

1 Introduction to the Land and Its People

Latin America is a vast, geographically and culturally diverse region stretching from the southern border of the United States to Puerto Toro at the tip of Chile, the southernmost town of the planet. Encompassing over 8 million square miles, the 20 countries that make up Latin America are home to an estimated 550 million people who converse in at least five European-based languages and six or more main indigenous languages, plus African Creole and hundreds of smaller language groups.

Historians disagree over the origin of the name “Latin America.” Some contend that geographers in the sixteenth century gave the name “Latin America” to the new lands colonized by Spain and Portugal in reference to the Latin-based languages imposed on indigenous people and imported African slaves in the newly acquired territories. More recently, others have argued that the name originated in France in the 1860s under the reign of Napoleon III, as a result of that country’s short-lived attempt to fold all the Latin-language-derived countries of the Americas into a neocolonial empire. Although other European powers (Britain, Holland, and Denmark) colonized parts of the Americas, the term “Latin America” generally refers to those territories in which the main spoken language is Spanish or Portuguese: Mexico, most of Central and South America, and the Caribbean islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. The former French possessions of Haiti and other islands of the Caribbean, French Guiana on the South American continent, and even Quebec in Canada, could be included in a broadened definition of Latin America. However, this book defines Latin America as the region that fell under Spanish and Portuguese domination beginning in the late fifteenth and into the mid-sixteenth centuries. The definition also encompasses other Caribbean and South American countries such as Haiti and Jamaica among others, since events in those areas are important to our historical narrative. This definition follows the practice of scholars in recent years, who have generally defined Latin America and the Caribbean as a socially and economically interrelated entity, no matter what language or culture predominates.

