

**JMS Special Topics - 04:567:473 - Spring 2019 Syllabus**  
**MEDIA AND STRUGGLES FOR DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

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**Course Description:**

This 10-day [3 credit] course takes students to Guatemala to study the role of media in historic and contemporary struggles for democracy. There are five 3-hour meetings on RU campus before we travel to Guatemala. Students will visit the capital of Guatemala City; the 16<sup>th</sup> century colonial town of Antigua (a UNESCO World Heritage site), the lakeside town of Panajachel and several Mayan villages. The class will meet with journalists, human rights activists, Indigenous rights associations, women's collectives and other community groups. We will visit news agencies, community radio and TV stations, the office of the country's first and only feminist magazine and radio station, and related museums and historic sites. Through readings, films, lectures, and site visits, students will learn about the regional effects of colonization, US military intervention and neoliberal economic policies in the Central American region, as well as about the role of media in local struggles for political autonomy, human rights and democracy. Because this class travels *after* graduation, "T" grades will appear on spring transcripts until travel is completed, final projects are submitted, and final grades are added to transcripts. Seniors enrolled in this course can still participate in the graduation ceremony.

**Travel Dates:** May 20 - May 29, 2019

**RU meeting dates** on **Thursdays 2:50 - 5:50 on April 4, 11, 18, 25 & May 2** - SC&I room 114B

**Readings:**

All readings are on the Canvas course website. To access the website, go to Canvas (<https://tlt.rutgers.edu/canvas>) and login with your Net ID. The course name appears as: 04:567:473. To resolve any problems with Canvas, please contact Canvas directly at: (877) 361-1134 (available 24/7/365) or email: [help@canvas.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@canvas.rutgers.edu); or [Canvas Help Desk Live Chat](#)

**Requirements:**

Mandatory participation in 5 on-campus class meetings and 10-day field experience in Guatemala. Scheduled Facebook postings on course FB page are required (see details below). Students will have weekly on-campus quizzes and a final essay assignment (due two weeks after returning from Guatemala) in which they will produce a journalistic 1500-word article or video piece about what they learned in the course. This should NOT be an overview of everything you did in Guatemala but, instead, a vivid description of one transformative experience or observation, one amazing person you met, or one distinctive phenomenon you noticed (i.e. income inequality; collectivism among Mayan communities; modern-day aspects of colonialism, etc.) The idea is to provide readers with a detailed but concise portrayal of something important that you learned on the trip and feel others should know about. The best articles will be submitted for publication in the Dept. of Journalism and Media Studies 2019 Fall edition of its online magazine *Kairos*. For examples of previously published student articles in *Kairos*, see: <http://kairosmagazine.rutgers.edu/category/fall-2016/guatemala/>

**Learning objectives:**

- Understand the role of journalism in developing countries (using Guatemala as a case study) and the powerful historical influence of US government and media institutions on Guatemala's journalistic media and politics;
- Understand the constraints, risks and dangers faced by journalists and grassroots activists in Guatemala and other parts of Central America
- Learn the history and modern legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism in Central America and their impact on the functioning of democracy
- Gain insight into the root causes of poverty in the region and the push factors of immigration from Central America to the USA
- Learn to select a compelling essay topic and write an article for future publication or portfolio, educating the public about Guatemala

**Grading:** Campus classes: **25%**; Quizzes: **25%**; Participation/Attendance in Guatemala; **25%** Facebook Posts: **5%**; Final Project: **20%**

**A** = 100-90;      **B+** = 89-85;      **B** = 84-80;      **C+** = 79-75;      **C** = 74-70;      **D** = 69-60;      **F** = 59 and below

## Grading of the final essay/article

- A** = Excellent! The work is publishable with only minor changes.
- B+** = Well-written, with appropriate use of facts and sources. The article may need additional material, but is free of factual errors and has no more than three grammar or punctuation errors.
- B** = Generally good work. Solid writing, but the lead needs work and the story may need more research and detail.
- C+** = Acceptable. Awkward phrasing and numerous syntax, grammar or punctuation errors that distract from the article's strengths.
- C** = Average. Multiple organizational, writing and/or reporting problems. Contains factual errors or insufficient information. Many spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Unimaginative or trite content.
- D** = Poor work. Shows minimal effort.
- F** = Completely unacceptable.

