

# SPA 336

## Guatemalan Civilization and Culture

**Prerequisites:** SPA 311 or instructor's permission

### Course Description

The primary purpose of this course is to explore the cultural inheritance of Guatemala from pre-Columbian times to the present, focusing on the diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups of Guatemala. This course begins with the premise that we need to know where we come from in order to know where we are and where we are going. Particular emphasis will be placed on contemporary cultural issues and cultural media, including murals and other visual arts, theatre, dance, music, and film. The course structure will follow that provided by Severo Martínez Peláez in his book *La Patria del Criollo; Ensayo de interpretación de la realidad colonial guatemalteca* (1970), which will serve as the primary written text. You may also watch video excerpts from the five-part television series *El Espejo Enterrado; The Buried Mirror* and other relevant films.

Since the course will be taught in Guatemala, we have rich opportunities to enhance learning from text books and films by listening to guest lectures by Guatemalan historians and anthropologists and participating in excursions to museums, archeological sites, historical monuments, and local cultural events, as well as talking directly with many Guatemalans and other Latin Americans from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. You will also be asked to read Guatemalan newspaper articles and analyze them with regard to themes discussed in this course.

Course-related excursions, cultural events, and guest lectures may include the following:

- Excursion to the *Palacio Municipal* and art museum.
- Guest performance and class with Guatemalan musicians singing protest songs from the period of the Guatemalan revolution and other folk songs.
- Excursion to the *Museo los historia* at the Casa de la Cultura.
- Music and/or theatre performances regarding contemporary cultural issues.
- Films about Guatemalan history and contemporary Latin American movies.

Due to the fact that the course is taught in Guatemala, we will focus primarily on Guatemalan history and cultures, although you will be exposed to common historical developments and cultural characteristics shared throughout Latin America.

### Augsburg Major/Minor and LAF Graduation Requirements

This course will count towards the **culture** requirement for Spanish majors and minors at Augsburg College. It will also fulfill a Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation (LAF) requirement. This Humanities Liberal Arts Foundation (LAF) course will help you explore the range and possibilities of human experience. You will 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, all Humanities disciplines have something in common: they help you *use reason and imagination to enter broader worlds of cultures, groups, and ideas*. Throughout this course, you will engage in rigorous inquiry into the ways written and spoken language can record, discover, and creatively express the truths of human experience.

## Required Texts

Martínez, Severo. *La Patria del Criollo*, Editorial universitaria centroamericana (EDUCA), 1979.

Chomsky, Noam. *Año 501, la Conquista Continua*. ISBN 84-7954-128-8.

*Libro de sinónimos y antónimos para estudiantes*. Barrons. ISBN 0764114476

Spanish - English dictionary

In addition, you will read articles and excerpts from more contemporary books, as well as recent newspaper articles.

## Learning Objectives

**By the end of the course, you should be able to:**

1. Identify important figures, dates, and places in Guatemalan history.
2. Identify important aspects of pre-Columbian civilizations in Guatemala.
3. Provide examples of ways in which pre-Columbian cultures have survived and continue to have an impact on the contemporary cultures of Guatemala.
4. Discuss the legacy of the Spanish conquest and colonial period on race, ethnicity, class, and religion in contemporary Guatemala.
5. Describe the cultural inheritance of Guatemala, focusing on key issues among the diverse cultural groups living today, including Afro-Cuban, ladino, and indigenous cultures.
6. Analyze Guatemalan and other Latin American newspaper articles with regards to their portrayal of Guatemalan history and the diverse cultures of Guatemala.
7. Discuss the relationship between history and culture, identifying some of the ways in which history shapes cultural values, norms, and behaviors and describing the ways in which culture shapes one's understanding of history.
8. Analyze the ways in which different historical time periods and diverse cultures are portrayed in the visual arts, music, theatre, dance, architecture, literature, and popular culture of Guatemala.
9. Describe the ways written and spoken language can record, discover, and creatively express the truths of human experience.
10. Compare and contrast diverse authors' perspectives on Latin American history and culture with those of guest speakers, host families, and others with whom you interact in Guatemala.
11. Improve your written and oral expression in the Spanish language.
12. Develop your ability to express your own thesis and arguments effectively in the Spanish language.
13. Express greater appreciation for the complexities of culture and the ways they are portrayed through oral and written forms.
14. Critically reflect upon your own cultural perspectives and the ways these influence your understanding of Guatemalan history and culture.

## Course Requirements (100%)

- 20% Active class participation. Class participation includes punctuality, presence in class, active engagement in class sessions, participation in excursions, and completion of all required readings and homework assignments on time.
- 20% Four short tests or quizzes regarding the genre, comprehension, thesis, and arguments of specific written and/or oral texts. Each test/quiz is worth 5 % of the final course grade.
- 20% Two oral presentations on assigned aspects of Guatemalan civilization and culture. Each oral presentation is worth 10% of the final course grade.
- 20% Two essays analyzing an assigned topic related to Guatemalan civilization and culture. Each essay is worth 10% of the final course grade.

- 20% A final research project/paper and oral presentation on a specific problem in contemporary Guatemalan culture. In your paper and presentation, you will have to draw upon primary and secondary sources as evidence to support the thesis that you articulate to address the problem. (Primary and secondary sources will be available in the library of the language school in Guatemala, as well as in other libraries in Quetzaltenago and online through your school libraries.)

### **Grading Criteria for Class Participation**

- Full participation involves speaking only Spanish in class, completing assignments on time, coming to class prepared and on time, participating in all class activities with enthusiasm and interest, collaborating with the instructor and other students (as applicable), and demonstrating effort at improving Spanish abilities.
- You must be punctual. Your grade will be affected each time you are more than five minutes late to class.
- Your class grade will be affected by unexcused absences. An excused absence consists of absence due to religious holidays, emergencies, and illness when you have called the Spanish director and asked him/her to advise the instructor of your absence prior to the start of class and later documented with a doctor's note. You may miss one class during the entire course for a reason other than illness without being penalized if you clear this absence in advance with your teacher or the director and if the reason for missing class is acceptable. Examples of an acceptable absence include the following: a visit from friends or family, an especially heavy workload in other courses at that moment or extenuating emotional circumstances. You may NOT miss class simply because your alarm clock didn't go off and you slept in! For any UNEXCUSED absences in your Spanish classes, your grade will be docked regardless of your progress in the course.
- You are responsible for talking with the instructor about what they missed in class, getting notes or handouts from other students, and for making up any assignments that were completed in class.

### **Grading Criteria for Essays**

- Structure: Introduction; organization, sequence, and development of ideas; and conclusion
- Content: Clarity and complexity of ideas
- Grammar: Correct use of grammar

### **Grading Criteria for Oral Presentations**

- Structure: Introduction; organization, sequence, and development of ideas; and conclusion
- Content: Clarity and complexity of ideas
- Grammar: Correct use of grammar
- Oral Expression: Pronunciation; articulation; volume; and tone
- Written Outline: Organization of ideas and main points

*Oral presentations are not considered complete (and will be graded down significantly) if they are not accompanied by an outline.*