

KIIS Maya Mexico Winter 2021-2022

SPAN 306 Experiencing Spanish Abroad: Mexican Culture and Identity (3 credits)

December 26, 2021 – January 7, 2022



Instructor: Dr. Laura Hunt

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Syllabus subject to change



Course Description

This course is an introduction to Mexican culture and identity through works of art and literature from pre-Colombian times to the present day, and through direct observation and analysis at various locations. Students study the history of indigenous groups at various archaeological sites (Maya, Aztec, Teotihuacan), considering their social systems, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. They also visit modern sites such as markets, city centers, churches, tourist sites, and local businesses to consider competing tensions throughout Mexico's history that have influenced regional and national identity; for example the impact of tourism, economics, politics, and social change. Through these site visits and observations, paired with relevant readings, students study the complexity of Mexican heritage and identity as influenced by the pre-Columbian era, the Spanish conquest, New Spain, the Mexican Revolution, and modern Mexico. Authors and artists studied include, but are not limited to, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. All coursework will be done in Spanish.

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not

affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

Academic Model

We employ a "Place as Text" teaching methodology, which inserts students into social environments and fosters close observation of the local culture. We make use of five basic learning strategies: mapping, observing, listening, discussing, and reflecting. A central goal is for students to take an active role in the direction of their learning by:

- self-selecting topics and readings (from among a selection provided by the instructor) that most interest them
- dedicating themselves to become “student-experts” in the chosen field
- participating in small group excursions that (safely) place them in culturally uncomfortable situations
- regularly synthesizing readings and on-site observations
- in pairs, leading a seminar-style oral presentation

Throughout the program, students develop an understanding of Mexican society, past and present. In the process, they also learn to work effectively in small groups, improve their oral presentation and analytical skills, and develop a heightened sense of confidence and leadership.

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain five transformative moments in Mexican history
- Gain an understanding of how Mexican history and culture have been, and continue to be, expressed in art, media, museums, food, rituals, public spaces, and politics
- Relate topics in Mexican history to current events
- Compare and reflect upon notions held about Mexico before and ideas developed during the study abroad program
- Work effectively in small groups and improve oral presentation skills
- Analyze and synthesize readings and observations in written assignments, blog posts, and presentations.

Program Calendar Snapshot

During this winter study abroad, we spend four days in Mexico City and eight days in the Yucatan Peninsula. In Mexico City, academic excursions include the Zocalo and Historic Center, the original artwork of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, the National Anthropological Museum, the city’s rich markets and diverse neighborhoods, the famous temples of Teotihuacan, and a night of Lucha Libre. In the Yucatan, we explore the spectacular Mayan archaeological sites of Chichen Itza and Uxmal, the vibrant markets & neighborhoods of Merida, off-the-beaten-path *pueblos*, and a Mayan *cenote* (natural swimming pool). The program concludes in the funky artsy beach town of Holbox with student final oral presentations and a group discussion regarding the complex relationship between tourism and environmental sustainability. Throughout, we employ a “Place as Text” learning model, which inserts students into social environments and fosters close observation of local culture. Note: items above are subject to change. See the KIIS Maya Mexico Winter webpage (<https://www.kiis.org/programs/maya-mexico-winter/>) for a more detailed program calendar.

Readings, Assignments

Students will be given multiple assigned readings prior to departure that are to be completed. Assignments related to these readings will be given throughout the course, and may take the form of questions, short compositions, and presentations.

Blog and Presentation

As part of the course, students are expected to create multiple blog entries to research and document their academic experiences. Prior to departure, all groups will 1) create a blog entry related to the chosen topic of the group, 2) comment on every other group's entry, and 3) respond to all posts on their own blog. Then, groups will rotate roles throughout the trip. They will take turns as first readers, responders, and searchers.

Blogging groups:

- *Readers/Publishers*: These students are responsible for posting an introduction to a historical figure, group, or event by the date of their presentation, as shown in the schedule below. They will reference specific readings from the Dropbox.
- *Respondents*: Students in this group build upon, disagree with, or clarify the first readers' posts. If a site visit was made since the post that is relevant, they should use observations from the site visit or place-as-text activity to expand upon the initial post.
- *Searchers*: Students in this group find and share at least one related online resource. In addition to linking to the resource, the searchers provide a short evaluation of the resource, highlighting what makes it worthwhile, unusual, or, if appropriate, problematic.
- If you do not have a named role on a given day, your group has the day off in terms of blogging.