### \*\*\* Rules during our time in Guatemala:

1. When not with the professor, program participants must always travel in the company of at least one other program participant, with larger groups encouraged at night. Each person will have a "buddy." We are all responsible for making sure that every person in our program always has someone to accompany him/her when they have to go somewhere. Make sure that the professor or TA knows where you are at all times.
2. All program participants are required to behave in a mature and appropriate way at all times, never forgetting that they are representatives of Rutgers University and the United States of America while traveling with this course. This includes dressing professionally when we visit media offices and meet guest speakers (no shorts, flip flops etc.). Any program participant engaging in disruptive, damaging, or illegal behavior of any kind may be sent home immediately. This includes use of illegal drugs and the excessive use of alcohol that causes disruption to our program, such as lateness or absence from class, or creates other problems or disruptions for the participant's roommate or classmates.
3. Any student sent home for disciplinary reasons will automatically receive an "F" in the course.

## COURSE READING AND VIEWING SCHEDULE:

### Week 1 April 4

Historical and political overview of the Central American region; Discussion of Monroe Doctrine and US intervention

Discussion of human rights issues facing journalists in Central America

Screening: *La Voz Del Pueblo* (18 min.) and discussion of challenges facing journalists in the region  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2ZQx34dGZ0> [Ignatian solidarity network]

This week read:

- \*\*\* *Guatemala: The Essential Guide to Customs and Culture* (2015), pp. 8-51
- Guatemala's tax system (quick 2-page synopsis).
- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-guatemala-family-planning-clashes-with-religion-tradition> (PBS clip on family planning 10 min.)  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/world/americas/guatemala-shelter-fire-trial.html> (Story of major sexual abuse case in Guatemala)
- Guatemalan Rebeca Lane is Behind Central America's new Feminist Hip Hop (article)
- Some Reasons for High Rates of Violence against Women in Guatemala (add two 1-page articles from optional to week 1)
- See BBC Guatemala Timeline: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19636725>
- See map of Guatemala & Country Overview: <https://www.usaid.gov/guatemala/overview>
- Optional article about Mayan hip hop in poor, rural areas of Guatemala as a form of expression and political organizing

### Week 2 April 11 Quiz on last week's readings

Discussion of Guatemalan History and Politics (discussion of the causes and aftermath of the 36-year civil war in Guatemala – 1960-1996)

In class screening: *When the Mountains Tremble* and discussion of film. (1 hour 23 minutes) followed by discussion

This week read:

- Selection from *Bitter Fruit: The untold story of the US Coup in Guatemala* "The United Fruit Company"
- NPR Podcast *What Happened at Dos Erres*: <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/465/what-happened-at-dos-erres>
- PBS New Hour video on forensic evidence being uncovered to prove that Guatemalan genocide occurred (14 min.)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOIJ1-7LDQs>
- Selections from *I Rigoberta Menchu*, "Introduction," and "An eight-year-old agricultural worker," pp. 33-37.
- Guatemala Fact sheets on: Land Reform; Human Rights; Femicide; Militarization; Gangs (each listed separately in Canvas)
- Fact sheet on Guatemala: <http://www.infoplease.com/country/guatemala.html> (read all sections)
- Guatemala Human Rights Commission: <http://www.ghrc-usa.org/resources/fast-facts/> (read all fact sheets)

### Week 3 APRIL 18 Quiz on last week's readings

Discussion of School of the Americas; US News coverage of Central America

This week read:

