



## KIIS Maya Mexico Winter 2024-2025

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

December 26, 2024 – January 6, 2025

**Instructor:** Dr. Ruth Brown

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*Syllabus subject to change*

### Course Description

This course introduces students to Mexico's diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage, from pre-Colombian times to the present. We will draw on a variety of materials, including literature, poetry, music, and visual art, to inform our study of with the locations that we visit during the program. Visits to archeological sites, markets, museums, churches, cultural centers, and businesses will provide students with opportunities to reflect on and evaluate the social systems, religious beliefs, and cultural practices of Mexican peoples and communities, both historical and contemporary. Personal exploration and reflection will complement our site visits and academic study to help students make meaningful connections and think critically about the competing tensions that influence Mexican regional and national identity, in particular relation to tourism, economics, politics, and social change, all while refining their own communicative abilities in Spanish. All work related to this course will be completed 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, cultural institutions, foodways, 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 in Spanish
- Analyze and synthesize readings and observations in written assignments, website 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, and the famous temples of Teotihuacan. 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 at the beach 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 and Assignments

Students will be assigned readings, songs, and visual sources to prepare prior to departure. Activities related to these materials will be assigned during both the pre-departure and travel portions of the course and may take the form of short quizzes, written reflections, pair and group discussions in Spanish, and oral presentations.

### Website and Presentation

This project encourages students combine their pre-departure study with experiences on-site to explore and develop expertise on a topic of personal interest. Students will work in groups to create a page for our class website before departure, then will present their site and engage in a discussion that connects the topic with their experiences on-site. This assignment will be accomplished in the following steps:

- Pre-departure:
  - The instructor will provide a list of suggested topics centered around historical figures, events, and other themes related to our class and travels.

- Students will be placed into groups based on their topic of choice and work together to research and create an overview of their topic for the class website. The website should include reference to at least two of the assigned pre-departure readings and should include a variety of input sources (text, images, and at least one video or song).
- During the trip:
  - On the day that their topic is assigned, groups will present the information included in their site and engage in a discussion on the topic with their peers. They should not count on being able to show their website as they present but can assume the class has read it.
  - On each presentation day, a different group from the one that is presenting will be expected to take the lead on the class discussion by sharing observations that connect the presentation with our on-site experiences.

Students will receive three grades for this assignment: 30% a group grade for the website, 30% individual grade for the website presentation, 40% individual grade for observations and comments.

### **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.

### **Pre-departure and Final Essays**

Students will complete two one-page essays in Spanish. For the pre-departure essay, the instructor will provide a photo prompt and guiding question. For the final essay, the instructor will provide a guiding question and students will select from 1-5 photo(s) 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(s).

### **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, professors, 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 and related assignments	25%
Website, presentation, and comments	30%
Digital scavenger hunt	10%
Pre-departure and Final Essays	15%
Participation	20%

### Summary of Your Pre-Departure Academic Responsibilities

1. Choose a topic to research for the class website at November orientation. You will be put into groups based on the topic chosen.
2. Investigate your self-selected topic with the other members of your group. Read closely two of the assigned pre-departure readings that you will use/cite in your website. Bring copies of those readings with you to Mexico.
3. In collaboration with your group, build your section of the website and prepare your presentation; you should meet with your groupmates at least once on Zoom to finalize your page and outline your presentation. You can continue to work on your site and presentation up until the day that you present, but since you will have limited time and access to internet during the trip you are encouraged to complete as much of this project as possible before departure.
4. Complete pre-departure readings and submit corresponding activities on Canvas. These activities should be complete in Spanish and submitted by **December 24 at noon**.
5. Pre-departure essay: Students will be provided an image (e.g. photo, artwork, graphic, etc.) and an accompanying question. You should submit a one-page essay response, in Spanish, on Canvas by **December 24 at noon**.

### Plan de curso (subject to change, check Canvas for updated schedule)

	(Sitio)	(Tarea/Presentación)
7 de noviembre- 25 de diciembre	Antes de la salida	Empezar el sitio web y organizar la presentación entre grupo.  Leer/explorar materias asignadas y completar actividades correspondientes.  Mirar Roma y escribir el ensayo preliminar (fecha límite 24 de dic.)
<hr/> Ciudad de México		
26 de diciembre	Llegada	Lectura: La Conquista
27 de diciembre	Zócalo y Secretaria de Educación Pública Museo Antropológico	Presentación: Diego Rivera y el muralismo mexicano
28 de diciembre	Roma Xoximilco y Museos	Lectura: Sor Juana
29 de diciembre	Casa Azul de Frida Kahlo Place as Text: Mercados, barrios Coyoacán y San Ángel	Presentación: Frida Kahlo y el feminismo

## UNAM & Tlatelolco

### Mérida, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, Campeche

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30 de diciembre	Mérida	Lectura: Comunidades indígenas y el Popul Vuh
31 de diciembre	Mercados de Mérida	<a href="#">Presentación: La cocina mexicana</a>
1 de enero	Chichén Itzá	Lectura: Carlos Fuentes, "Chac Mool"
2 de enero	Mérida	<a href="#">Presentación: Los misioneros, Bartolomé de las Casas</a>
3 de enero	Uxmal	Lectura: Octavio Paz
4 de enero	Campeche	Lectura: Rosario Castellanos

### Playa del Carmen

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5-6 de enero	Playa	<a href="#">Presentación: Las cuestiones ecológicas y el ecoturismo</a>
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### Salida

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6-14 de enero	Ensayo final
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### 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](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 Office Manager, 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 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, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@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/titleix/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.