

# Syllabus: GGR 341. Changing Geography of Latin America

University of Toronto, Fall 2020  
Tuesdays, 12 to 2 PM  
Online-Synchronous via BB Collaborate

## Christian Abizaid

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Office Hours/Drop-in Sessions: Thursdays 1:30 to 3:30 PM, via BB Collaborate

Teaching Assistants

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A chicken bus in Guatemala. Photo by C. Abizaid, January 2020

## Course Description

Not long ago, Latin America seemed very distant to Canada and the mind of Canadians. Today, our ties with Latin America are stronger than ever before –through investment, trade and consumption, foreign aid, tourism, migration, environmental and human rights issues, as well as culture and the media– yet Canadians still have a limited understanding of this fascinating and complex region. Bound together by a common cultural heritage and colonial history, Latin America is nevertheless, characterized by an incredible diversity of physical and cultural landscapes. Countries and people in this region continue to face many important challenges, including poverty and persisting socioeconomic disparities, environmental destruction, migration, discrimination and violence. At the same time, Latin America has been the cradle of a number of social movements in response to the neoliberal project.

This course seeks to develop a general understanding of present-day Latin America using a thematic overview and case studies to examine the diversity of Latin American landscapes (physical and cultural), and how they are changing within the context of globalization. The course is divided into two parts. Part 1 provides a general overview of the region, addressing the physical environment and major historical, political, economic and social processes that have shaped development patterns from colonial to present times. Part 2 connects the first section to relevant contemporary themes in human geography, including: urbanization, race and migration, environment and development issues, violence and security, and social movements.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will:

1. establish/strengthen their connection with Latin America and its people.
2. be able to describe and appraise different ways to define Latin America as a region.
3. recognize the geographical diversity that exists within the region (and countries) and explain the reasons and outcomes of such diversity, in the past and present.
4. explain and relate Latin America's past, both, indigenous and colonial, with current geographies of the region.
5. identify and discern important geographical dimensions of current societal issues in Latin America.

## Course Organization

### Access to Course Materials & Readings

A QUERCUS page has been created for this course where various course materials, including lecture recordings, PowerPoint slides, assigned readings, assignment guidelines and other useful materials will be posted. Quercus will also serve as an important platform to communicate with the class and also for assignment submission. To access the GGR341 QUERCUS, go to the [UofT login page](#) and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in, click on the Dashboard module on the right margin of your screen. You will then be able to see the tab for GGR431 course (along with all your other QUERCUS-based courses).

### Submissions

All assignments must be submitted electronically through QUERCUS by 7:59 PM (TORONTO TIME) on the date specified by the instructor. It is recommended that you keep copies of your assignments and early drafts until you receive your graded assignment. Please submit your assignments in a DOC, DOCX or Word-compatible file format. Please do NOT submit your assignment as a PDF file.

## Scheduled Course Time/Synchronous Activity

As a synchronous course, students are expected to set the 12 to 2 (Tues) window aside for this course, much as if you were to attend the course in person each week. This serves to build a routine and structure that will help you to organize your time. What will happen during this "synchronous" component may vary from one week to the next. Some weeks this will entail a lecture component with opportunity for discussion and participation, in others, the emphasis will be more on discussion, both in

small groups (break-out rooms) or as an entire class, and Q & A sessions. Lectures will be recorded by the instructor and will be made available for subsequent viewing only through the BB Collaborate tab in QUERCUS.

## Drop-in sessions and Office Hours with the TA

Juan Carlos (the TA) will run a series of “virtual” drop-in sessions and/or office hours on specific weeks during term. They are intended to provide guidance in preparation for the various assignments. Specific dates and virtual platform (e.g., BB Collaborate, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) will be announced later.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Key Dates

1. Media Coverage Assignment	15%	October 7, 2020
2. Memory of Fire Project		
a. Proposal	10%	October 21, 2020
b. Research Paper	35%	December 15, 2020 (final assessment period)
3. Film Assignment	10%	December 1, 2020
4. Participation and engagement	20%	Throughout term
5. Quizzes	10%	Throughout term

### Assignment Details

#### Assignment 1 – Media Coverage Assignment

Due October 7, 2020 (15% of final grade)

A 2-week review and analysis of current events related to the geography of Latin America through the media. More detailed guidelines will be provided in a separate assignment handout. We will continue to follow current events in Latin America throughout the term and will be devoting a few minutes to discuss them in class each week.

#### Assignment 2 – Memory of Fire Project

Students are required to conduct a research project related to the geography of Latin America in relation to Eduardo Galeano’s “Memory of Fire” trilogy, which we are using as key reference materials for this course. Specifically, students are to select one episode or story from the vignettes on Latin America included in the Memory of Fire series and critically analyze the events and circumstances described therein making some connection to geography broadly defined. Geography can be many different things, but is always about life, culture, identity, land and peoples connection to it, and the struggle for control of resources. Take this assignment as an opportunity to engage with the region through a geographical lens. The assignment is divided into two parts described below. More details on the Memory of Fire project will be provided in a separate handout.