- *The Guatemala Reader* (Duke 2011) - "Intent to destroy," pp. 361-365 and "Thunder in the city," p. 367-372
- *The Guatemala Reader*: "Acts of genocide," pp. 386-394 & "Arbitrary power and sexual violence," pp. 405-410
- The Case of Myrna Mack (optional)
- Guatemalan Dictator Convicted of Genocide dies at 91: (article) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/obituaries/efrain-rios-montt-guatemala-dead.html>
- Ghosts of Guatemala's Past (article), *The New York Times*
- An Apology for Guatemalan Coup, 57 Years Later, *The New York Times*

In class screening:

*School of the Americas* – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc\\_jqO9kBJY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc_jqO9kBJY) (13 minutes - produced by SOA Watch - 1995)

Screening: [https://www.democracynow.org/2016/1/8/18\\_ex\\_military\\_guatemalan\\_leaders\\_arrested](https://www.democracynow.org/2016/1/8/18_ex_military_guatemalan_leaders_arrested) (14 min. from 37:41 to 51:32)

Screening: *Justice For My Sister* (about the high rate of femicide in Guatemala and the difficulties of prosecuting those responsible) 53 min. [www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir\\_04\\_567\\_473\\_01\\_template\\_spr19.html](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir_04_567_473_01_template_spr19.html)

### Week 4 APRIL 25 Quiz on the readings

In class screening: *Mother Tongue* (15 min.) (Documentary about translating genocide documentary into Mayan languages)

In-class screening of *El Norte* and discussion of Central American immigration to US (push factors/pull factors)

This week read:

- *Guatemalan Reader*: "A good place to commit murder," p. 473-479; "Transnationalism and Maya Dress," p. 523-531
- Guatemalan Committee to Protect Journalists: Radio Journalist Murdered in Guatemala (article)
- Guatemala's Journalists Fear for Safety as Press Killings Spread (article)
- Rising Attacks against journalists in Guatemala cause concern. Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas (article)
- Plaza Pública aims to challenge and improve Guatemala's journalistic culture. NiemanLab. (We will visit Plaza Pública in Guatemala)
- The Secrets in Guatemala's Bones: Exhuming the victims of a "dirty" civil war. *The New York Times*. (optional article)

### Week 5 May 2 - Quiz on last week's readings

Discussion of Guatemalan cultural norms and behavior expectations when in Guatemala

Orientation about travel safety and health precautions to take in developing countries and important coordinating information for the trip. (Stephanie La Cava from the Rutgers Center for Global Education will share important information)

In class screening: *Ixcanul - Volcano* (2015) and discussion of rural Mayan villages, Guatemalan plantation system, traditional gender roles, linguistic isolation, lack of educational opportunities in remote villages

### **Suggested Supplemental Material**

To get the most out of your time in Guatemala, it would highly benefit you to watch some of these award-winning films or read these books before we travel. All are available in the RU Library and most have viewing links below. Some are also available free on YouTube.

#### **Books:**

*I Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (Verso: 1984)  
*Bitter Fruit: The untold story of the US Coup in Guatemala*, Schlesinger & Kinzer (Doubleday: 1982)  
*The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture Politics* - Grandin, Levenson & Oglesby Eds. (Duke: 2011)  
*Talons of the Eagle*, by Peter Smith (Oxford University Press: 1996)

#### **Films:**

Slideshow of historic photos of Guatemala: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b\\_pUABlzybY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_pUABlzybY)

*Harvest of Empire* (about history of US political and military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEAJWs3GiJU>

*Living on One Dollar a Day* (2013): US college students go to Guatemala to live on \$1.00 per day, as most rural Guatemalans do  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3gF3DPTCfA&annotation\\_id=annotation\\_1421321&feature=iv&src\\_vid=tmQujWTMuC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3gF3DPTCfA&annotation_id=annotation_1421321&feature=iv&src_vid=tmQujWTMuC8)

*Bananas: On Trial for Malice* (2009) directed by Fredrik Gertten <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYcaT9l1rbQ>

*Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011) directed by Pamela Yates

*Justice for My Sister* (2012) directed by Kimberly Bautista: (we will watch this in class)  
[www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir\\_04\\_567\\_473\\_01\\_template\\_spr19.html](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir_04_567_473_01_template_spr19.html)

*Romero* (1989) watch it at: [www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir\\_04\\_567\\_473\\_01\\_template\\_spr19.html](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir_04_567_473_01_template_spr19.html)

(Excellent film illustrating the power of Central American landowners and their connections with the military. Although this film is about El Salvador, the dynamics are very similar to this history of Guatemala. There are also many similarities to historic situations of inequality in Nicaragua and Honduras. All of these countries had similar situations of landed elites and wealthy business owners who supported militaries that for decades repressed popular movements struggling for democracy (and are basically still repressing progressive social movement activists today).

