



Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies
Frequently Asked Questions for Undergraduate Students

Can I really major in Latin American studies?

Yes, the University of Michigan has offered an undergraduate concentration in Latin American and Caribbean Studies since 1984. If you are interested in Latin America and the Caribbean, but cannot devote the time needed to complete a major, you can now elect LACS as your Academic Minor.

What is the difference between a LACS Concentration and a Spanish Major?

The Spanish major is based on your knowledge of the Spanish language and your coursework in Spanish classes, which are mainly literature classes. Having a B.A. in Spanish tells people that you know a lot about Spanish language and literature. It is possible to get a Spanish degree without ever taking a single course on Latin America.

The LACS concentration covers the anthropology, history, and politics of Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to its language and literature. A LACS degree tells people that you have a well-rounded, academically sound knowledge of broad aspects of the regions society and culture.

It is possible to concentrate in both LACS and Spanish and it is quite easy to combine the two.

Please see our LACS Undergraduate Concentration page for more information regarding the LACS Concentration.

What do I have to do to concentrate in LACS?

The basic requirements are:

- Competence in Spanish or Portuguese.
- At least 30 hours of courses that cover Latin America and/or the Caribbean. Please see LACS Course List page for more information regarding courses applicable to LACS. If you think a course may be applicable to LACS, but it is not on our list, please contact LACS Student Advisor.
- Among the above courses, at least one from each of these areas: Anthropology, History, Literature, and Politics.
- A senior thesis, which counts for 3 of the required 30 credit hours. For more detailed information, please look at the Undergraduate, Senior Thesis Guidelines page.

Is it possible to do a double concentration with LACS and another major?

Yes, in fact we encourage you to have a double major. Each year at least half our graduating concentrators complete degrees in more than one program. A double major is particularly easy to accomplish with programs that offer a large number of courses that count toward a LACS major, such as Anthropology, History, and Spanish, because you can apply these credit hours toward more than one major. Students with sufficient interest have also been able to double-major with Economics, English, French, Political Science, and other departments and programs.

Another option is to combine a LACS major with a minor in another field (or vice versa).

I'd like to study abroad. Can the courses I take count toward my major?

Absolutely! The University's Office of International Programs (G513 Michigan Union, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1349; tel: 313-764-4311) sponsors several Study Abroad programs in Latin America, and also offers counseling and assistance for students looking for programs sponsored elsewhere. The U-M programs include:

- Bahia, Brazil (Fall)

- Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Fall)
- Santiago de Chile (Fall, Winter, Academic year)
- Guanajuato, Mexico (Winter)
- Xalapa, Veracruz , Mexico
- San José, Costa Rica (Fall, Winter)
- A "Sustainable Development" program in Costa Rica
- Summer programs in Bahia, Brazil and Guanajuato, Mexico
- A summer program on Health and Nutrition in the Dominican Republic.

If you participate in one of these - or if you go on a study program to Latin America sponsored by another university and receive accreditation for it through LS&A - then every course on the local country, the Caribbean, or Latin America generally that you take (at the equivalent of the 300 level or above) will count toward your LACS major. (Language acquisition courses do not count, however.)

Credits earned in University of Michigan study-abroad programs (run through the OIP) normally show up automatically on your UM transcript. (Check with the OIP for details.) To find out if credits will transfer to the University of Michigan from a non-UM study abroad program, ask the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to pre-evaluate the credits for the program. Submit the information online at www.admissions.umich.edu/oor.

What about the thesis?

Writing the thesis is a rewarding and fulfilling experience. Most LACS seniors enjoy researching and writing their senior thesis, and they learn a tremendous amount in the process. Don't think of it as a thesis, but as a research paper. The thesis-writing course earns 3 credit hours, and should take no more of your study time than the average course. The difference is, you yourself choose the topic, do the research, find the professor who wants to work with you - and the only assignment is that one paper!

- If you know you will be unable to complete a thesis--or if will not complete the required 30 hours of course work, but wish to be recognized for the courses you have completed--please consider signing up for the new LACS Academic Minor.
- If you are already doing, or planning to do, an honors thesis (for example, in Anthropology, History, or Spanish), contact the Undergraduate Advisor at LACS to see if your thesis can also count for your LACS thesis requirement.
- For more information about the thesis, please see the LACS Thesis Guidelines Page.

What can I do with this degree after I graduate?

Latin America - and the Latino community in the United States - are growing in economic importance. More and more employers are aware of the importance of having employees who have the background and the skills to communicate intelligently with people from this vital region.

Recent Latin American and Caribbean Studies majors have gone on to get graduate degrees in Law, Public Health, Public Planning, Natural Resources, Business, Medicine, Education, Anthropology, History, Political Science, Spanish, and other programs at top-ranked universities. They have gotten jobs in such careers as:

- Companies with business interests in Latin America (for example, a student hired right after graduation into a mid-level management position at a Michigan firm with a branch in Brazil)
- Public Health (for example, a career at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
- Public Planning (for example, the Planning Director for a Michigan township, and a tenants rights advocate working with Latinos in California)
- Law (for example, an environmental lawyer in Pennsylvania and a civil rights lawyer in South Carolina)
- U.S. Foreign Service (for example, an internist at a U.S. embassy in South America who is poised to begin a diplomatic career)
- Teaching, from elementary grades through college

- Journalism, museums, web design, and other careers

How do I sign up?

Please contact David Frye, the LACS Undergraduate Advisor, at 647-0844, or send me an email to: dfrye@umich.edu.