

## The University of Denver

### **Project El Salvador: Transition to Democracy Winter Interterm 2008 ABRD 3514, 2:00-5:00pm 5 Credit Hours Sturm Hall 376**

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#### **Course Description**

Project El Salvador, like all of DU's International Service Learning projects, will combine academic study at the University of Denver with further academic study and service work in-country. Community service in El Salvador will offer the students a way to experience daily life there that is not focused on tourism. While in Denver, before leaving for El Salvador, **students will attend a retreat, as well as four pre-departure class sessions in the fall (3 hours/day), and a re-entry seminar in January.** All this will be designed to provide students with background on the history and culture of El Salvador, service learning principles, and general orientation related to the service work and other activities to take place in El Salvador. It is our goal that the service experience will deepen and expand the students' understanding of Salvadoran culture while at the same time serves the needs of the local communities in a collaborative manner. While in El Salvador, students will perform at least 60 hours of volunteer service at a humanitarian aid agency or educational institution, attend lectures by local experts and faculty, hear from community guest speakers, visit sites of cultural interest, and complete a series of writing assignments. The program will be based in San Salvador, with opportunities to explore and understand life in smaller, rural communities as well.

Project El Salvador will provide immersion experience in Salvadoran society, so that learning will take place in an intense, constant, and direct manner. Students will use their critical skills while studying texts, documentaries and films that will help them better understand the political history of El Salvador and its implications for present and future generations.

This program will provide students with the opportunity to work with rural communities, as they strive to meet both their most immediate needs and construct long-term sustainable solutions to the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and the lack of social justice. Students will be able to explore and evaluate some of the approaches that have been adopted or that are under consideration for promoting democracy and development in El Salvador and, through volunteer service, to contribute to a sustainable development project. Through analytical essays, reflective journal writing, and group discussion students will be able to apply academic knowledge and theories to actual experiences in El Salvador, focusing on a variety of themes such as education, development issues, environmental problems, gender roles, human rights, politics and conflict resolution. Specifically, Project El Salvador will provide students with an unparalleled opportunity to actively observe and participate in one developing nation's efforts to balance development and social and political concerns.

The preparation class for El Salvador is going to be taught in English (unless all the students taking the class are fluent in Spanish), so it would not count towards the Major or Minor in Spanish. The student's ability to speak the language is not required to apply to this program. However, some knowledge of Spanish is highly recommended.

In addition, students will benefit from a collaborative arrangement between the University of Denver and the *Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"*. The Central American University (UCA) is a Jesuit-run private university about the same size as DU. This University is one of the most prestigious universities in Central America. The faculty and staff from the Department of Literatures, Communication and Journalism will participate in the coordination of lectures in El Salvador.

### **Course Goals**

This course is an introduction to El Salvador, its history and its people. The class is designed as a tool to help the students to become familiar with the country and be ready for the everyday challenges of living in a new and foreign environment, define their learning and personal goals and the potential outcomes of their experience, and enter in a process of self knowledge and development through journal writing.

The main goals are:

- To gain cultural awareness and knowledge of the rich and polemical history of El Salvador, from pre-Columbian cultures to the twenty first-century.
- To gain a basic understanding of the various ways in which politics and economics interact in the region.
- To identify some of the most important factors in the political economic processes in the region; and to understand some of the forces which limit economic and political options.
- To examine the positive and negative impacts of globalization on a small, developing nation and to cultivate an understanding of the challenges that developing countries face.
- To develop skills in communicating and working with people from different cultures.

- To engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial service.
- To make connections between the pre-departure course academic content, the cultural experience, and whatever service project or community-based research project the students undertake.

### **Course Outcomes**

- Students will improve their disciplinary knowledge as a direct result of their community experience.
- Students will engage in effective dialogue about local and/or global issues with individuals and groups.
- Students will develop the capacity for critical thinking and reflective judgment.
- Students will improve their ability to communicate with Spanish-speakers.
- Students will have the opportunity to experience and appreciate the beauty, wealth, and hospitality of El Salvador.
- Participants will forge friendships, and cross cultural competences.

### **Course Requirements**

1. **Retreat:** While in Denver, all students are required to attend a retreat on October 11th. Retreat focus is on team building, intercultural communication and beginning discussion on Salvadoran culture.