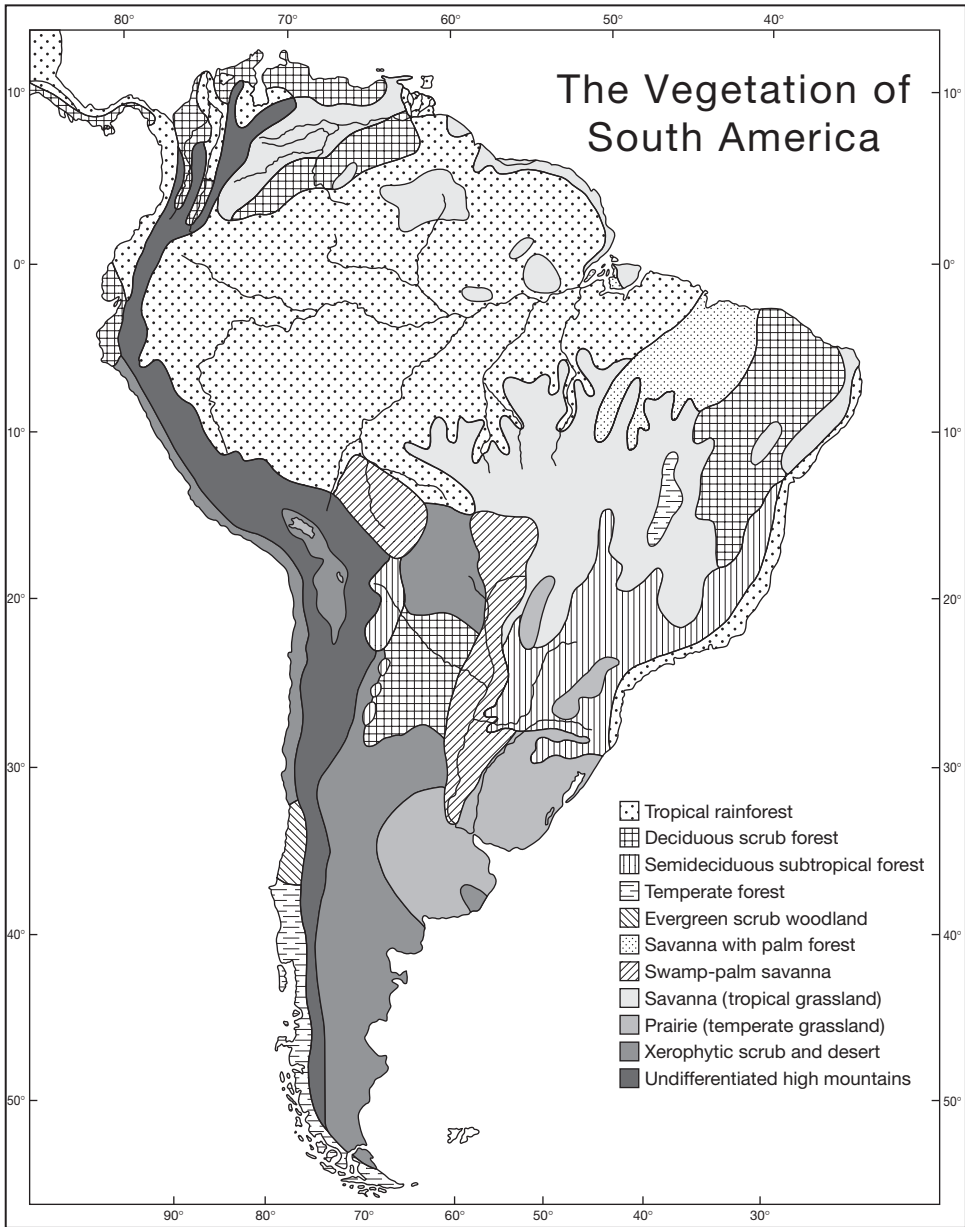
Geography

Latin America boasts some of the largest cities in the world, including four of the top 20: Mexico City, São Paulo (Brazil), Bogotá (Colombia) and Lima (Peru). When defined by greater metropolitan area – the city plus outskirts – Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) join the list of the world’s megacities, the term for a metropolis of more than 10 million people. Population figures, however, are controversial since most of these gigantic urban centers include, in addition to the housed and settled population, transitory masses of destitute migrants living in makeshift dwellings or in the open air. It is hard for census takers and demographers to obtain an accurate count under those circumstances.

Not only does Latin America have some of the largest population centers in the world, but its countryside, jungles, mountains, and coastlines are major geographical and topographical landmarks (see Map 1.1). The 2-million-square-mile Amazon Basin is the largest rainforest in the world. Spanning the far north of Brazil, stretching into Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname, and Venezuela, it is home for approximately 15 percent of all living species on the planet. South and to the east of the Amazon Basin in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso lays the Pantanal, the world’s largest wetlands. Other superlatives include the highest mountain range of the Americas (the Andes) that stretches nearly the entire length of the continent; second in the world to the Himalayas of Asia in height, the Andes are much longer, geologically younger, and very seismically active. The Andean peak Aconcagua in Chile is the highest mountain in the Americas, which at 22,834 ft. exceeds Dinali (Mt. McKinley) in Alaska by over 2,000 ft. The Atacama Desert, spanning Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, is the driest place on earth and the largest depository of sodium nitrates on the planet. Elsewhere in the Andean region is Lake Titicaca, the most elevated navigable body of water in the world. This huge lake forms the boundary between Peru and Bolivia, and the Bolivian city of La Paz is the world’s highest-altitude capital city. Angel Falls in Venezuela is the highest waterfall in the world; at 3,212 ft. it is almost 20 times higher than Niagara Falls. Angel Falls connects through tributaries to the world’s largest river (in volume), the Amazon. In its 25,000 miles of navigable water, this mighty “River Sea,” as the Amazon River is called, contains 16 percent of the world’s river water and 20 percent of the fresh water on Earth.

