Latin American and Caribbean Studies

The concentration in Latin American and Caribbean Studies is designed to help students develop an interdisciplinary understanding of culture, history, and contemporary issues in Latin America. Social, political, economic, scientific, literary, and cultural factors combine to explain the Latin American and Caribbean societies of today. The concentration in Latin American and Caribbean Studies provides the opportunity to integrate the methods of various disciplines. Requirements are intentionally broad and flexible to accommodate the interests of students in understanding the diverse reality of Latin America, yet the concentration also encourages focus. Concentration requirements cover four general areas: language, area studies, research, and internship/service work. Competency in Spanish or Portuguese is developed through intermediate and advanced coursework. Many concentrators also study abroad in Latin America and the Caribbean (http://www.brown.edu/academics/latin-american-caribbean-studies/undergraduate/study-abroad-latin-america-and-caribbean) for one or both semesters during their junior year to advance their language skills.

Requirements are intentionally broad and flexible to accommodate the interests of students in understanding the diverse reality of Latin America and the Caribbean, yet the concentration also encourages focus. Concentration requirements cover four general areas: language and literature, area studies, independent research, and out of classroom experience.

Language

Basic competence in either Spanish or Portuguese is required. Each student must take either HISP 0100, HISP 0200, POBS 0110 or any more advanced Spanish or Portuguese language course. This requirement may be satisfied by examination, but the examination will not count as a course. No more than one advanced language course (not including literature courses) may be counted among the ten courses required for the concentration.

Literature

Some familiarity with the literature of the region is required. Each concentrator must take at least one of the following: HISP 0730, POBS 0610, or a 1000-level Spanish or Portuguese literature course dealing with Latin America.

Area Studies

6 courses: Two types of area-focused courses are required: (1) courses specifically designated "Latin American Studies" (LAST; not including LACA 1990-LACA 1991), and (2) courses in several departmental programs that demonstrate the ways in which various disciplines have contributed to our understanding of Latin America. Approved area studies courses for the concentration are listed in Appendix B of the Concentration Guide.

At least 2 disciplines (not including Latin American Studies) must be represented among the six area studies courses. Other 1000-level courses dealing with related subjects that are especially pertinent to the study of Latin America may be substituted with approval.

Senior Thesis or Project

2 courses: A Senior Thesis or Project is optional for concentrators. It includes course credit for a reading and research course (LACA 1990-LACA 1991). In order to integrate the diverse perspectives gained in courses and readings, seniors may elect to complete a Senior Thesis or Project under the direction of one faculty member. Seniors will also choose one additional faculty member to serve as a reader. The reader will receive a draft and a finished copy of the student's thesis or project, which the reader will be responsible to grade. The reader may be involved in the earlier development of the thesis or project depending upon the arrangement made by the student with the reader. The Senior Thesis or Project will normally consist of a major research paper. A student may, with prior permission of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Concentration Advisor, present a film, videotape, museum exhibition, or other appropriate project, together with a paper that clearly demonstrates the academic relevance of the project. Only the Senior Thesis qualifies the student (along with a minimum B+ average) for Honors. The Senior Project is quite often of a more personal nature, such as observations on practice teaching or a survey of social resources on Latin America. Near the beginning of the seventh semester, students should submit to the concentration advisor a 5 to 8 page prospectus accompanied by the signature of one faculty member indicating that he or she is willing to serve as primary advisor on the project.

If a concentrator chooses to do neither a senior thesis nor a senior project, then a research paper must be written in an advanced undergraduate seminar (1000-level). The seminar must be among the approved area studies courses listed in Appendix B of the Latin American Studies Concentration Guide, and will count as one of the ten courses required for the concentration. Research papers will typically be 20-30 pages in length and must be approved by the Concentration Advisor. Students who choose this option do not take or LACA 1990 - LACA 1991. The seminar counts as the research component of the program. The distribution requirements for this option are: 2 language courses, 7 area studies courses and 1 research course (i.e. the seminar for which the paper is written).

Internships/Community Service

The Concentration in Latin American and Caribbean Studies requires students to complete an internship or volunteer service work in Latin America or with a local organization that works primarily with Spanish or Portuguese speaking peoples. The Center maintains a database of local and international internship opportunities. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the Swearer Center for Public Service. Internships and community service work are available to Brown students who study abroad at the Brown programs in Mexico (Universidad de las Americas) and in Brazil (Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro). Examples of local service work performed by concentrators in previous years include: helping compile a Spanish language guide to welfare service agencies, developing a culturally appropriate adaptation of a health testing and education program, and ESL instruction to Latin American immigrants. Such extracurricular work can be rewarding in itself; in consultation with a faculty member, it can often be used to earn academic credit and furnish material for either a Senior Thesis or Project.

A minimum of one semester or a summer of internship or volunteer service work is required. Students need to submit an internship/service work proposal form to the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Concentration Advisor for approval prior to starting the internship or service work. Upon completion of the internship or service work, students are required to submit to the Concentration Advisor a brief summary report of their experience, which must be signed by the supervisor of the student's internship or service work.

Honors

Qualified undergraduates may pursue work towards the B.A. with Honors. The requirements for graduation with Honors are the following:

1. Maintenance of at least a B+ average in the ten courses counting for the concentration.
2. Maintenance of at least a B+ average in all course work done for the B.A. at Brown.
3. Completion of a Senior Thesis approved by the primary advisor and reader as acceptable for Honors. The senior thesis should be "A" level work, although an "A" thesis does not automatically qualify for honors.

Prizes and Awards: Graduating seniors in Latin American Studies are eligible for an award administered by the concentration for outstanding Senior Thesis.

Foreign Study

Study abroad (normally in the junior year) is encouraged as an important part of the concentration. Interested students should begin early to prepare for such a venture. Popular programs with Latin American
concentrators include Universidad de las Americas-Puebla, Mexico, and the Catholic University (PUC-Rio) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Up to three courses taken abroad may be counted toward the ten courses required for the concentration. A list of Brown programs and approved non-Brown programs is available from the Office of International Programs (OIP) located in Rhode Island Hall. Feel free to consult the Latin American and Caribbean Studies concentration advisor about study abroad.