Latin American Culture and Politics

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Overview

The goal of the Latin American Culture and Politics program is to unite students passionate about Latin American history, landscape, traditions, culture, government, and any other facet of the region. By bringing together members who share similar interests, we will create a social environment which will allow us to learn as individuals and as a group. Through explorations of geography, culture, current events, and—of course—food, we will gain greater knowledge of specific areas of Latin America. Furthermore, we will also examine broader themes and thus gain an overall understanding of its diverse culture and how it relates to our own sense of place and identity. Our program hopes to celebrate and illuminate Latin American culture in as many ways as possible by providing an engaging variety of activities and events for all of those interested in participating.

Learning Objectives

Each member will become familiar with Latin American geography, and will be able to identify different countries, regions, landforms, and associated cultural information.

Action Steps

- Members will become acquainted with a map of Latin America, which will be hung in the suite and will be decorated with news items, cultural facts, environmental information, and any other related material. Members will be encouraged to add their own photos, notes, questions, etc. to the map to make it more engaging and to synthesize our geographic knowledge with our personal experiences.

- Prior to a monthly dinner meeting, members will be asked to do some brief research online or in the library in order to gather interesting and relevant facts about each geographic region. Or, we the program directors will compose short written activities for members to complete before monthly meetings. For example, instead of telling group members what country to research, we would pick a country and assemble a list of interesting, unusual facts. Members would each have three facts to look up while attempting to figure out which country they pertained to. We would reveal the country at that evening’s dinner, and would discuss our findings and reactions.

- Our program will hold meetings every two weeks. As stated above, of these two, one of these meetings each month will involve a dinner inspired by a particular country or region of Latin America. The dinner will reinforce our geographic knowledge (such as natural resources, food supplies, and cultural connections to food) as well as providing a fun, relaxing, and enjoyable atmosphere.
Each member will increase his/her knowledge of Latin American culture, as is expressed through language, customs, music, food, and other means. By better understanding each of these cultural aspects, program members will improve their overall cultural knowledge.

**Action Steps**

- In conjunction with the geography monthly meetings, the themed dinners will also provide a time and space to explore both Latin American geography and general culture. The significance of food and different dishes may be discussed, as well as other general program material.
- While members are not required to speak Spanish or any other language commonly spoken in Latin America, in order to promote another facet of culture, we would post words/phrases of the week in either Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous language such as Quechua. This is simply to expose program members to different languages and ethnic groups within Latin America.
- At times, program members could be required to read brief excerpts from famous or otherwise noteworthy Latin American writers. Comparisons between styles, language, nationalities, and thematic elements will lend a different perspective to understanding diverse cultures.
- While exploring different countries and ethnic groups, the program will also take time to focus on regional customs and traditions. These customs will be explored via film, music, and through informational posters or displays created by our suite. This will also be incorporated into the monthly dinners: for example, we may plan a dinner based on a typical Bolivian meal, during which we would listen to traditional music and discuss relevant geographic/cultural/political issues. Or, afterwards we would watch a short film or documentary as a sweet. Some combination of media and discussion would be used to integrate different types of learning in order to enforce material.

Each member will perform research to augment their knowledge regarding Latin American political situations and their historical roots. Members should be able to identify current political issues and should analyze basic Latin American history to understand the bases of these situations. Furthermore, members will be able to infer the connections between Latin American history and political events in U.S. history and foreign policy.

**Action Steps**

- At each bi-weekly meeting, program members will discuss a current issue assigned either by relevancy or by country. Discussions will attempt to explore both present political conditions and will also pinpoint historical events that could have established the groundwork for such issues. Websites such as BBC News, Latin America Press, CNN, and other news networks can be obtained free of cost and will provide valuable information for understanding current events in Latin America. Historical background will be provided through text references or through reliable websites, if necessary. Program members taking Latin American studies courses or other related classes are encouraged to share their views and educate other program members.
- To give a visual representation of Latin American history and political conditions, we as program directors would construct a timeline of significant events which would be an additional informative suite-decoration. In order to further enhance our knowledge of the cultural, political and historical systems within Latin America, program members would be encouraged to attend certain lectures, museum exhibits, or related excursions. Our goal is to attend at least four on-lectures each school year (two per semester) and to attend a minimum of three cultural events or displays, be they on campus or outside of UVM. If we sponsor or co-sponsor an event with another program, we would also like the opportunity to invite a speaker from UVM or from the greater community.
**Community Service**

The Latin American Culture and Politics Program would work in conjunction with other cultural-themed suites to promote diversity, tolerance, respect, and a better understanding of world cultures to the UVM community. This could be done by sponsoring events and celebrations open to all students and staff, or by organizing community events in the Burlington area. For example, we could help bring awareness to Hispanic Heritage Month by assisting with related activities between September 15th and October 15th of the fall semester.