##### a) Memory of Fire Proposal

Due October 21 (10% of final grade)

This is a 500 to 700 word submission that identifies a vignette that is of interest to you and outlines a research topic that arises from the events and circumstances Galeano invokes in the vignette you

selected. The research proposal serves as a structure for students to identify a topic of interest and to get feedback that can be incorporated into the research and final paper.

#### b) Memory of Fire Research Paper

Due December 15 (35% of final grade)

A short research paper (~2500 words) that examines the issue you identified arising from the Memory of Fire vignette that has some connection to geography broadly defined.

#### Assignment 3 – Film Assignment

Due December 1 (10% of final grade)

A short (500-700) reflective piece that relates a film/documentary on Latin America to the academic literature. More details will be provided in a separate handout.

#### Assignment 4 – Participation and Engagement

Ongoing throughout term (worth 20% of final grade)

Participation involves playing an active role in the course, by asking questions, making comments, partaking in discussions during synchronous sessions (i.e. the whole class or in break-out groups) or through options online. As a way to provide a wider range of options to engage with course materials, students are also welcome to submit questions and brief informal comments related to the readings and class discussion of the week. Electronic questions and comments should be posted on the discussion forum on a weekly basis, preferably the day before class and up to the end of the day (5:00 PM) on Wednesday (i.e., a day after such materials were discussed in class). Please note that it is easier to incorporate questions into the lecture if sent in advance. In your questions and comments consider what you found most interesting, surprising, unclear, or what you are take away from the article(s), the lecture, or discussion. There will be opportunities to engage with the materials, the instructor but also with your peers.

#### Assignment 5 – Quizzes

Ongoing throughout term (worth 10% of final grade)

Students will be asked to respond to short quizzes prior to or shortly after class on various occasions during the term. They are intended to serve two purposes: 1) to test whether students have prepared the readings and are ready to participate and engage with lectures and discussion; and 2) to identify areas that require further clarification. For such reasons, quizzes will be unannounced and will have a time-expiry.

#### Late Penalties

Work submitted late will be accepted with a 5% daily penalty (INCLUDING SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS), up to seven days after the due date. In such cases, the date/time of submission will be considered, using 7:59 PM Toronto time as time of reference. In the case of an outstanding VALID situation you must contact me, preferably in advance. I cannot consider a situation unless I know about it, so do not wait until the end of the term to communicate with me if something did come up. A recent communication you should have received from the university states that “[t]he University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor’s note or medical certificate for absences from academic participation. Please use the [Absence Declaration tool on ACORN](#) to declare an absence if you require consideration for missed academic work. You are responsible for contacting your instructors to request the academic

consideration you are seeking. Record each day of your absence as soon as it begins, up until the day before you return to classes or other academic activities.” No extensions will be granted unless you have communicated with the instructor and your reasons have been deemed valid. Reweighting of assignments/grades is not permitted.

## Required Texts

### Selected Readings from Various Sources

Selected readings from books, journal articles, and other relevant sources will be made available through the course’s Quercus page, typically through links to the U of T Libraries.

### Eduardo Galeano’s “Memory of Fire” trilogy

- 1) Volume 1: Genesis (1985)
- 2) Volume 2: Faces and Masks (1987)
- 3) Volume 3: Century of the Wind (1988)

These three books were originally published in Spanish and translated into English by Cedric Belfrage in the 1980s. Since then, they been reprinted by Norton in the 1990s and Nation Books in the 2010s. The books are generally available through mainstream bookstore, or online stores, either as paperback or in electronic form (Kindle/Kobo). Recently, an electronic version of the entire trilogy has been made available for a price roughly equivalent to that of one of the separate volumes. Please note that Kindle/Kobo versions can be read on conventional electronic devices (tablets, phones, PC/MAC computers).

### Other Useful Resources on Latin America

- [Journal of Latin American Geography](#)
- [Hispanic American Historical Review](#)
- [Latin American Perspectives](#)
- [Journal of Latin American Studies](#)
- [Bulletin of Latin American Research](#)
- [Latin American Research Review](#)
- [NACLA Report on the Americas](#)
- [Alexander’s Street Latin American Studies Video Series](#)

## Course Schedule\*

Week 1 – September 15

Introduction

Week 2 – September 22

What is Latin America? Latin American sub-regions.

Week 3 – September 29

Physical Geography of Latin America

Week 4 – October 6

Latin America before Columbus

Week 5 – October 13

The Conquest and the Colonial Period

Week 6 – October 20

New Republics and the Search for Modernization I

Week 7 – October 27

New Republics and the Search for Modernization II

Week 8 – November 3

Urbanization

Fall Reading Week – November 12- No Classes

Week 9 – November 17

Race and Migration

Week 10 – November 24

Environment and Development in the Amazon

Week 11 – December 1

Social Movements

Week 12 – December 8

Latin America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century & Course Wrap up

\*Modifications may apply as the term progresses; students will be notified in advance, should any changes be made. Dates for synchronous lectures will be announced on Quercus.

