)  
Students should choose one of the following assignments:
  - Critical Analysis Presentation of the Sandinista Revolution (power point presentation or poster board): Students will analyze the Sandinista Revolution drawing on the readings of UNIT IV plus the chapters from the narratives *Faith and Joy: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Priest* and *Sandinino's Daughters Revisited* as well as your own research, providing
  - Critical Analysis Presentation on the Contra War: Students will analyze the Contra War drawing on the resources of UNIT IV and your own research, providing evidence to support arguments.
  - Critical Analysis Presentation on US Foreign Policy: Students will analyze US foreign Policy in Nicaragua during the Sandinista Revolution. Your presentation should draw from readings of UNIT IV, the below sources and your own research. The presentation should address contradictions of the period. Poster board or a power point presentation may be used.
  - Testimonial Literature Paper: You may choose a book of testimonial literature by or about Latin American women or men who have been involved in a contemporary resistance movement in a country of interest. The paper/presentation should include a brief summary of the book. The narrative should serve to better understand the history of conflict in Nicaragua. Where do you see similarities and or differences between the narrative and what you have learned about conflict in Nicaragua?
4. Final Project and Oral Presentation (30%)
  - Choose a social movement, a union, an NGO or a specific interest group (i.e: women's groups, youth groups, gay and lesbian organizations, environmental organizations, migrant, etc.) Explain why you have chosen this particular group.
  - Describe and analyze:
    - Historical context that gave rise to the group
    - Describe the group's organization (leadership style, decision making etc.
    - How do constituents participate, outreach style, etc.)
    - Identify the main issues that group is working on and why
    - Their struggles (obstacles), successes (signs of hope) and lessons learned
    - Different perspectives i.e. what do other sectors of society think of the group? Compare and contrast

- While the final project is a group project it requires an individual response to the question: How has what I have learned about citizen's participation, conflict and social change this semester affirmed, challenge and/or change my sense of self as an agent for change. Format for personal reflection vary. Students sometime speak/read their reflection, read a journal entry, a poem, a statement, a rap, music, etc.
- An outline of the project must be email to instructors, one outline per project that includes: the topic, list of students presenting, summary of project or paper, format that will be used and possible resources you are considering
- Each student will design a class presentation of approximately 10 minutes of their project or paper synthesizing their research as well as articulating their own
- Students should work in groups and time should be allotted accordingly analysis (e.g. 2 students 20 minutes, three students 30 minutes etc.)
- A bibliography and list of resources must be submitted with the project on the day of the presentations as well as a summary of the content if the project is a creative one.
- Grading Criteria for Project and Oral Presentation
  - 20% Form and Delivery of Presentation (clarity, effective communication)
  - 50% Ability to critically analyze (substantiation of arguments )
  - 30% Connections (connections to course content and your own experience)

## **Bibliography**

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- Cabestrero, Teofilo. *Minister of God Ministers of the People: Testimonies of Faith from Nicaragua*. Orbis, 1982.
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- Deere, Carmen Diana & Magdalena Leon. *Empowering Women: Land and Property Rights in Latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
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- North, Oliver L. *Underfire: An American Story*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.
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- Randall, Margaret. *Sandino's Daughters Revisited: Feminism in Nicaragua*. Rutgers University Press, 1994.

Walker, Thomas & Wade, Christine. *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*. Westview Press, 2011.  
Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956*. Princeton University Press, 1992.  
Zinn, Howard. *Howard Zinn on History*. Seven Stories Press, 2001.

**Choices of Testimonial Literature:**

Alegria, Claribel and Darwin Flakoll. *Death of Somoza: The First person Story of the Guerrillas Who Assassinated the Nicaraguan Dictator*. Curbstone Press, 1996.  
Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Plume, 1994.  
Atlee-Loudon, Jennifer. *Red Thread: A Spiritual Journal of Accompaniment. Trauma and Healing*. EPICA, 2001.  
Belli, Gioconda. *The Country Under My Skin: Memoir of Love and War*. Anchor Books, 2003.  
Benitez, Sandra. *Bitter Grounds*. Picador, 1997.  
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Cabezas, Omar. *Fire from the Mountain*. Crown Publishers Inc., 1985.  
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Gorkin, M, Pineda, Marta and Gloria Leal. *From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women's Stories*. University of California Press, 2000.  
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Kruckewitt, Joan. *The Death of Ben Linder: The Story of a North American in Sandinista Nicaragua*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999.  
Lopez Vigil, Maria. *Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic*. EPICA, 2000.  
Melville, Thomas. *Through a Glass Darkly: US Holocaust in Central America*. Xlibris Corporation, 2005.  
Randall, Margaret. *Christians in the Revolution*. New Star Books, 1993.  
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Rodriquez, Cristina. *A Nicaraguan Story: Autobiography of a grassroots activist- From Workers rights to Women's Rights*. Latin American Solidarity Centre, 1996.  
Tula, María Teresa and Lynn Stephen. *Hear My Testimony: María Teresa Tula, Human Rights Activist of El Salvador*. South End Press, 1994.  
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## Additional Comments

### Explanation of Grades

Augsburg's grading system uses the following definitions:

Grade	Grade Points	Description
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	
B+	3.33	
B	3.00	Good
B-	2.67	
C+	2.33	
C	2.00	Satisfactory
C-	1.67	
D+	1.33	
D	1.00	Poor
D-	0.67	
F	0.00	Failure

A "Pass" grade is 2.0 or above.

### Grading Policy and Late Assignments

You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us in advance to negotiate a new deadline. If you have not been given an extension in advance and you turn in a late assignment, you will be docked half a grade. If you are more than one week late, you will be docked a full grade. No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original deadline; a "0" will be given after that. Assignments due near the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of the semester.

### Re-writing Assignments

If you receive a grade of B- or lower, you may revise a paper as long as you resubmit it within one week of the date it was returned to you. Your final grade will be an average of the two grades.

### Augsburg Honesty Policy

You are expected to follow the Augsburg Honesty Policy which is printed in the program manual. We assume that you have read the honesty policy, understand it, and are following it. Except when the assignment expressly encourages group work, it is assumed that all course work will be your own. You may not copy other students' work. The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment. A student who commits plagiarism a second time will fail the course.

### Students' Rights and Responsibilities

Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to course modifications. Those who qualify should identify themselves to the instructor as soon as possible in order to obtain extra assistance.