Introduction to Mexican History, Culture and Business

IDST 398U: 3 Credit Hours (Hybrid Format)

University of Richmond
School of Continuing Studies

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Faculty

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Introduction:
Welcome! Bienvenidos! Our neighbor Mexico has an important and complex relationship with the United States. Today, issues of trade, immigration, border security, and bilingual education are frequent topics in the news. Moreover, Mexican and Hispanic culture have become important components of U.S. society, including in metropolitan Richmond.

Exposure to international culture, history and commerce is an important component in any liberal arts education. This is particularly true for students who desire to perform effectively in our increasingly global work environment. What better place to start than in Mexico! This special international study course is designed to accommodate working adult SCS students.

In the course, we will consider important issues and developments in Mexican history, politics, culture, and business. This will include a discussion of international trade linkages between Virginia and Mexico, current immigration issues, etc. There are no course pre-requisites for the SCS Study in Mexico course and Spanish fluency is not required. (However, this will be a great opportunity to practice your Spanish.) All classroom instruction will be in English. One-on-one meetings at our partner institution in Monterrey will also be available based on specific professional interests: business management, banking/finance, higher education administration, elementary/secondary education, etc.
The Mexico portion of the trip will be conducted during UR’s annual Spring Break: March 7-15, 2009. Students from SCS Human Resources Management degree programs led by Dr. Patricia Strait will also participate with us. Both Dr. Strait and Professor Hiller are fluent in Spanish. We anticipate a total group of approximately 15 students.

We will study at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, UR’s principal partner university in Mexico. The “Tec” is the leading private university in Mexico, with approximately 90,000 students on 33 campuses. The Monterrey campus has about 18,000 students. Mrto. Raoul Godinez R., Adjunct Professor, will be our principal instructor at the Tec. We will stay in apartments located near the Tec campus. Meals will be available at the Tec cafeterias and nearby restaurants.

http://dri.sistema.itesm.mx/dial/proyectos/sim/homedoc.htm

Monterrey, the industrial center of Mexico, is a safe, metropolitan area of some four million people. The city is located in northeastern Mexico, about three hours by car from San Antonio, Texas. It is the home of many major Mexican-based conglomerates in such industries as steel, beer, cement, industrial components, etc.

Course Objectives:

1. Develop a basic understanding of key concepts in Mexican history, politics, economics, arts, social culture and business.

2. Analyze contemporary political and economic issues engaging the United States and Mexico.

3. Learn about key business and international trade linkages between the U.S., Mexico and Virginia and the role of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

4. Meet with Mexican businessmen and women to learn more about the structure and organization of these institutions as well as the role of multinational companies in Mexico.

5. Develop an independent research paper on topic of interest to you and/or your employer. Possible topics may include: Mexican historical and cultural distinctives, developing a marketing plan for your employer who may be doing or considering doing business in Mexico, U.S.-Mexican political relations, analysis of NAFTA’s impact on U.S. and Mexican employment conditions, Virginia and Mexico trade issues, immigration, and educational policies.
6. Learn basic phrases in Spanish. For students with some background in Spanish, this trip will be an opportunity to practice your Spanish.

7. Learn about the activities of the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and other service organizations supporting the Mexican community in Richmond.

8. Personal growth and enrichment from international travel.

9. This course will fulfill the Social Sciences and Cultural Studies Areas of Study or General Distribution Requirements of a Liberal Arts Degree. (Please consult with the Student Advisory Staff to insure eligibility for this feature).

Course Texts:


Selected contemporary readings from *The Wall Street Journal, Economist*, etc., will also be assigned. Lecturers from the Tec will also provide additional reading assignments to accompany their presentations.

Professors reserve the right to make changes as required prior to and during the class.

Class Schedule:

14 Jan.: Course introduction. Explanation of course structure, study abroad requirements and activities. Discussion of independent study project.

21 Jan.: Introduction to Mexican History and Culture – Part I
Readings:

28 Jan.: Introduction to Mexican History and Culture – Part II
Readings:

4 Feb: Introduction to Mexican History and Culture – Part III
Readings:

11 Feb Introduction to Mexican culture and Mexicans in Richmond. Lisa Zajur, Director, Spanish Academy and Cultural Institute. Michel Zajur, President,
Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Meet students in SCS Human Resources Mgmt. class.

18 Feb.: Class meeting. Live interactive video course with Prof. Raoul Godinez on Mexican - U.S. culture and stereotypes. Submission of independent research topics.

25 Feb.: Class meeting. Introduction to international trade in Virginia and linkages with Mexico. Introduction to NAFTA, outsourcing, and "maquiladoras." Mr. Hank Selby, Reynolds Packaging and Consumer Group concerning company operations in Mexico.


04 Mar.: Class Meeting. Discuss videos and final preparations for trip.

07 Mar.: Depart for Monterrey, Mexico

    Approximately 12 hours of classroom instruction at Tec de Monterrey led by Prof. Godinez. Lectures will concentrate on cultural anthropology, colonial history, and contemporary social-political issues in Mexico and relations with the United States. We will also have a "cultural scavenger hunt." A class schedule will be distributed separately.

    We will tour selected historical/cultural sites, meet with Mexican business managers, educators, etc. We will also visit the Reynolds Packaging Facility in Monterrey and a Mexican multi-national company.

15 Mar.: Return to Richmond, Virginia.

18 Mar.: No class. Rest and catch up. Get ready to start online post-trip discussions.

25 Mar.: No class. Online “take-home” exam available.

01 Apr.: Hand in exam. Discussion and de-briefing of trip experience.

15 Apr.: Optional group reunion dinner at La Siesta Restaurant in Richmond? (Michel Zajur) Tentative

22 Apr.: Last day to submit research paper online.
Student Evaluation:

Take home exam re Mexico.  45%

Independent study research paper, 12+ pages, on a topic to be selected by the student and approved by the instructor.  45%

Journal-keeping (not graded for content)/class participation/discussions 10%

Students are expected to abide by the various tenets of UR Honor Code.

Biographies of Instructors:

Dan Roberts is Associate Professor of Liberal Arts and History and Chair of the Department of Liberal Arts at SCS. He specializes in Early Modern English History and is a public historian, hosting and producing various radio and television projects. His most visible project is A Moment in Time heard on many public radio stations, satellite radio and Armed Forces Radio around the world with more than seven million listeners per day. Roberts is an avid traveler and integrates his international experience and knowledge into both classroom and media productions.

George Hiller has served as an instructor in the SCS Liberal Arts program since 2001 where he teaches international business and politics in the Social Analysis II teaching team. He has also served as an adjunct professor of international business law at the School of Law and a lecturer in the Professional Development Program at the Robins School of Business.

Mr. Hiller is the Director of International Programs at the SW Virginia Higher Education Center.  www.globalvirginia.com  He has organized and led several short-course study trips to the Tec de Monterrey. Previously, he worked for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership from 1992-2002 where he coordinated Virginia’s export promotion programs in Mexico. He received a BA from the University of New Mexico, MBA from the Thunderbird School of Global Management, and JD from the University of Richmond School of Law.

Mrto. Raoul Godinez R. has served as an Adjunct Professor in the International Relations and Political Science Dept. at the Tec de Monterrey since 1999. Professor Godinez is from Tijuana, Mexico, and holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Tec de Monterrey. His research focuses on cultural and socio-political development of Mexico within the context of North America. From 2005-2007 he served as the instructional coordinator for the summer international study in Mexico program offered by the SW Virginia Higher Education Center.