**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

*This proposal form is intended for departments proposing a course for inclusion in the Northern Michigan University General Education Program. Courses in a component satisfy both the Critical Thinking and the component learning outcomes. Departments should complete this form and submit it electronically through the General Education SHARE site.*

**Course Name and Number:** GC 300 Geography of Latin America

**Home Department:** Earth, Environmental and Geographical Sciences

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information**

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**Expected frequency of Offering of the course** Fall, Winter, Summer

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? YES

*Courses that have not yet been approved by CUP must be submitted to CUP prior to review by GEC. Note that GEC is able to review courses that are in the process of approval; however, inclusion in the General Education Program is dependent upon Senate and Academic Affairs approval of the course into the overall curriculum.*

**Overview of course** (please attach a current syllabus as well): *Please limit the overview to two pages (not including the syllabus)*

1. Overview of the course content

The course engages in a systematic and regional geographic examination of Latin America aimed at helping the student recognize, appreciate, and understand the geographic, social, cultural and environmental diversity of the Latin American experience. Part I of the course is a systematic exploration of Latin America’s physical environments as well as its historical, agricultural, population, urban and economic geographies. Part II of the course narrows its focus to examine more specific characteristics of Latin America’s countries, regions and peoples. Particular attention will be given to the global significance of Latin American issues related to population, natural resources and the environment.

1. Explain why this course satisfies the Component specified and significantly addresses both learning outcomes

Cultural diversity abounds in Latin America. Almost every racial and ethnic group and political and philosophical persuasion are represented among its peoples. Economic activities range from traditional slash and burn agriculture to modern, high-technology manufacturing. Nearly every geopolitical or environmental issue challenging other nations of the world can be found in one form or another confronting the peoples of Latin American. Human settlements vary from remote peasant villages to huge urban agglomerations containingneighborhoods that range from palatial mansions to inner city tenements and periphery shantytowns. However, beneath this external diversity, there exists a dominant Hispanic cultural heritage whose values and institutions have shaped much of human behavior throughout the region for more than 500 years. Yet the geography of this massive land mass and its peoples is in many ways as remote and unknown to North Americans as it was 500 years ago.

The intended outcomes of the course are to: (1) enable students with the capacity to better understand modern Latin American culture (e.g. politics, economy, society, race, ethnicity, etc.) by locating it within the historical contexts of its diversity; (2) prepare the student to assess the causes and consequences of change within Latin America, and asses Latin America’s constantly evolving position in the world’s state of affairs; and (3) understand the underlying cultural, historical and geographical dimensions that have contributed to both Latin America’s present-day ethnic, racial, political, and sociopolitical challenges within its borders, as well as the perceptions of those challenges by people outside its borders.

This course also contains the critical thinking component by providing students the opportunity to apply their in-class learning experience to: (1) explain how the historical diversity of Latin America’s physical and cultural geography has expressed itself into the myriad worldviews, geopolitical patterns, economies, and stages of development characterizing modern-day Latin America; (2) assess the degree to which their own worldviews, geopolitical understandings and socio/cultural values compare/contrast to those of their Latin American neighbors; and (3) explain the role that cultural diversity plays in creating patterns of local, regional and national socioeconomic and geopolitical development.

1. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.)

This is a 300 level course and when capped at 40 is typically populated with non-geography majors from a wide variety of majors. This makes it especially challenging to teach since most of the students have had little to no prior geography education at the college level. However, student evaluations over the past 15 years suggest the course is well received as the course topics and issues are relevant and timely to students.

1. Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.)

GC 300 currently counts for Liberal Studies upper division humanities and world cultures credit, as well a course elective within the Environmental Studies and Sustainability major. Course enrollments caps are filled every semester.

1. Provide any other information that may be relevant to the review of the course by GEC

Most students taking the class come in with little to no knowledge, appreciation or understanding of the physical and cultural diversity imbedded in the Latin American region—a region that shares an international border with us.. Nor do students fully grasp the significance of what it means when referring to the Latin American experience within Latin America and increasingly within the United States.

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| Evidence | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | Students will complete two (2) exams structured around multiple choice questions, short answers, short essay, and maps. Incorporated into the essay portion of these exams, students will be asked to select and synthesize evidence/information (from their textbook, internet readings/video clips, films and articles) most appropriate for supporting their arguments/assessments (different sets of questions for each of the two exams)regarding the various impacts that historical and geographical (spatial) patterns of discovery/exploration have had on changing patterns of Latin American cultural diversity, geopolitical developments, and ethical issues underlying the ethnic, gender, racial and economic inequalities challenging Latin America today. These exams will count for 60% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 75% student proficiency--the rough equivalent of a C upon completing the course.  |
| Integrate | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | Students complete ten (10) critical thinking current event assignments that compare and contrast what is happening in the “real” world with in-class text materials. Students also critically assess films/documentaries/web videos by identifying common themes and reflecting on how/why Latin American issues are similar/different to their own experiences as “Americans.” These exercises will count for 20% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 80% student proficiency--the rough equivalent of a B- upon completing these assingments |
| Evaluate | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | At the end of the semester, students complete a semester written project and then give an oral presentation on a Lain American issue/topic of their choice but which has not been explored in depth in class. Using information gathered and discussed through the semester they will identify the significance of the topic within the Latin American experience. Then, they will explain via written narrative and PowerPoint how historical and geographical patterns of discovery/exploration have contributed to current patterns of Latin American cultural diversity, geopolitical developments, and ethical issues underlying the ethnic, gender, racial and economic inequalities challenging Latin America today. The presentation will count for 20% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 75% student proficiency with regards to their presentation--the rough equivalent of a C upon completing the course.  |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD**

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks  | Knowledge of elements important to members of another culture | Students will demonstrate their knowledge of elements important to members of another culture by identifying and describing key terms and concepts relating to the cultural/ethical diversity issues of Latin America via in-class assignments (10), quizzes (5), and exams (4) will be used to assess student understanding of a multitude of key terms/concepts. Map identification of key physical and cultural geography locations that have played a role in helping shape the cultural diversity will also be employed to assess knowledge. These exams will count for 60% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 75% student proficiency--the rough equivalent of a C upon completing the course. |
| Intercultural Awareness | Awareness of multiple cultural perspectives | Students will complete written assignments/essay exam questions that require them to identify the sociocultural and geopolitical elements (past and present) of each of the ethnic/racial groups that differentiate the Latin American population. Once identified, students will also describe the individual perspectives that each group holds regarding values, ideologies of socioeconomic status and political agency. .” These exercises will count for 20% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 80% student proficiency--the rough equivalent of a B- upon completing these assignments |
| Intercultural Engagement | Being willing to engage with cultures other than one’s own | Students will collate their understandings (via textbook readings, films, supplemental readings and lecture) of the Latin American culture and prepare a final oral Powerpoint presentation that demonstrates awareness and appreciation of the diversity of the Latin American culture. The presentation will count for 20% of the course grade. It is reasonable to expect a mean of about 75% student proficiency with regards to their presentation--the rough equivalent of a C upon completing the course. |
| Ethical Issue Recognition  | Awareness of ethical issues as they relate to cultures | Via in-class current event assignments and exam questions students will be required to identify in writing the current ethical issues facing Latin Americans and also identify the cultural elements within Latin America that create the greatest challenges for the region in trying to resolve such issues. |