Latin American Studies Program

Spring 2027
Course Description Booklet

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Academic Programs

The Latin American Studies program provides Villanova students with an innovative, interdisciplinary curriculum through which they can explore and study Latin America in depth. The major and minor combine language courses, comparative global perspectives, experiential learning, methodological and writing courses, and a wide range of electives offered through the departments of Art History, Criminology, English, Global Interdisciplinary Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Spanish, and Theology and Religious Studies. Together, these offerings introduce students to complementary disciplinary approaches for understanding the diversity, uniqueness, and complexity of Latin America.

The program responds to growing national and international demands for globally engaged citizens who recognize and value cultural differences, can navigate increasingly diverse communities, and approach other cultures with openness, respect, and cultural competence. By developing language proficiency, critical-thinking skills, and the ability to engage thoughtfully across cultural and disciplinary boundaries, Latin American Studies prepares students to respond effectively to the challenges of an interconnected world. In doing so, the program supports the mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences while providing students with a rigorous and distinctive academic experience that prepares them for meaningful engagement in their communities and successful transitions into the workplace.

Latin American Studies Minor Requirements

Six courses for a minimum of 18 credits.

a. Four elective courses with the LAS attribute (12 credits).

Note: The Latin American Studies program allows up to two courses, or six credits, to be counted in both the LAS minor and the Spanish major or minor. Overall, no more than two courses, or six credits, from the Department of Spanish may count as electives for the LAS minor.

b. Two Spanish courses at the intermediate level (1121 and 1122) or above (6 credits).

Spanish Electives	Two Spanish courses at the intermediate level (1121 and 1122) or above	**6 credits**
LAS Electives	Courses related to Latin America. Overall, no more than two courses, or six credits, from the Department of Spanish may count as electives for the LAS minor.	**12 credits**

Latin American Studies Major Requirements

Twelve courses for a minimum of 34 credits

- GIS 2000: Introduction to Global Interdisciplinary Studies
- Two GIS 5011 team-taught 3-credit courses
- GIS 5000: Special Topics (1-credit)
- GIS 6500: Senior Capstone 1: Research
- GIS 6600: Senior Capstone 2: Thesis

Six courses for a minimum of 18 credits, of which the following must be included:

- four courses with the LAS attribute (12 credits).
- two Spanish courses above 1122 (6 credits)

Note: courses taken as part of a study abroad program may be counted. One internship course may be counted.

Villanova Summer Program
"Spanish Language and Indigenous Sustainability in Mérida, Yucatán, México"

This 6-credit summer program takes place in and around **Mérida, Yucatán**, a vibrant and culturally rich city known not only for its deep history and environmental knowledge, but also for being one of the **safest cities in the Americas.**

Courses:

- **Spanish 1122** (Intermediate Spanish II) or **SPA 3412** (Special Topics Abroad).
- **LAS 3412. Ethnoecology and Indigenous Sustainability (required course).**
  Attributes: LAS; Peace & Justice; Cultural Studies; Sustainability Humanities STEM; Diversity 3; Core Social Science; VSB BEHAVSCI; VSB SOCSCI Attribute; Policy and Management elective for Environmental Science and Environmental Studies majors, Global Health Minor elective, Sustainable Engineering Minor elective.

  Note: LAS 3412 counts toward the Spanish major, but not toward the Spanish minor.

Faculty program coordinator: Dr. John Cunicelli: john.cunicelli@villanova.edu

For more information click here.

Latin American Studies Course Descriptions
Spring 2027

CRM 4000-001/002.- Organized Crime

Every year, criminal organizations claim hundreds of thousands of lives. Beyond the direct violence, millions of people—across the developing world and even in wealthy nations like Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States—live under the pervasive control of these groups. In such contexts, it is impossible to fully grasp politics, governance, or daily life without first understanding how criminal organizations operate and reshape the world around them. This course draws on criminology, economics, political science, geography, gender violence, human rights, and related disciplines to open the "black box" of organized crime. The course unfolds in three parts. Part I introduce the four major types of criminal organizations: mafias, cartels, street gangs, and prison gangs. Part II explores their impact on the societies they inhabit—particularly how they shape violence, inequality, marginalization, weak rule of law, and the erosion of human rights. Part III turns to policy: What, if anything, can governments do to combat organized crime effectively while promoting justice, community wellbeing, and the common good? This course takes a global perspective, examining organized criminal groups across Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States, Europe, Asia, and other regions to identify broader similarities and differences in how they operate across societies.

Attributes: Core Social Science, Gender and Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, Peace & Justice, Political Science

Professor: Guillermo Jesús Escaño

Meeting time: M/W: 1:55pm - 3:10pm (Sec 001)
M/W: 3:20pm - 4:35pm (Sec 002)

HIS 1155-007.- Latinos in the US

This course is designed to provide students with a comparative introduction to the social, political, economic, and cultural history of Latinos in the United States. Students will examine the experiences and adaptations of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Cubans, and Dominicans, among other Latino groups, upon their arrival in the country, as well as their impact on U.S. society. Selected themes include identity, migration, colonialism, imperialism, social movements, and struggles for self-determination.

Attributes: Core History; Latin American Studies; CPS PE Approved

Professor: Oscar Aponte

Meeting time: T/R: 1:00pm - 2:15pm

HIS 2324-001.- Contemporary Latin American History

This course provides an introduction to the history of Latin America and the Caribbean, focusing on the region's social, economic, political, and cultural history from the birth of its republics in the 1800s to the present. It will explore what brings such a large number of diverse societies together as a region and what sets them apart. Selected themes include European colonialism and Indigenous societies, independence from colonial rule, extractive economies and international trade, neocolonialism, nationalism, revolutions, and neoliberalism.