2. **Pre-Departure Course and Pre-Departure Reflective Paper:** Before leaving for El Salvador, students will attend four pre-departure courses. They will prepare a reflective paper (minimum of 4 pages) demonstrating an understanding of the basic pattern of social, economic, and political problems that have persisted in this country since the colonial era and grown in intensity during the twentieth century, while also addressing the particular challenges facing today's El Salvador.

3. **Journal:** Students will keep a journal starting the first time we gather for our retreat and continuing through the experience in El Salvador. Through the exercise of writing, the class will stress the most important component of the travel experience: reflection. Students will keep a journal that addresses the following themes: Volunteer placement, self-evaluation, and critical reflection/analysis. Four of these journal entries will be posted online in our website.

4. **Service:** Each student will perform approximately 60 hours of volunteer service in El Salvador (Círculo Solidario: [www.circulosolidariosv.org/](http://www.circulosolidariosv.org/) or <http://www.circulosolidario.org/>) The Program Coordinator, Michelle Doherty, will assist students during their volunteer service. This service will provide a unique insight into various aspects of Salvadoran society. Working with local organizations and volunteering in community centers, clinics, and public schools will allow DU students to link their actual experiences in El Salvador to the academic components of the pre-departure course. The students will be able to integrate rigorous academic work with real-life experiences and vice versa. Service in El Salvador will provide cross-cultural educational opportunities to foster critical analysis of local and global conditions so that learning will take place in the context of the community, leading to a more just and sustainable world.

**5. Reflection Sessions:** The subject matter of these sessions will interconnect with that of the Field-Based Journal, with students coming together two times per week (8 sessions total) to reflect upon and to inform the group about experiences and insights gained in the previous week.

**6. Lectures and Guest Speakers:** Local experts will conduct lectures in El Salvador. In addition, students will hear from a number of guest speakers, including community members and representatives of NGOs, government officials and the private sector. Students will be expected to attend the lectures, take notes, participate in the discussions and ask questions. The schedule of lectures and speakers has yet to be determined.

**7. Excursions:** In addition to the fieldwork that students will do during their volunteer service, they will have the opportunity to visit a number of sites of cultural interest. Possible excursions include:

- Visit to a Maya Archeological Site, Joya de Cerén. “Cerén is an agricultural village in El Salvador that was buried in ash nearly fourteen centuries ago. Registered as a UN Heritage site, Cerén has been called the 'Pompeii of the New World.' Discovered in 1976 by Payson D. Sheets, an anthropology professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and under continuous excavation and study since, Cerén offers exciting opportunities to study household archaeology.” (<http://ceren.colorado.edu>)
- Visit to Ruinas del Tazumal. The Mayan ruins of Tazumal, considered the most important and best preserved in El Salvador, are in the town of Chalchuapa. In the Quiché language the name Tazumal means 'pyramid where the victims were burned'.
- Visit to Fair Trade coffee cooperatives. One of these cooperatives is located in Las Lajas, in the Municipality of Coatepeque. Fair Trade Certified coffee is a socially and environmentally responsible way to conduct trade between developed and developing countries.
- Visit to Ciudad Segundo Montes. This is a rural community located in the north part of the province of Morazán, along the border with Honduras. Named after Dr. Segundo Montes, a Jesuit priest and scholar, murdered in 1989 by the Salvadoran Armed Forces.

Students will also have some scheduled “down time.” They can choose to relax on the beach or spend time in the natural surroundings of this tiny country, but they are primarily in El Salvador to work and learn. Grades will be lowered if students fail to participate in mandatory activities.

**8. Final Project:** Each student will assemble a polished portfolio of his or her experiences in El Salvador. The final project will synthesize the student’s lived experience with the assigned readings, lectures and independent research and may include photographs, artwork, etc. Students are to choose a focus for their final project that interests them and they are to draw on their experience, readings, lectures and research in discussing this topic/theme. In addition students must include personal reflection on their experience in El Salvador. **The minimum length is 15 pages not including title page, table of contents and bibliography.** Everything should be typed (Times News Roman 12 pt.), double-spaced text with one inch margins all the way around, numbered pages, beginning with page 2, and presented in a spiral-bound notebook or a 3-ring binder. Document all statements, ideas, and arguments that are not your own. Paraphrasing requires citing the original source. Feel free to be creative in presenting your materials (e.g., add photos, maps, graphs). Use either APA or MLA style for the bibliography.

This is to be an analytical exploration of a topic. The student is expected to present and develop an argument supported by research.

