



## KIIS Mexico & The Caribbean Program, Summer 2022

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### SPAN 372: Latin American Civilization and Culture

**Instructor:** Dr. Itzá Zavala-Garrett

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**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

#### 1. Course Description:

This course is a survey of the historical, cultural, and literature background of Caribbean Mexico (Merida) and its people from the Discovery to the present. However, this class will center in the indigenous influence in Latin American countries, particularly the Mayan culture heritage in south of Mexico and Central America. Students study the history of indigenous groups at various archaeological sites (Chichén Itzá and Uxmal), 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 provided by Dr. Zavala-Garrett, 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. Literary works include, but are not limited to, pre-Hispanic texts (*Popol Vuh* and *Chilam Balam*) and *Relation on the Incidents of Yucatan* by Diego de Landa. All coursework will be done in Spanish.

#### 2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

##### 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 (Merida and Puerto Rico)
- 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.

### 3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

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.
- Individually, 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 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, social interactions, 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, and presentations.

### 4. Major Activities Covered in the Course:

**PARTICIPACIÓN:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to volunteer responses to the instructor's questions, demonstrate preparation for class by contributing to class discussions, and offering constructive comments and questions. Students are also expected to behave appropriately, showing respect to their instructor and their classmates. Class participation points are based the instructor's observation of a student's willingness to participate in the oral exercises in class, his/her full participation in the peer group work and his/her willingness to respond when called upon as well as to ask pertinent questions and make meaningful contributions to the class.

**TRABAJOS EN CLASE Y ACTIVIDADES ESPECIALES:** Students will be constantly working in and outside the class with different activities to help in their acquisition of the material covered in class. 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. Students are expected to hand in homework ON TIME and LATE HOMEWORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Any missed in class work will automatically result in a zero for the student, UNLESS THE STUDENT HAS MISSED CLASS BECAUSE OF JUSTIFIABLE REASONS AND HAS NOTIFIED MS. CHAPA (Mérida's liaison officer) AND MYSELF ABOUT IT.

**EXCURSIONES, REPORTES & NOTICIAS:** Through this kind of tasks, the students will be able to share some aspects of their own experiences in the target culture reinforcing vocabulary and developing their oral skills. They will also get immersed into the local news, and they will be able select, analyze, and communicate culturally relevant ideas to their classmates in the target language. For each cultural trip or excursion, students must write a report in Spanish with an opinion about it since they would share this information in class. Each activity from the official calendar relates to your syllabus course. In addition, Dr. Zavala-Garrett will organize extracurricular activities reinforcing class assessments.

**EXPECTATIVAS:** Students are expected to come to class prepared, to thoughtfully contribute to class activities, to the responsibility of the student to find out what was covered and to learn the appropriate material. Please refer to the attendance portion of this syllabus to review the attendance policy. Students can expect the instructor to come to class well-prepared, to be available during office hours (or by appointment) and to return graded materials as promptly as possible. Daily classes will be designed so that students hear and use Spanish exclusively. Using only Spanish in class is fundamental because it is essential to your progress in mastering your Spanish skills.

## 5. Required Readings and Materials:

- I recommend the following links for additional information:  
<http://yucatanoday.com/?lang=en> This electronic magazine has cultural information about the *Península de Yucatán* and activities schedule.  
<http://www.theyucatatimes.com>  
<http://yucatan.com.mx>
- Local newspapers and Mexican magazines are also a good resource for your daily reports. Ask your host family about it.

**Course Materials:** Handbook will be provided by Dr. Zavala-Garrett

**Recommended Texts:** A good Spanish dictionary or thesaurus, this could be electronic (<http://www.dictionary.com/>). Also, please bring a 3-ring binder with paper and a small notebook. You could buy these materials at Mexico in case you are avoiding over packing.

**6. Graded Assignments:** KIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.)

**Grade Breakdown:** Grades are based on the following categories:

PARTICIPACIÓN Y ASISTENCIA	30%
REPORTE DE EXCURSIONES*	30%
REPORTES DE NOTICIAS LOCALES*	20%
PRESENTACIÓN ORAL*	20%
TOTAL	100%

**\*\*\*NOTA:** 1) Frecuentemente se compartirá una noticia local o nacional de México, frase o palabra nueva con la clase y la profesora. 2) Se escribirá un breve reporte escrito a mano, doble espacio de las excursiones durante el viaje para comentar en clase y entregarlo a la profesora. 3) Al final del curso, se harán presentaciones orales sobre sus experiencias personales en conexión con la cultura y vocabulario aprendidos durante el programa.

### Grading Scale:

100-90: A      Grades are not curved nor rounded up.  
89-80: B      Extra credit is not offered on an individual basis.  
79-70: C  
69-60 D  
59 and below:      F (E)

### 7. 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.

### 8. 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](mailto: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 Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto: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 Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, 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.

### **9. 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](mailto:deborah.wilkins@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)) or Joshua Hayes (270-745-5121 / [joshua.hayes@wku.edu](mailto: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.