*La Camioneta: The journey of one American school bus* (2012), directed by Mark Kendall  
[www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir\\_04\\_567\\_473\\_01\\_template\\_spr19.html](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/eres/spr19/marchir_04_567_473_01_template_spr19.html)

*La Violencia* (2015) directed by Til Frohlich:  
<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/52884/La-Violencia---The-untold-truths-of-Guatemala>

*Maria's Story: Love and Survival in El Salvador's Civil War* (1991) Produced by Pamela Cohen & Catherine Ryan  
[https://rutgers.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=asp\\_summonAcademicVideoOnlinePremiumUnitedStatesASP2265357\\_vast&context=PC&vid=01RUT\\_INST:01RUT&lang=en&search\\_scope=MyInst\\_and\\_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central](https://rutgers.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=asp_summonAcademicVideoOnlinePremiumUnitedStatesASP2265357_vast&context=PC&vid=01RUT_INST:01RUT&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central)

*Nicaragua: A Nation's Right to Survive* (1983). This is a CNN documentary about the School of the Americas (SOA)  
 Available at: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/nicaragua-a-nations-right-to-survive/>

Short film about El Salvador: *La Coordinadora* by Avi Lewis & Naomi Klein. <https://vimeo.com/209492134> password: bajalempa

*El Norte* (film about Guatemala) by Greg Nava: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hLrGnpEKdU&t=5816s> (will be shown in class)

**Songs:**

Written by Venezuelan band Los Guaraguao (1973), *Casas de Carton*, speaks of the poverty throughout Latin America. [cover version by Oscar Chavez with photos and lyrics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08h0KDmY-0g>]

Written by Panamanian salsa star Ruben Blades, *Homenaje a Monseñor Romero/ El padre Antonio y su monaguillo Andres* (1984) speaks of the courage of El Salvador's Arch Bishop Oscar Romero, who spoke out publicly against the Salvadoran military and was gunned down while giving Mass. (See hand-out of English translation)

Traditional Marimba Music & photos of Guatemala: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cK74uCpNGA>

**SCHEDULE FOR FACEBOOK POSTS**

As part of the course requirements, students must write short Facebook posts about their experiences. On the day before you leave the US, every student will do 1 Facebook post to the official course Facebook page, sharing your thoughts, excitement and expectations about the trip. This can be a post of you at home packing your suitcase or saying good-bye to family/friends, or it can be you checking in at the airport or some other pre-departure activity. The post should include a photo that conveys a moment of your life before leaving for Guatemala.

While in Guatemala, 3-4 students will post to the official course website each day, according to the schedule below. Each student will do 3 posts while in Guatemala. All posts **must be shown to the professor first** for approval **before being posted** (to make sure that the spelling of towns, institutions, people's names, and factual information is correct). Each student has been assigned a number based on the alphabetical order of their last name (please see list below). Please do your posts on the dates corresponding to your number.

The following students will post on the course Facebook Page on these dates:

May 19: Everyone posts a pre-trip reflection

May 20 : Students 1, 2, 3

May 21 Students 4, 5, 6

May 22: Students 7, 8, 9

May 23: Students 10, 11, 1

May 24: Students 2, 3, 4,

May 25: Students 5, 6, 7

May 26: Students 8, 9, 10

May 27: Students 11, 1, 2, 3

May 28: Students 4, 5, 6, 7

May 29: Students 8, 9, 10, 11

May 30: Everyone post a post-trip final reflection