- **Title page with your name, course title, instructor's name, and date**
- **Table of contents**
- **Introduction to El Salvador based on seminar readings, guest lectures, etc.**
- **Description and analysis of the effectiveness of the agency where students served, drawing in part on the self-evaluations of their service**
- **Critical discussion/analysis of a topic on an aspect of Salvadoran society**
- **Personal reflection and conclusion**
- **Bibliography of written sources**

**9. Re-entry seminar at the International House:** All students will be required to attend a re-entry seminar in January 2009. **Date TBA.**

### **Grading Policy**

Grades and course credit will be awarded only after all work in El Salvador and the written project have been completed. Attendance to and full participation in all scheduled activities related to the program, including the retreat weekend, Friday sessions, volunteer placements assignments and lectures in El Salvador, as well as a January re-entry seminar is mandatory. **The portfolio will be due Thursday January 15, 2009.** Criteria for evaluating the portfolio: (1) evidence of research; (2) quality of analyses; (3) ability to integrate service experience with academic learning. Each student's final grade will be based on the following percentages:

Attendance & Participation	20%
Reflective Paper	20%
Journal	20%
Final Project	40%

### **Grading Scale:**

A: 93-100	A- : 90-92	
B+ : 87-89	B: 83-86	B- : 80-82
C+ : 77-79	C: 73-76	C- : 70-72
D+ : 67-69	D: 63-66	D- : 60-62

### **Honor Code:**

The Honor Code defines plagiarism as "representation of another's work or ideas a one's own in academic submission." Plagiarism as well as other forms of cheating is a form of academic dishonesty and disciplinary action will be taken on suspected cases of plagiarism and other academically dishonest acts. Students are expected to adhere to the university's honor code. Please read it for information and clarification of expectations

(<http://www.du.edu/honorcode/statement.htm>)

## Films, Video documentaries

Most films and documentaries will be shown during class sessions or posted in Blackboard.

- **Voces Inocentes (2004)**. Directed by Luis Mandoki. Set in the mid 1980s El Salvador, in the midst of the country's civil war, a young boy must decide between enlisting in the army or join up with guerrillas. The film depicts the story of Chava, an 11 year-old boy, whose main concern is that as soon as he turns 12 he will be recruited by the Military to fight the Guerrillas. Through his eyes, we see the atrocities that are brought upon his family, friends and his own life.
- **School of Assassins (1995)**. Maryknoll World Productions. Documentary narrated by Susan Sarandon. Describes the military assistance and training that the United States provides to Latin American countries at the U.S. Army School of the Americas. All too often the graduates of the school have used their training in attacks against their own people. Human rights advocates would like to see the school closed.
- **Romero (1989)**. Directed by John Duigan. This excellent drama depicts the last three years in the life of Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran bishop who became archbishop in 1977 and was assassinated on March 24, 1980, in San Salvador's Divine Providence Hospital Chapel for opposing the repression in El Salvador.
- **Salvador (1986)**. Directed by Oliver Stone. A powerful, reckless and brutally moving depiction of the civil war in El Salvador in 1980 (filmed in Mexico). It was co-scripted with the director by American photojournalist Richard Boyle, whose story the film is based on. Though based on true events, Oliver Stone chooses to fictionalize events at will and is noticeably more disturbed by right-wing government than left-wing guerrilla atrocities.
- **Deadline: San Salvador (1986)**. Narrated by Robert Foxworth. A stirring document of the May 1986 protest staged by 80,000 Salvadorans against the human rights violations administered by their country. The protesters bravely defy government forces to get their point across in this fascinating political film.
- **El Salvador: Another Vietnam (1981)**. Directed by Gleen Silber and Teté Vasconcellos. This political documentary illustrates the turbulent history of El Salvador from the 1920s-1970s, and the role of the U.S. government in that history. As the title suggests, the presence of U.S. military advisors in a military dictatorship fighting guerrilla factions that are labeled communist is highly reminiscent of the beginnings of the U.S. escalation of the war in Vietnam. Although El Salvador is a dot on the map compared to the much-larger Vietnam, the potential for escalation and/or the deaths of American soldiers was not discounted. Material for the documentary came from European and North American sources, historical footage, and interviews with dissidents -- some subsequently murdered.