People

The sheer diversity of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean has made the region extremely interesting culturally, but has also affected the level of economic and political equality. Latin America is exceedingly diverse, a place where the interaction, cross-fertilization, mutation, interpenetration, and reinvention of cultures from Europe, Asia, Africa, and indigenous America has produced a lively and rich set of traditions in music, art, literature, religion, sport, dance, and political and economic



Map 1.1 The vegetation of South America. (Courtesy Cathryn L. Lombardi and John V. Lombardi, *Latin American History: A Teaching Atlas*, ca. 1983. By permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.)

trends. Bolivia, for example, elected an indigenous president in 2005 who was a former coca leaf farmer. President Evo Morales won easily with the backing of poor and indigenous Bolivians but has met hostility from wealthy and middle-class citizens who benefited from the country's natural gas exports and follow more "Western" traditions. Thus ethnic and racial strife has accompanied synthesis and cultural enrichment as cultures continue to confront each other more than 500 years past the original fifteenth-century encounter. (See Map 1.2.)

In Bolivia and Peru people who trace their ethnicity back to the pre-Columbian era constitute the majority, while in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela people of mixed European and indigenous ancestry, known as mestizos, constitute the majority. Africans were imported as slaves from the sixteenth until the mid-nineteenth centuries, and their descendants still comprise over half of the population in many areas. People in the Caribbean islands of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, as well as in many South American nations, especially Brazil, are descendants of a mixture of Africans and Europeans, called mulattos or Afro-descendant, a more appropriate term that refers to heritage rather than race. Blacks are in the majority in Haiti and in many of the Caribbean nations that were in the hands of the British, Dutch, French, or other colonial powers. Everywhere in Latin America there is evidence of racial mixture, giving rise to the term *casta*, which the Spaniards used to denote any person whose ancestors were from all three major ethnic groups: indigenous, European, and African. Although this has a pejorative connotation in some regions, the creation of such a term suggests that racial mixture in Latin America is so extensive as to make it often awkward, and imprecise, to list each combination.

Large numbers of Europeans immigrated to Latin America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to the majority who came from Spain, Portugal, and Italy, immigrants arrived from France, Germany, Poland, Russia, and the Middle Eastern countries of Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon; a large number of Eastern European and German Jews sought refuge in Latin America both before and in the years immediately after World War II. Many European migrants settled in the Southern Cone countries of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and the southernmost region of Brazil. Japanese also immigrated to Brazil, especially to São Paulo, where they were resettled on coffee plantations and eventually moved into urban areas to form the largest community of Japanese outside Japan. In addition, Japanese moved in large numbers to Peru, while Koreans and Chinese migrated to every part of Latin America. Chinese and East Indians were brought as indentured servants to many of the countries of the Caribbean region beginning in the nineteenth and extending into the twentieth century.

Because race in Latin America was from the earliest days of the arrival of Europeans identified along a continuum from indigenous and black at one end and white Europeans at the other, any discussion of racial categories has been very complicated. By contrast, the US largely enforced a system of bipolar identity inherited from British colonialism, which then solidified in the late nineteenth century after the Civil War. Nonetheless, race everywhere is socially constructed – for example, it is estimated



The Countries of Latin America

Map 1.2 The countries of Latin America. (Courtesy Cathryn L. Lombardi and John V. Lombardi, *Latin American History: A Teaching Atlas*, ca. 1983. By permission of The University of Wisconsin Press.)

Table 1.1 Racial origins of the population of Latin Americans

<i>Identified as</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of total</i>
White	217 million	33.3
Mestizo	165.3 million	31.3
Mulatto	90.3 million	17.3
Indigenous	60.8 million	11.6
Black	24.8 million	4.7
Asian	1.4 million	0.3
Other/Unknown	6.2 million	1.2

(Venezuela no longer tabulates ethnic/racial categories; however, its population is 26,749,000. Applying to this the country's 1998 ratios [mestizo 67%, white 21%, black 10%, indigenous 2%] the yields for the entire region would change slightly: Population 549,552,000; white 33.7%, mestizo 33.3%, mulatto 16.4%, Amerindian or native peoples 11.2%, 5.7%, black 5%, Asian 0.3%, other/unknown 1.1%).
Source: World Factbook, 2007.

