

Understanding Argentina

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: ARGN 3302

Number of Credits: 1

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 15

Instructor: On-site faculty

Course Description

This course seeks to provide students with an intercultural understanding of contemporary Argentina through classes, site visits, and critical analysis, all of which will allow them to draw comparisons to their own home country. The syllabus also focuses on the different spheres where the individual and the social intersect in Argentina: the private space, the public space, the political space (which may differ from the students' home country).

The departing point of this course will be a synchronic overview of Argentina nowadays. The fact that students will be culturally immersed in the host country for a whole semester will strengthen their self-awareness and global perspective.

Students will learn about the interplay of some issues in today's Argentinian society: identity, politics, gender, ethnicity, migrations, education, culture, and power relations, and similarities and differences with the USA.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course students should be able to:

- interpret Argentina as a historical, geographical, and social kaleidoscope through the combined use of class teaching and first-hand experiential learning.
- become aware of and think critically about intercultural differences and similarities.
- draw comparisons between Argentinian and the US culture, in particular applied to the different spheres and spaces where individuals in a society move and act.
- apply their knowledge and learning of the Spanish language through interaction with locals (according to each student's own level of the language).

Methodology

This course will be divided in two parts: a first week of intensive cultural orientation, with an emphasis on the comparison between both students' host and home cultures. A second part will consist of field visits and debates linked to the topics which will be discussed throughout the semester. The final project on one of the topics studied throughout the course will integrate the experiential learning acquired by students on site visits, to the reading material and course content through critical reflection.

Course activities, including lectures, field visits, and cultural orientation, along with Spanish instruction (according to the students' different levels), will facilitate their gain of cultural and historical knowledge of Argentina and contact and interaction with locals.

Required Reading / Materials

Nouzeilles, Gabriela and Montaldo, Graciela (eds). (2002). The Argentina Reader (History, Culture, Politics). Duke University Press.

www.matadornetwork.com Matador Network (Argentina webpage) Articles on Argentine culture and identity, cultural highlights and venues, travel.

www.thebubble.com Articles on Argentinian news, politics, lifestyle, opinion.

A series of news articles about the topics taught (which, given their ephemeral nature, will be chosen as they are published, during each semester). Sources:

www.lanacion.com.ar

www.clarin.com.ar

Constitución de la Nación Argentina (English versión):

<https://bibliotecadigital.csjn.gov.ar/constitucion-traduccion-ingles.pdf>

A series of news articles about the syllabus topics taught (which, given their ephemeral nature, will be chosen as they are published, during each semester).

Complementary Reference Material:

Brown, Jonathan C. (2010). A Brief History of Argentina, NY, FactsonFile, 2nd edition. [**General Background** -this book deals not only with a historic perspective of Argentina but also delves into cultural and social topics of the country to help students understand it better]

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Class and field visits participation (interaction and attendance)	20%
Final project proposal and abstract submission	10%
Assignments (three, 15% each)	45%
Final project	25%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Assignments: three critical reflection written assignments during the intensive orientation week with an emphasis on the comparison of the Argentinian and the US culture in terms of behavior, beliefs, set of values, habits, relationships, and family. Assignments will focus on a variety of topics.

Final project: its progress will be monitored by the instructor throughout the course. Students choose one topic from the syllabus and write a final project, emphasizing the intercultural differences between Argentinian and American society. Sources will include interviews with locals, readings, site visits, and some research on their part. Students must submit an abstract by week 4 of the program.

Participation: All classes (including site visits) require students' active participation. In order to receive a high grade, they must complete the corresponding readings in advance. Students should also make meaningful observations, comments, and questions at each visit, proof of their understanding of and interest in the subject.

Class attendance: Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. Attendance is mandatory, since trips and outings are an integral part of this course.

Course Content

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Unit 1

Argentina: the country. Buenos Aires, the capital city of the country. Buenos Aires province. Comparison: provinces (in Argentina) vs. the USA. The city: its layout and neighborhoods.

- **Site visit:** City tour of Buenos Aires.
- **First assignment (written):** The private space. Homestay characteristics and host family habits. Observation and comparison with your home country.
- **Second assignment (written):** The public space. Your neighborhood and the city of Buenos Aires: layout, transportation, architecture, types of buildings, density, population, behavior, and habits of locals in the public space. Comparison with your hometown (and home country).
- **Readings:**
 - “The Urbanization of Peripheral Capitalism: Buenos Aires, 1880–1920” Johns, Michael. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, September 1992, Vol.16(3), pp.352-374
 - “Do Gates Negate the City? Gated Communities’ Contribution to the Urbanisation of Suburbia in Pilar, Argentina” Roitman, Sonia; Phelps, Nicholas, in: Urban Studies, December 2011, Vol.48(16), pp.3487-3509
- **Complementary reading:** Brown, Jonathan C. (2010). A Brief History of Argentina, NY, FactsonFile, 2nd edition

Unit 2

Guest Lecturer. The History of Argentina, overview. The Economy of Argentina (from the 19th Century up to now). Elections, voting system. Political parties. Differences between the Argentinian and American constitutions.