Attributes: UNITAS Division 3; Latin American Studies; CPS PE Approved

Professor: Oscar Aponte

Meeting time: T/R: 2:30pm - 3:45pm

LAS 3412-001.- Representing Race in the Spanish Speaking World

This course explores the interconnected history of race across Latin America, Spain, and the United States. Rather than viewing race as fixed, we will examine it as an evolving tool of power, tracing its impact from colonial laws to modern pop culture. We will connect past injustices to current global conversations, dismantling myths of racial harmony in the Spanish-speaking world. Finally, we will analyze how Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and Latinx communities use creative expression to reclaim history and drive social justice.

Attributes: Africana Studies; Core Social Science; Cultural Studies; UNITAS Division 1; Peace & Justice; Race, Justice, Dialogue

Professor: Cristina Percoco

Meeting time: M/W: 3:20pm - 4:35pm

SPA 2221-001.- Latin American Literature & Culture

This course introduces students to Latin American literature and culture from the pre-Columbian era to the present. Through poetry, fiction, essays, theater, and selected visual materials, students will explore Indigenous traditions, the colonial period, independence movements, the avant-garde, and contemporary cultural expressions. Readings and discussions will examine how literature and the arts reflect and shape everyday life, identities, and social change across Latin America. Students will also learn basic elements of literary analysis, including theme, imagery, narrative voice, characterization, and structure, while developing their ability to discuss and write about literature and culture in Spanish.

Attributes: UNITAS Division 3; Latin American Studies; CPS PE Approved

Professor: Larisa Colón-Rodríguez

Meeting time: M/W: 1:55pm - 3:10pm

SPA 2221-002.- Latin American Literature & Culture

This course explores literary, artistic, historical, and sociopolitical developments in Latin America from the colonial period through the twenty-first century. Students examine how writers, artists, musicians, and intellectuals have represented and responded to issues including conquest and colonization, independence and nation-building, race and gender, revolution, migration, memory, and political and social inequality. Through close analysis of literary texts, visual art, film, music, and other cultural productions, students consider how Latin American cultural expression engages with questions of identity, power, history, and social change. The course develops students' ability to engage critically with diverse cultural perspectives and to communicate their ideas effectively in Spanish through oral and written expression.

Attributes: UNITAS Division 3; Latin American Studies; CPS PE Approved

Professor: Jill Gonzalez

Meeting time: 11:30am -12:45pm

SPA 3412-003.- Mapping Blackness in Latin America

In this interdisciplinary course, we closely examine the extensive and diverse histories, social movements, political mobilization, and cultures of Black people (Afrodescendientes) in the Americas. The course critically examines the history of African-descended peoples in the region. Some topics we will explore include: the particularities of slavery, notions of race and nation, blackness in the Pacific and debates on "racial democracy" during the mestizaje discourse across the Western Hemisphere. The course considers the intersection of race, gender, class, and empire. Material includes historians, artists, activists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political theorists.

Attributes: Africana Studies; Latin American Studies; UNITAS - DIV 2 & 3; Peace & Justice; CPS PE Approved

Professors: César Salgado Portillo

Meeting time: T/R: 1:00 pm - 2:15pm

SPA 3993. Community Interpreter Internship

The course prepares students to be verbal interpreters and translators, from English to Spanish or vice versa, by introducing them to the basic strategies for written translation and oral interpretation. This community-based learning course allows the student intern to use his/her Spanish abilities while helping Villanova law students represent clients. To satisfy the internship requirement,

students need to complete 120 hours of service at the Law School Clinic and the 3993 course requirements. This a letter graded internship-course.

Attributes: Latin American Studies; Peace & Justice; Pre-Law

Professor: Brendan Spinelli

Meeting time: M/ 5:20 pm - 7:20pm

THL 5003-002.- Hispanics in the US Catholic Church

This course examines peace and social justice through the experiences of Hispanic/Latino communities in the United States, focusing on issues such as racism, marginalization, immigration, poverty, and exclusion. Particular attention is given to the dynamic relationship between culture and faith, exploring how cultural values, traditions, identities, and lived experiences shape religious expression and how faith, in turn, informs cultural engagement and social action. Through the lenses of Catholic Social Teaching, liberation theology, and intercultural ministry, students explore themes of human dignity, solidarity, the common good, and the preferential option for the poor. Using the practical theology method of See, Judge, Act, along with discussions, reflective journals, case studies, and group projects, students critically analyze social realities and the interaction of culture and faith in diverse communities, developing informed responses that promote justice, inclusion, peace, and intercultural understanding.

Attributes: Latin American Studies, Core Theology.

Professor: Ruth Bolarte

Meeting time: M/W: 1:55 pm - 3:10 pm.

THL 5003-003. Liberation Theology

This course introduces students to Latin American Liberation Theology, exploring its roots in struggles against poverty, oppression, and repression in Peru. Students examine its biblical and ecclesial foundations, distinctive theological methods, key thinkers such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, its impact and controversies, and its continuing challenge to the Church, theology, and a world marked by growing inequality.

Attributes: Latin American Studies, Core Theology, Peace & Justice

Professor: Arthur Purcaro

Meeting time: T/R: 8:30am - 9:45am