SPAN 4813 Syllabus

Course Prefix: SPAN
Course Number: 4813
Course Name: Latin American Environmental Humanities
Semester: Spring 2027

Instructor Information

Instructor: Miguel Rosas Buendia
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General Course Information

Course Description:
Although Latin America and the Caribbean account for less than 10% of total greenhouse gas emissions, the region is particularly vulnerable to the global impacts of the current ecological crisis, including high levels of environmental toxicity, threatened species, habitat loss, and displaced populations, among other effects. However, the ecological crisis entails far more than measurable environmental impacts. Resource extraction zones and their underlying notions of development mobilize political visions, social structures, and economic demands, while simultaneously generating critical responses and stances from diverse actors and fields. This course provides an introduction to some of the region's most relevant environmental contexts through the academic and creative lenses of environmental humanities. This emerging field draws upon knowledge and tools from various disciplines to formulate interdisciplinary approaches for studying the root causes and consequences of contemporary environmental crises, as well as conceptualizing critical alternatives. The study of environmental themes will serve as a foundation for broader discussions on extractivism, global markets, Western science, ethnicity, activism, and urban degradation, among other topics.

This course adopts an interdisciplinary framework through a wide range of cultural materials (films, documentaries, literary texts, and artistic projects) alongside academic essays from fields such as history, anthropology, political science, and cultural studies

Course Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course student will be able to:

- Students will become acquainted with critical topics and local contexts of contemporary environmental problems in Latin America.

- Students will be exposed to a variety of research perspectives, combining the study of present-day cultural production with insights from diverse disciplinary fields.
- Students will be able to analyze course materials using comparative and interdisciplinary methodologies, while identifying the distinctive features of each type of production.
- Students will be able to approach contemporary environmental problems in Latin America with a wider and deeper critical and historical scope, enabling them to situate the region within the context of common challenges in the Global South.

Required Course Materials:

All course materials (discussions, assignments, grades etc.) will be hosted in Canvas.

Grading Policy:

Grading for the course will be broken down as follows:

- Participation: 25%
- Quizzes (16): 24%
- Presentations (3): 36%
- Final project: 15%

Description of Graded Components:

Attendance and Participation: 25%

Attendance is mandatory. Classes meet in person on Mondays and via Zoom on Wednesdays. Students are allowed only one (1) unexcused absence per semester without penalty, which should ideally be reserved for emergencies. Additional absences will only be excused with proper documentation, medical certification, or other official validation. Please contact me by email regarding any absence; next steps to make up participation credit and session assignments will be determined on a case-by-case basis. For any additional unexcused absences, one (1) point will be deducted from the final course grade per missed class.

Students are required to complete all assigned materials prior to each class meeting. Participation will be evaluated according to two primary criteria: evidence of preparation based on engagement with the assigned materials and the initiative to contribute constructively to class discussion.

Quizzes (16): 24%

At the beginning of each in-person session (Mondays) and some synchronous online sessions (Wednesdays), students will complete a brief, one-question quiz based on the assigned material for that class. These quizzes are intended to verify students' preparation and engagement with the required readings and materials. All quizzes will count toward the final course grade. No make-up quizzes, substitute assignments, or alternative assessments will be permitted to replace any missed weekly quiz.

Presentations (3) - 36%
Students will complete three group presentations over the course of the semester. The purpose of these presentations is to deepen and, where appropriate, broaden the topics studied in the course. Students are expected to demonstrate a critical engagement with the assigned sources as well as a creative and analytical approach to the course themes. Detailed instructions and expectations for each presentation will be provided on Canvas in advance of the scheduled presentation dates.

Final Project - 15%
The final project will be open-topic and presented in a multimedia format; it may be completed individually or in pairs. Possible formats include an artistic project, a website, a podcast, or similar mediums. Students may focus on materials and topics discussed in class or on related themes. Specific guidelines and evaluation criteria will be established by the instructor based on the nature of each project. All projects must be pre-approved by the instructor following an individual discussion with the student. General guidelines will be made available on Canvas.

Grade Scale
Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A 100%-90%

B 89%-80%

C 79%-70%

D 69%-60%

F <60%

Course Policies

Modified Operations and Digital Learning Days
In the event of a weather-related campus closure or other emergency requiring modified operations, the instructor will communicate with all students via Canvas regarding class cancellations and/or the implementation of a digital learning day. If such an event coincides with an asynchronous assignment day, students are expected to proceed with the assigned work as scheduled. However, reasonable accommodations will be considered in cases where circumstances (e.g., loss of internet access) prevent a student from completing online work. The instructor will exercise flexibility as appropriate under these conditions.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams
No late assignments or extensions will be granted. Please plan accordingly. Contact your instructor in the case of extenuating circumstances.

Collaboration & Group Work
Language learning occurs in a community of people. However, the following forms of assistance are not allowed for doing any of the work in this course: copying (from someone else's assignments or from another source [a reading in a textbook, the Internet, etc.]) without clear attribution of the source; having another student, a tutor, or a friend suggest changes or correct the work you are to turn in; completing assignments in consultation with other students ("working together") unless specified by your instructor; translating directly from another source; and especially using electronic translation programs. These restrictions apply to any work turned in for this course. The issue of digital plagiarism has raised concerns about ethics, student writing experiences, and academic integrity. GT subscribes to a digital plagiarism detection program called Turnitin, which may be used to check assignments submitted in this course.

Academic Integrity:
Georgia Tech strives to foster a community founded on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and determine the appropriate penalty for the violation. It is strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with these sites:

- Honor Challenge — https://osi.gatech.edu/students/honor-code
- Office of Student Integrity — http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php/

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement
At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/ for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Campus Resources for Students

The Center for Academic Success (success.gatech.edu/) offers a variety of academic support services to help students succeed academically at Georgia Tech (e.g. tutoring, peer-led study groups, study skills, etc.).

The Office of Disability Services (disabilityservices.gatech.edu/) ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to all programs and activities offered at Georgia Tech. They provide documentation and officially sanctioned requests for accommodation for students and serve as a resource for instructors as they build learning environments to meet the needs of all students.

OMED: Educational Services (omed.gatech.edu/) is the unit charged by Georgia Tech with the retention, development, and performance of the complete student learner who is traditionally underrepresented: African American, Hispanic, and Native American. OMED's programming and academic support services are aimed at equipping all students with strategies to navigate the Georgia Tech environment.

Support for Students in Distress

Counseling Center counseling.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2575
Dean of Students (Student Life) studentlife.gatech.edu/ 404-385-8772
GT Police police.gatech.edu/ 404-894-2500
Stamps Health Services health.gatech.edu/ 404-894-1420