that nearly half of those who identify in the US as African American have some white ancestors – and in Latin America race is a conflicted category. Many Latin Americans who identify as white, and are seen as white because of their social status, education, and physical features, might not be considered white in the US and vice versa. There are any number of stories of black South American diplomats who were outraged when they encountered discrimination in Washington DC, not because they objected to racial profiling, but because they considered themselves white. It is estimated that of a total population of 522.8 million in the countries of Latin America, a third define themselves as white; a quarter as mestizo (mixed white and Indian); 17 percent as mulatto/Afro-descendant (mixed white and African); about 12 percent as Indian (with Peru and Bolivia as the only countries with a majority Indian population); five percent as black; less than one percent as Asian; and the remaining as other/unknown (see Table 1.1).

While exact figures are hard to determine, we can draw several conclusions, the most salient of which is that people who are wholly or partially of indigenous, African, and Asian ancestry predominate in Latin America. Certainly no discrimination against a minority should be tolerated anywhere, but in Latin America it bears remembering that the history of discrimination is against the *majority* population, not the minority. Secondly, whereas indigenous people constitute a minority in most countries, people of whole or partial indigenous ancestry comprise the single largest ethnic/racial group in Latin America as a whole.

Economies

Nature has graced Latin America with stunning natural landmarks, but the gains achieved through human interaction are not all positive since huge numbers of its

people are impoverished, while a small group in each country is extremely wealthy. The World Bank calculates that most of the population lacks basic services such as water, sanitation, access to health care and vaccinations, education, and protection from crime. Nearly 25 percent of Latin Americans live on less than US\$2.00 a day. Although Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, and Chile rank as the countries with the greatest inequality, the sheer numbers of poor in Brazil and in Mexico pose some of the greatest challenges to those nations' resources. According to United Nations development reports, lack of access to basic infrastructure serves as a major impediment to anti-poverty initiatives throughout the region.

Historians argue over the source of Latin America's inequality, some tracing it back to the days of European conquest over large indigenous populations and centuries of exploitation of imported African slaves. Others note that Latin American leaders have failed to promote the type of policies for the efficient exploitation of the continent's vast natural resources that would be required to raise the standard of living of the majority of its people. Another group points to the need to improve Latin America's commercial relations with the rest of the world, or to build ties among themselves, as through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which links Canada, the US, and Mexico; the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA); MERCOSUR (called MERCOSUL in English), which includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela; and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), encompassing Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. A few nations, especially Chile and Brazil, have pursued bilateral trade agreements with the US, the European Union, and nations in Asia. Similar initiatives by the Peruvian and Panamanian governments to enter into trade pacts with the US have met with stiff opposition from their local labor unions and farmers.

The debates these agreements have generated do not focus on trade per se, but on the long-term impact of entering into compacts with larger, more developed, and technologically more advanced nations. Critics charge that Mexico has benefited little from NAFTA; in fact, NAFTA has resulted in a flood of agricultural commodities into the Mexican market from the US and Canada, where they are produced far more efficiently and cheaply. As a result, Mexican farmers have been driven off the land and into urban squalor, or across the border to the US, in order to survive. Critics of free trade pacts argue that the free flow of capital the agreements nominally protect has proved beneficial only to the rich nations, and perhaps to the wealthy classes of emerging economies. They argue that the pacts have accelerated income inequalities both within Latin America and outside it, in relation to the rest of the world. Contained within the trade debate is the larger issue of neoliberalism, sometimes called the "Washington Consensus," referring to the push from the United States to keep markets in developing nations open and available for investment and trade agreements favorable to the US. The real impact of foreign investment, and disagreements among and between Latin American governments over the impact of earlier liberal and recent neoliberal policies, is a topic that weaves through this text.