In addition to the blog, the students will give a presentation on the topic for which they are required to act as "reader." They should not count on being able to show their blog as they present, but can assume the class has read it.

Digital Scavenger Hunt

There is much to learn about Mexican culture by personal exploration, during site visits and any free time students might have. Students will be given a list of specific situations, stores, foods, experiences, etc., that they are expected to find over the duration of the course and document by photo or video.

Final Project

At program's end, the instructor will provide students with one final question. To respond, each student will need to select one photo s/he has taken over the course of the study abroad program and write a one-page essay that speaks to the question and self-selected photo.

Participation

Students are required to participate in all place-as-text activities and debrief sessions, using the target language at every possible moment. When communicating with other Spanish students, Dr. Dizgun, Dr. Hunt, Dr. Sierra, or locals, Spanish students must use the target language at all times. All assignments will be completed in Spanish, and in addition, the participation grade is dependent upon their use of the language in the course. Due to the nature of this interdisciplinary program, there will be times when it is appropriate or polite for Spanish students to use English with fellow students who do not speak Spanish. In these situations, English will be necessary and the student will not be penalized.

Grading Procedures

90 – 100 A
80 – 89 B
70 – 79 C
60 – 69 D
Below 60 F

Assessment

Readings, assignments	25%
Blog and presentation	30%
Digital scavenger hunt	10%
Participation	20%
Final project	15%

Summary of Your Pre-Departure Academic Responsibilities

1. Choose a topic to blog/present at November orientation. You will be put into groups based on the topic chosen.
2. Investigate your self-selected topic with other members of your group. Read closely two Dropbox readings that you can use/cite in your blog. Bring copies with you to Mexico.
3. Begin your blog entry (in Spanish) about the chosen group topic.
4. Pre-departure essay: Students will be provided an image (e.g. photo, artwork, graphic, etc.) and an accompanying question. Each student submits a one-page essay response, in Spanish, by **December 24 at noon**.

Plan de curso (subject to change)

	(Sitio)	(Tarea/Presentación)
7 de noviembre- 25 de diciembre	Antes de la salida	Empezar el blog. leer artículos relevantes Ensayo preliminar (fecha límite 24 de dic.)
Ciudad de México		
26 de diciembre	Llegada	Lectura y preguntas: Sor Juana
27 de diciembre	Zócalo y Palacio Nacional Museo Antropológico	Blog y Presentación: Diego Rivera y el muralismo mexicano
28 de diciembre	Sitio azteca Teotihuacán Place as Text: Exploraciones de barrios	Lectura y preguntas: Carlos Fuentes, “Chac Mool”
29 de diciembre	Casa Azul de Frida Kalho Place as Text: Mercados, barrios Coyoacán y San Ángel UNAM & Tlatelolco	Blog y Presentación: Frida Kahlo y el feminismo
Mérida, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, Campeche		
30 de diciembre	Ciudad de Mérida Centro histórico	Lectura y preguntas: La Conquista
31 de diciembre	Chichén Itzá Cenote Ik Kil	Blog y Presentación: La civilización maya (uno o dos aspectos)
1 de enero	Palacio del Gobierno Mercado	Blog y Presentación: Los misioneros, Bartolomé de las Casas y la conversión de los indígenas
2 de enero	Exploración de pueblos	Lectura y preguntas: Octavio Paz
3 de enero	Uxmal Hacienda Yaxcopoil	Lectura y preguntas: Rosario Castellanos
4 de enero	Campeche	Blog conclusión: La identidad mexicana
Playa Holbox		

Attendance Policy

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

Academic Honesty Policy

Cheating, plagiarism (submitting another person's material as one's own), or doing work for another person which will receive academic credit are all impermissible. This includes the use of unauthorized books, notebooks, or other sources in order to secure or give help during an examination, the unauthorized copying of examinations, assignments, reports, term papers, or the presentation of unacknowledged material as if it were the student's own work. Disciplinary action may be taken beyond the academic discipline administered by the faculty member who teaches the course in which the cheating took place.

Disability Accommodation

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Office Manager, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, or KIIS Office Manager, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program

directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Deborah Wilkins (270-745-5396 / deborah.wilkins@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / joshua.hayes@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/eo/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.