

Latin American and Luso-Brazilian Studies Proposal

Elizabeth Foster
Class of 2012

The countries of Latin America, in my experience, are some of the most interesting places to visit and study. Among these nations many tensions exist: political unrest, indigenous peoples integrating into society, immigration movements, generational gaps and yawning economic divides. All of these aspects come together to create countries which have amazing cultures and peoples, and they all came from fascinating histories of colonialism and warfare. I intend to continue my study of Latin American and Luso-Brazilian culture after my education here at Hendrix College and hopefully one day live and work in either Central or South America. I plan on using my background knowledge that I acquire here to better understand how these cultures developed, and why some of these problems are still going on today. By the end of my studies, I hope to be knowledgeable about the history, culture, and languages of the region so that I can apply what I have learned in the field and hopefully work with in-country organizations to help solve some of these issues.

My Latin American Studies program at Hendrix consists of a variety of fields including primarily: Anthropology/Sociology, History, Politics, and Latin American Literature courses. Through anthropology, I can gain an understanding of how to study groups of people, learn more about human interactions, and learn research methods for further graduate study. History provides a background about how certain cultures came to be, and helps to explain why certain economic, political, and social aspects of these cultures are in their current state. I hope to develop a better appreciation for the arts and peoples of Latin America through studying their literature in the Spanish language. Also, literature and art are windows into a culture and help to explain certain elements that political history may not provide. Studying politics allows for the assessment of the current affairs going on in Latin America. Many of the countries of this region experience political unrest and civil disturbances, and this field will provide both a historical context and a modern analysis of the situation. These fields of study should be complementary in providing a thorough education about Latin America.

As part of my major requirements, I also intend on studying abroad for the fall semester of my junior year in Brazil. I chose the country of Brazil because I have a strong level of Spanish already and would like to learn Portuguese. While the majority of Latin America is Spanish speaking, Brazil covers nearly fifty percent of the continent of South America, and has a unique culture which is much different from that of its neighbors. I chose the Northeast coast, because it has a high Afro-Brazilian population and is home to one of the oldest cities in the country; Salvador. Salvador has a fascinating history of slave trade and as a result, the city and region are full of extremes in wealth and poverty, as well as distinct cultures which maintain strong ties to their African roots. I will study Brazilian history and history of Bahia, along with Afro-Brazilian Anthropology and politics at the Federal University of Bahia while performing a community development project. This experience is an opportunity to live in an entirely different Latin American culture, master a language, and better understand my field of study.

Upon return, I will do an independent research project with Dr. Goldberg on a topic which combines ethnographic research while abroad with library work. This project will be concluded with a lengthy thesis paper which will be reviewed by the members of my committee.

With this course of study, I believe that after graduation I will be well qualified to work for an NGO or volunteer organization based in Latin America and be knowledgeable about the culture, political structure, and history of the region.

Course Listing for Major:

Spanish:

- SPAN 330 Survey of Latin American Literature
- SPAN 350: Latin American Essay
- SPAN 474: Indigenous Influence on Latin American Literature

Anthropology:

- ANTH 230: Peoples and Cultures of US/Mexico Borderlands
- ANTH 300: Ethnographic Methods
- ANTH 235: Peoples and Cultures of Latin America
- Afro-Brazilian Anthropology (Study Abroad, fall)

History:

- History of Bahia (Study abroad, Federal University of Bahia, fall)
- History of Brazil (Study Abroad, fall)
- Economic, Political, and Social History of Brazil (Study Abroad, fall)
- HIST 325 Africa and the Americas

Politics:

- POLI 237: Human Rights and Social Justice in Latin America

Senior Capstone:

- Independent Study (Subject to be determined)

Dr. Ian King:

Advisor Signature:
Committee

 11.20.09


Dr. Lilian Contreras-Silva:

Advisor Signature:
Committee

 11.20.09

Dr. Anne Goldberg:

Advising Committee Chair:



Elizabeth Foster:

Student Signature:

Elizabeth Foster