Although critics point to the detrimental impact of free trade deals on agricultural production, especially in Mexico, the fact is that most people throughout Latin

Americans live in cities. By 1960 the majority of the population was involved in non-agricultural production; that is, in the service sector, manufacturing, private and public bureaucracies, and the informal sector. The common assumption is that people making a living in the informal sector – selling what they can on the street, engaged in casual and day labor, or peddling “illegal” wares and services – are very poor. That may be true, with the exception of certain illegal activities such as prostitution, trading in contraband, etc., in which case it is hard to make any overriding assumptions. Yet some entrepreneurs selling homemade crafts, foodstuffs and other objects in local markets earn a very good living – comparable to, or even better than, those employed in manufacturing and the formal economy. The national economy, however, may suffer because of the difficulty of collecting taxes on informal-sector earnings.

A sizeable middle class has emerged in most of the continent’s large cities, concentrated in growing domestic and transnational manufacturing sectors, financial and commercial institutions, government bureaucracies and service sectors, and traditional professional occupations. Probably owing to the precariousness of its position, the middle class has not been a consistently strong voice in the political arena. By the late twentieth century, however, this previously timid group had become a more sustained and consistent actor in many emerging democracies.

Politics

The Latin American political landscape has been as diverse as its geography and culture. Since the end of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in the nineteenth century, the region has been host to monarchies, local strongman (*caudillo*) rule, populist regimes, participatory democracy of parliamentary, socialist, and capitalist varieties, military and civilian dictatorships, and bureaucratic one-party states, to name a few. The US has played a strong role, especially during the twentieth century. The lament of Mexico’s autarchic leader, Porfirio Díaz, could be said to be applicable to the continent as a whole: “So far from God, so close to the United States.” British historian Eric Hobsbawm once remarked wryly that Latin America’s proximity to the US has had the effect of it being “less inclined than any other part of the globe to believe that the USA is liked because ‘it does a lot of good round the world.’”¹

Latin America’s history is replete with conflict resulting from the unequal distribution of resources among and between nations, classes, racial and ethnic groups, and individuals. In the nineteenth century Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay went to war against Paraguay from 1864 to 1870 in the War of the Triple Alliance. This devastating conflict wiped out half of Paraguay’s population and over 80 percent of its men. The most extensive war, the Mexican Revolution of 1910–21, resulted in the death of an estimated one million people both on and off the battlefield, of a population of 15 million. Other twentieth-century conflicts considered highly costly in terms of human life were the War of the Chaco between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932–5), in which an estimated 150,000 people died, and the civil conflict in Guatemala (1978–96), in which at least 200,000 Guatemalan Indians and mestizos were killed at the direction of a series of

brutal military regimes. The country whose history has been most associated with violence is Colombia. From 1948 to 1966 an estimated 200,000–500,000 Colombians (the number varies widely) died in a war between political parties and factions that is known as *La Violencia*.

One erroneous stereotype, however, depicts Latin America as *exceptionally* violent, as a place of war, unstable governments, and social strife. In actuality, probably fewer Latin Americans have died as participants in wars and revolutions than is the case in other continents. This is due in large part to the relatively small role Latin American nations played in history's major international conflagrations, including World Wars I and II and Japan's war against China (1937–9). Unfortunately, the number of casualties throughout the world has been tremendous: the 20–30 million who died in the Taiping Rebellion in China (1850–64), the massacre of an estimated 1.6 million Armenians in 1915–16, the World War II Holocaust, the Cambodians left to die in the "killing fields" of Pol Pot (1968–87), or the 1994 Rwanda Genocide in which anywhere from 600,000 to one million Tutsis and their Hutu sympathizers were killed in 100 days. The fact that Latin Americans have not historically killed each other in rebellions nor carried out mass slaughters in any greater number than peoples in other parts of the world (and probably fewer) draws into question the cultural stereotyping to which the region has been subjected.