- **Site visit:** Casa Rosada or National Congress.
- **Assignment three (written):** The public space, continued: being a citizen of Argentina. Brief comparison of the voting system and elections in Argentina and the USA. Similarities and differences.
- **Reading:**
 - Constitución de la Nación Argentina (English versión):
<https://bibliotecadigital.csjn.gov.ar/constitucion-traduccion-ingles.pdf>

Unit 3

The contrast between the Northern area (San Isidro) and the rest of the Metropolitan Area. The Argentinian aristocracy at the turn of the 20th Century.

- Intersection of the private and public spaces
 - **Society:** The distribution of wealth/poverty and income in the city of Buenos Aires and the metropolitan area. Shanty towns and their location in the city of Buenos Aires.
 - **Site visit:** Tigre and San Isidro.
- Readings:
 - <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-argentina-cities-slum-feature-trfn/buenos-aires-bold-slum-renewal-forges-ahead-amid-hopes-and-concerns-idUSKBN1Z71KO>

Unit 4

The role of religion and its shaping of the country. Catholicism and other religions in Argentina. Devotion and mainstream worship and pilgrimage (Virgin of Luján). Other kinds of devotion (Difunta Correa, Gauchito Gil, etc.)

The unification of the country: Rosas. Unitarios and Federales. Dissident writers (Esteban Echeverría). The draft of our Constitution (Alberdi). Unification of the country in 1853.

Comparison with the unification process in the USA.

- **Intersection of the private and public spaces:** Faith and religion in Argentina.
- **Site visits:** The city and Basilica of Luján, and Los Talas Ranch.
- **Readings:**
 - https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/origen-jamas-contado-peregrinacion-lujan_0_EzN3XQcn.html (translated abstract will be provided)
- **Complementary reading:** Brown, Jonathan C. (2010). A Brief History of Argentina, NY, FactsonFile, 2nd edition

Unit 5

Art, Literature, and Music in Argentina. Overview of artistic manifestations and dialogue between Argentinian art and the art from other cultures. Cultural venues, museums, and art centers.

- **Site visit:** Guided Visit to Teatro Colón
- **Society:** The role of the arts in the Argentinian society

- **Readings:**
 - Articles from matadornetwork and thebubble.com

Unit 6

MERCOSUR, relations with border countries, similarities and differences with the Uruguayan culture: mate, "fútbol," dulce de leche, beef, linguistic variations. Colonia and its history: Portuguese and Spanish Domination.

- **Society:** Current demographics of Argentina, migrations.
- **Site visit:** Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay
- **Reading:**
 - mercosur.int/en
- **Complementary reading:** Brown, Jonathan C. (2010). A Brief History of Argentina, NY, FactsonFile, 2nd edition

Unit 7

The "gaucho" in the Pampas: characteristics, history, tradition. Ricardo Güiraldes and his depiction of the gaucho in his novel Don Segundo Sombra City and countryside as cultural topics.

- **Society:** Stereotypes about Argentina as perceived by foreigners. Comparison with stereotypes about Americans. Foundational myths of Argentina and the USA.
- **Site visit:** San Antonio de Areco, town and ranch La Porteña de Areco
- **Reading:**
 - Gaucho Politics: Cultural Nationalism and Autochthony in Güiraldes's Don Segundo Sombra. Hallows, Ryan, Concord University. Presented at South Eastern Coastal Conferences on Languages and Literature.

Unit 8

Identity. The individual as a part of society. Argentinians and their identity (family, social relations, work, leisure, homeland and patriotism). Main issues which affect Argentinian society nowadays: human rights, the "disappeared" and the Madres of Plaza de Mayo's quest, abortion, equal marriage, LGBTQ rights.

- **Readings:**
 - Newspaper articles and websites
 - <https://theculturetrip.com/south-america/argentina/articles/an-lgbtq-guide-to-living-in-argentina>

- “Never Again,” National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons. In: Nouzeilles, Gabriela and Montaldo, Graciela (eds). (2002). The Argentina Reader (History, Culture, Politics). Duke University Press.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).