

GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

GPHY 257: The Geography of Middle America



Contact Time	One three-hour class per week
Format	Lectures, discussions, and film screenings based on course texts and readings
Class Assessment	Galeano Project Proposal: 20% Galeano Project: 40% Final “Take-Home” Exam: 40%

COURSE OVERVIEW

Geography 257 is designed to serve as a general introduction to the lands and peoples of Middle America, defined territorially as Mexico, Central America, and the Greater and Lesser Antilles. These geographical boundaries, however, are increasingly blurred as the daily lives of Canadians as well as citizens of the United States become inexorably linked to those of our southern neighbours. Key themes address the historical, ethnic, social, and cultural realities that have shaped the human geography of the region, including (1) the varying nature of colonial experiences; (2) confrontations between native peoples and European newcomers; (3) the transatlantic slave trade and the creation of slave-driven economies; (4) problems of post-colonial development; (5) indigenous resistance and survival; (6) violence and revolution; and (7) transmigration and the global economy. The role of the United States in influencing events and circumstances throughout the region will be examined in detail. Films will be screened as an integral part of the course, with visual representations of Middle American reality drawn from several genres (documentary, drama, historical reconstruction). These films, made by Middle Americans and other foreign nationals, are designed to complement material presented in power-point lecture format and designated as required weekly reading.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To provide a critical appreciation of how present-day conditions of life throughout the region came to be.
- To foster a better understanding of how Canadian and U.S. interests affect Middle American realities.

COURSE TOPICS

As indicated in the course overview above.

COURSE READINGS

Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire* trilogy, available from the Campus Bookstore:

Volume One, *Genesis* (1985).

Volume Two, *Faces and Masks* (1987).

Volume Three, *Century of the Wind* (1988).

W. George Lovell, *A Beauty That Hurts: Life and Death in Guatemala* (2019), available from the Campus Bookstore.

Geography 257 (Fall 2023) Coursebook, available from the Campus Bookstore.