**Program Advisor**

Our program advisor for the current year, professor Ernesto Capello of the History department, has agreed to maintain his role of Program Advisor for the Latin American Culture and Politics Program. He is extremely knowledgeable in Latin American history, as well as its modern cultural and political implications. While he will be on leave the Spring semester of the 2007-2008 school year, he has agreed to help us as much as possible in the continuation of our program. We are confident that he will continue to be a helpful guide and informed resource for the program, as he has been so far.

**Collaborative Programming Ideas**

This program will be part of the Global Village Residential Learning Community, and we will collaborate with other programs and houses within the Global Village.

As well, at the beginning of the Fall semester, we would like to confer with La Casa and ALANA House programs about events for Hispanic Heritage Month. With three groups helping with activities, the events could be expanded and may even appeal to a broader audience if we all help get the word out about the lectures, forums, and of course- celebrations.

It would also be rewarding to work with the No Boundaries: Redefining Culture program, since their focus is also on diversity and cultural issues. We could possibly brainstorm events together, or could design new film and/or lecture series that explore mutual interests.

And finally, it would be great if we could share some meals with the Healthy Eating with Cultural Style program, who surely have many great recipes that we could exchange to spice up our monthly dinners! In general, any social or material-related connection made with another suite would be a positive and enlightening addition to our own program.
About the Global Village

This program is part of the Global Village Residential Learning Community (RLC). For UVM students interested in exploring other cultures, studying abroad, or pursuing lives and careers in an increasingly interconnected world, the Global Village may be just the place for you! Drawing on the resources of the Living/Learning Center and its dynamic network of student- and faculty-led programs, the community of learners that make up the Global Village will be engaged in coursework, lectures, concerts, exhibits, study sessions, faculty and peer mentoring, social connections with international students, group meals, and trips that:

- Explore the many connections among language, art and culture at regional, national, and international scales.
- Share disciplinary expertise within an environment that values a holistic approach to “living and learning.”
- Encourage formal and informal contacts among students, faculty, and staff within the Global Village, the Living/Learning Center, the other Residential Learning Communities, and the university as a whole.
- Aim to be a complement to existing international and cross-cultural programs at UVM.
- “Think globally and act locally” by outreach to the international community at UVM and within the greater Burlington area.

More information about the Global Village RLC can be found at: [http://www.uvm.edu/rlc](http://www.uvm.edu/rlc)

AIS 095: The Global Village

AIS 095: The Global Village is a self-paced, one-credit course designed to help you get the most out of your experience as a citizen of the Global Village residential learning community. In addition to taking part in any courses that are required or recommended for your individual House, all new Global Village residents must enroll in AIS 095 for one credit during the fall semester (as must any returning Global Village student who has not yet satisfactorily completed the class). This course will be graded on a “Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory” basis. As this a self-paced course, there will be no weekly class meeting time. Instead, you are expected to participate in an average of one House activity or one non-House cultural/educational event per week throughout the semester. Each House will have the opportunity to craft a “community learning plan” that will involve a combination of House and non-House activities that will fulfill the requirements of one-credit course. We’ll provide you with a list of suggested events and activities, or you can identify other events/activities with a cultural theme; you choose which ones you wish to attend. Finally, you should plan to attend the Global Village community meetings, which are periodically throughout the year.

We’ll provide you with a Global Village Passport; use it to keep track of your activities and explorations. In addition to documenting participation in your weekly events/activities, you will need to do reflective writing in the form of five short journal entries on the cultural/educational events that you participated in, along with a lengthier essay looking back on your most meaningful experience of the semester within the Global Village.
Returning Global Village students are also invited (but not required) to enroll in AIS 095 during the fall semester. Enrollment in AIS 096 for one credit during the spring semester is optional and encouraged for all students.

If you anticipate a problem with fulfilling this course expectation (such as if you will already be enrolled in 18 credits), please contact your Program/House director.

For more details about this course, visit: http://www.uvm.edu/rlc/ais095096.pdf