In recent times, progressive and moderate leaders elected to office in many countries of Latin America have attempted to find solutions to the longstanding problems of widespread poverty, malnutrition, lack of education, human rights abuses, and inequality. This political phenomenon, labeled the "Pink Tide," refers to the election in the last decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries of left and center-left governments in many Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and, disputably, Nicaragua. As opposed to the Cold War label, "the Red Tide," that implied the spread of communism from the Soviet Union and China to other parts of the world, this "Pink Tide" is a milder, "less Red," political current. While many of these elected socialist and leftist politicians are sympathetic to their own country's revolutionary past, have voiced open admiration for Cuba's stubborn rejection of US hegemony, and have personally suffered under the military dictatorships that dominated much of the region from the 1960s to 1990s, they are at the same time proceeding cautiously. These new, pragmatic leftists do not follow a single political trajectory and have not attempted to forge a united front. In fact, most seem to be content to remain loosely affiliated ideologically, pursuing policies that benefit their own nations while seeking the broadest level of cooperation with like-minded, and even not so like-minded, neighbors.

Among the elected leaders, Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez is the most outspoken opponent of US policy in Latin America, and has forged close ties with Cuba's Marxist government. Chávez, leading a nation with enormous oil reserves, can afford to be oppositional in a way that, for example, Tabaré Vasquez, president of tiny Uruguay, cannot. In Bolivia President Evo Morales has supported the cultivation and sale of coca for medicinal and nutritional uses, much to the alarm of Washington. On the other hand, since Bolivia has the largest natural gas reserves in the hemisphere, the US has

moved cautiously in mounting a critique. Similar to Chávez, with whom he is closely allied, Evo Morales has used the clout of Bolivia's vital energy resources to bargain for better terms of trade with international bodies and for the political space to undertake a social reform agenda, despite objections from the country's traditional ruling circles. Both leaders face powerful opponents inside their respective countries: Chávez from the media, highly skilled petroleum workers, members of the traditional elite, and from the growing middle class. Morales has confronted a separatist movement from the energy-rich eastern provinces. Both leaders have faced showdowns over attempts to amend and change their nations' constitutions and curb democracy, and both have scaled back plans for redistributing wealth in the face of the economic crisis that began in 2008.

Michelle Bachelet, Chile's second socialist president elected since the demise of the military dictatorship in 1990, is one of very few female heads of state in the history of the Americas (Figure 1.1). Interestingly, the other women to head governments have all been in Latin America, rather than the United States: Isabel Perón in Argentina, 1974–6; Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, 1990–6; Mireya Moscoso de Arias in Panama, 1999–2004, and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Argentina's first elected female



Figure 1.1 Presidents Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil), and Evo Morales (Bolivia) at the founding meeting of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), May 2008 in Brasília. Leaders from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean attended but formal members at the time were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela. (*Agência Brasil* photo)

president in 2007. Bachelet's government has made some strides in promoting the rights of women and taking on the issue of income inequality in Chile, but her tenure in office has thus far remained tied to the more moderate wing of the "Pink Tide." In general, progressive governments have found that the goal of providing social benefits to the many poor, unhealthy, and uneducated people in their respective countries must be balanced against the fiscal discipline required to pay off the debt burden they inherited from previous authoritarian and military regimes. Many Latin American observers and political pundits speculate that the leftist rhetoric at the forefront of recent electoral campaigns has given way to economic centrism and political maneuvering.