## Internet Resources

Articles and News:

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin\\_america/jan-june99/latin\\_3-10.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/jan-june99/latin_3-10.html)

<http://www.library.yale.edu/Internet/latinamericanews.html>

<http://info.lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/news/> (University of Texas, Austin)

General Sites:

<http://lanic.utexas.edu>

<http://lal.tulane.edu> (Tulane University)

<http://ladb.unm.edu/www/retanet> (University of New Mexico)

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/rrs/selector/laselect.html> (University of

Michigan)

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Libweb/mex.html> (Libraries on the Web)

<http://www.globalissues.org>

Human Rights:

<http://www.umn.edu/humanrts> (University of Minnesota)  
<http://www.amnesty.org> (Amnesty International)  
<http://www.lchr.org/> (Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights)  
<http://www.cispes.org/english/index.html> (CISPES)  
<http://www.gwu.edu/%7EEnsarchiv/nsa/publications/elsalvador2/>  
<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/enemiesofwar/>  
<http://www.uca.edu.sv/publica/idhuca/> (IDHUCA)  
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Danner/1993/truthelmoz01.html>  
[http://www.wola.org/central\\_america/salvador/salvador\\_countrypage.html](http://www.wola.org/central_america/salvador/salvador_countrypage.html)

Maps:

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map\\_collection/americas.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/americas.html)  
<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/47/383.html>

Politics:

<http://www.latinworld.com/government>  
<http://www.georgetown.edu/LatAmerPolitical/home.html>  
[http://www.usip.org/library/pa/el\\_salvador/pa\\_el\\_salvador.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/el_salvador/pa_el_salvador.html)

History:

<http://international.loc.gov/intldl/intldlhome.html>  
<http://www.countryreports.org/history/elhist.htm> (History of El Salvador)

Helpful websites:

The student's ability to speak Spanish will not be required to succeed in this class. However, there are many helpful websites that can be used for extra practice of grammar concepts: <http://www.studyspanish.com>; <http://mld.ursinus.edu/~jarana/ejercicios>; <http://colby.edu/personal/bknelson/grammar.html>; <http://www.conjugemos.com> (for verb conjugation practice only).

### **Course Schedule & Reading Assignments**

Students should **complete all assigned readings prior to class**. The following readings should be completed in addition to any homework that the instructor may assign on any given day. For those with no prior knowledge of Salvadoran culture, history and politics, I highly recommend two books as background reading materials (not required):

- Kevin Murray and Tom Barry. *Inside El Salvador*. Albuquerque, NM: Interhemispheric Resource Center, 1995.
- Roy C. Boland. *Culture and Customs of El Salvador*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001.

**October 11** **Retreat at the I-House** to provide an opportunity for students and faculty to get to know each other and engage in team-building activities.

**October 17** **Topic:** Course Introduction and Resources on El Salvador: Geography, historical background, cultural and social patterns.

**Required Readings:**

- Roy C. Boland. "From the Kingdom of Cuscatlán to the Republic of El Salvador," in *Culture and Customs of El Salvador* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001): 1-37.

- Tommie Sue Montgomery. “The Roots of Revolution,” in *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and evolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982): 27-53.

**October 24** **Topic:** The Role of the Catholic Church: Examine the role of religion, both past and present in creating and alleviating social injustice in El Salvador.

**Required Readings:**

- *The Salvadorian Church in the 20th century* from Proceso, No.696, Feb. 1996. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/47/072.html>
- Tommie Sue Montgomery, “The Church,” in *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995): 81-99.

**October 31** **Topic:** Democratization processes: Analyze the role played by international actors in the agenda setting of key contemporary social and economic policies. Analyze the degree to which social groups have participated in the formulation and implementation of development policies.

**Required Readings:**

- Philip Williams and Knut Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador’s Transition to Democracy*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997): Chapters 5-6.
- Thomas Buergenthal, “The United Nations Truth Commission for El Salvador,” *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*, Neil Kritz, ed., 1995. Vol.3

**November 07** **Topic:** The dynamics of youth gangs and violence in El Salvador, its effects on poor communities, and the development of appropriate multisectoral strategies for violence reduction that would in turn help promote peace and development in the region.

**Required Readings:**

- Manfred Liebel. “The Identity and Culture of Central American Youth Gangs.” in *Revista Envío*, No. 252, Central American University (UCA), Managua, Nicaragua, July 2002.
- USAID, “Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment: Annex 1: El Salvador Profile,” April 2006.