## Course Policies & Expectations

### Communication

My preference would have been to meet with students in person but due to the COVID-19 pandemic there will NOT be any in-person interaction this term. Still, I hope to be able to communicate with you in “real time” to the degree that is possible. I have designated a block of time for “virtual” office hours or drop-in sessions during which I am available to discuss with you course-related matters (for the hours, see the first page of the syllabus). It is time set aside for you-- take advantage of it! Appointments may also be set for students who cannot attend scheduled office hours/drop-in sessions, whether they are in other time zones or not. For urgent matters or simple questions, you may also contact me via email, but the rule of thumb is that email should not be a substitute for these “live” sessions. Depending on the situation/issue, I may ask that we set up a virtual meeting. Please note that I am not online 24/7 and thus may not be able to respond to your messages right away. I will make an effort to respond to you within 48 hours, but it will take longer during weekends as I remain offline to spend time with my family. Please make sure to use your University of Toronto email account (i.e. @mail.utoronto.ca) and to include the course code “GGR341” and your name in the title box of your email for easier handling. Other e-mail addresses may be filtered as spam and thus I may be unable to respond to them.

### Mutual Respect

We all have a shared collective responsibility to build an atmosphere of mutual respect for all, students, teaching assistant and instructor. We must work together to build a community that welcomes different points and where everybody feels welcome and respected. Harassment, discrimination and hate speech will not be tolerated.

### Formatting of Written Work

Coursework must be word processed 1.5-spaced, 12-point font size, unless otherwise noted. Assignments should be proofread prior to submission to insure that they are free of grammatical and spelling errors and must include a list of all references cited in the text, using [the APA citation style](#). All coursework should include the student’s name and student number, the course’s code and name, and that of the instructor, in order to avoid loss or improper identification. Note, however, that there is no need to use a cover page to do so.

### Accessibility Services

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible ([disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca)). You may also want to contact the Accessibility Services Office if you have problems arising from chronic issues or injuries sustained during the term that affect your ability to do tests or course work.

### Reread Requests

Students concerned about the assessment in assignments are invited to carefully read the feedback provided by the TA and/or instructor in written form and in the assignment rubric. If you require clarification or feel that you have been unfairly assessed, please contact the TA or me explaining the rationale for your request within one week of receiving the graded assignment. Please be aware that

rereading the assignment does NOT necessarily translate into a higher grade. It is a reassessment and as such, the grade can remain, go up, or drop.

### Recordings, Electronic Materials and Copyright

Lectures and course materials are considered intellectual property of the Instructor and are covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. These materials are made available to students for personal study purposes only (i.e. they cannot be shared outside or 'published' in any way without written consent of the instructor). Lectures cannot be recorded without the instructor's written permission. Please be advised that posting course materials, or recordings to external websites (or in any other format) without explicit permission of the instructor, constitutes an infringement on the Canadian Copyright Act.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves. Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement
- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including lecture and study group notes) and not placing the words within quotation marks
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
- Making up sources or facts
- Including references to sources that you did not use
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
  - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
  - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while "editing"
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own without your permission

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades

Please note that potential offences will be addressed in accordance with institutional procedures. Check the 'How not to plagiarize' website at: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize> for further guidance.

### Services and Support

[Health and Wellbeing](#) provides a range of health services for your physical and mental health, as well as wellness programs and information to help support you in achieving your personal and academic goals.

UofT Libraries

- [Library Catalogue](#) (search for books, journal articles and documents):

- [Research services](#) for students (e.g., research guides, citation resources, refworks, etc.):

[UofT Writing](#) (for advice on: planning and organizing, reading and researching, using sources, types of writing, style, and editing and English as a second language): see also: <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca>

[English Language Learning](#) (ELL) offers a variety of services including:

- Communication Cafe meets virtually for practice with oral skills like class discussion and presentations.
- Reading eWriting, an online program that helps students engage course with readings more effectively.

Stay on top of your work while connecting with your peers

[Recognized Study Groups \(RSG\)](#) are voluntary, peer-led study groups of 3 – 6 students enrolled in the same course. They're available for all A&S courses and are now fully online. In addition to supporting students' study habits and academic success, RSGs also encourage student participants to be socially connected with their peers. Last year, over 2,000 A&S students participated in RSGs for courses spanning all streams and class sizes.

[Meet to Complete](#) are online drop-in study sessions held exclusively for A&S undergrads. Offered multiple times per business day and led by trained A&S student-staff, these study sessions help students to stay motivated and productive by offering daily goal-setting and the opportunity to study alongside their A&S peers.