

Geography 155, Latin American Geography

Editorial Assignment Due March 2

This assignment will require each student to synthesize and apply the knowledge gained of Latin American geography, culture, and economics to specific regions or countries in Latin America. Select a topic of interest and write an editorial defending an argument. Make sure to state your argument up front, to present both sides of the argument, and to back up your assertions with facts, data, and logic. I encourage you to look at major newspapers such as the New York Times, LA Times, or Washington Post for examples of good editorial writing. You have been assigned several editorials and op/ed pieces from the New York Times. I would particularly encourage you to follow the model of an op/ed piece (e.g., the ones that are approximately 700 words, such as the ones by Brooks and Krugman, or the one I wrote).

Recommended topic:

Topics relating how demographic, social, political, and economic forces have altered human and physical landscapes, how environmental dynamics and resources constrain human development, or how scale and place are important geographical lenses through which to analyze your chosen theme. Nevertheless, you are free to pursue any topic. Some suggestions include the following:

Geographies of Latin American Sustainable Development

What is an example of economic and environmental sustainability or, conversely, unsustainability. What is (un)sustainable about the human-environment problem on which you are commenting? Are some components more sustainable than others? Why? What solutions would you propose? What do place and scale have to do with the research problem?

Examples: peasant slash and burn agriculture, cattle ranching, mining, wood harvesting, service sector development, urbanization, tourism, waste disposal.

Other potential topics:

Policy

How does the democratic process in Latin America effect economic, social/demographic and environmental change? Cite a specific example.

Examples: corruption, conservative liberalization and privatization policies versus more socialist/populist policies (e.g., Cuba, Venezuela, and Peru versus Chile; Brazil pre and post Lula.)

Economics

How do economic processes in Latin America affect political, social/demographic and environmental change? Provide a specific example.

Examples: World Bank/IDB privatization and debt repayment plans, populist economic agendas, NAFTA/CAFTA free trade agreements.

Environment

Argue for an example of deleterious or benign environmental change in Latin America. What (if any) are its economic, political and demographic causes and consequences?

Examples: tropical deforestation, reforestation, salinization, desertification, erosion, flooding, air, water, and soil pollution, agricultural intensification, use of ethanol in Brazil.

Demographics

How do patterns of demographic change in Latin America relate to economic, political and environmental change?

Examples: migration to the US, urbanization, rural migration, fertility change, mortality.

Lab and Writing Assignments (from syllabus). I encourage you to seek help at Campus Learning Assistance Services. Writing tutors are available at the CLAS Bldg Building 477 and Building 300 near Girvetz Hall and the Old Gym. Phone: 3269 Web: www.clas.ucsb.edu.

To earn an A on writing and lab assignments do the following:

Fulfill task requirements.

- Basic instructions are followed and all tasks and questions are addressed (*It is amazing to me how many people fail to do this!*)

You state an argument or arguments upfront and you provide appropriate examples and concepts to support your points.

- You choose a research question or argument that is of significance to the human and physical geography of Latin America. Your examples convincingly support your argument. You provide novel insights and raise further questions through your analysis.

Use concepts appropriately and creatively.

- Geography is central to your assignment, and historical and geographical examples are used to reach new insight on the subject.

Synthesize, interpret, and evaluate.

- You use geographical concepts to explore unusual interrelations or links that may not be obvious. Description is used only as a necessary base for synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

Organize with logic and clarity.

- Your work follows a clear-cut and logical trajectory. The introduction and conclusion are well developed and correspond to the body of the assignment. Topic sentences

form the backbone of the work and introduce the body of each corresponding paragraph. Your prose is free of superfluous points and *non-sequiturs*.

Display accuracy and conceptual discipline.

- No conceptual, logical, or organizational errors are apparent. All factual information or opinions not produced independently by you is cited using MLA style.

Present your work flawlessly (or nearly so).

- Your work is polished, an evident product of several drafts. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct; word choice is judicious.