These new leaders have likewise demonstrated a variety of views on one of Latin America's most enduring institutions: the Catholic Church. Rafael Correa Delgado was elected president of Ecuador in 2006 and assumed office in January 2007. Considered one of the most recent additions to the "Pink Tide" presidencies in Latin America, Correa describes himself as a "Christian on the left" and as a "twenty-first-century socialist." After earning a degree from the Catholic University of Guayaquil, Correa volunteered for a year in a Salesian mission, an order of Catholic priests known for their charity work with young children, and seriously considered joining the priesthood. Instead he opted for a PhD in economics from the University of Illinois and a career in politics, but credits the Church for introducing him to social justice issues. In many ways Ecuador's new president illustrates the variety of positions on religion apparent among the new crop of progressive leaders. For example, Correa has voiced political views in line with those of other left and center-left presidents in Latin America, but does not share Chilean Bachelet's embrace of atheism, nor support same-sex civil unions and reproductive freedoms as do the Kirchners of Argentina, nor has he antagonized the church hierarchy as has Chávez in Venezuela. The new president of Paraguay, Fernando Armindo Lugo Méndez, is in fact a former bishop, as well as a left-wing politician. What Lugo will be able to accomplish is uncertain, since he heads one of the poorest and smallest countries of Latin America. Paraguay is still recovering from 35 years of military rule under Alfredo Stroessner, who came to power in a military coup in 1954 and was subsequently "re-elected" (often by margins of 80 percent or more) over the next 35 years. Stroessner's decisions were funneled through the compliant Colorado Party. Lugo's election brought an end to 61 years of Colorado rule and marked the first time in Paraguay's nearly 300-year history as a republic that a ruling party surrendered power peacefully.

If presidents Correa and Lugo came to politics from a base in Catholic activism, Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega seems to have moved away from socialism and toward religion. A former guerrilla commander who headed the leftist Sandinista government in the turbulent 1980s, he returned to power in 2007 under a political banner that many argue includes few of the social reform measures or promises of equality, especially for women, sought during the earlier period. The Sandinista coalition recently split under a barrage of accusations of corruption against Ortega and his closed circle of supporters. Because of his acceptance of Christian fundamentalism, or because he simply wants to curry favor with the Catholic hierarchy, Ortega imposed a ban on abortion even in cases where the mother's life is in danger. Oddly, Tabaré Vazquez in Uruguay has voiced the same position, promising to veto reproductive

rights legislation that passed in 2008 with widespread backing from Uruguayan citizens. In religion, as in politics and economics, the new leaders exhibit a variety of ideological stances.

Culture and Entertainment

Latin America and the Caribbean is a crazy quilt of nationalities, cultures, and language groups, representing nearly every part of the globe and creating a profoundly heterogeneous society from North to South. This diversity is manifest in many aspects of Latin American culture.

Literature

Archeologists have deciphered over 15 pre-Columbian distinct writing systems from Mesoamerican societies. The ancient Maya had the most sophisticated textually written language, but since texts were largely confined to the religious and administrative elite, traditions were passed down orally. The same was true of other major indigenous groups including, but not limited to, the Aztecs and other Nahuatl speakers, Quechua and Aymara of the Andean regions, the Quiché of Central America, the Tupi-Guaraní in today's Brazil, the Guaraní in Paraguay, the Mapuche in Chile.

The contemporary reincarnation of an African and Indian oral tradition can be found in the *testimonio* literature; the best known, and controversial, example being the narrative of the life of Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Indian woman whose graphic account of the persecution of her people in the 1980s has been widely read and translated into many languages. Although there have been some questions about the book's veracity, Rigoberta Menchú's story gripped readers' attention, much like Frederick Douglass's narrative of his life as a slave in the South of the US a century earlier, *because* it was a first-hand account. Her testimony brought to the world's attention the persecution of Native Americans in the hemisphere, especially the genocide against the Quiché-Maya of her native Guatemala, where an estimated 200,000 people died during a string of brutal military dictatorships from 1978 to 1996. For her efforts, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 on the 500th anniversary of the European "discovery" of America.

Latin American literature has been particularly significant in its contribution to the world of letters. Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío has a place among the greats of the Spanish literary canon as the founder of modernism, a passionate, visual, and stylized form of poetry that broke with romanticism. Chile alone produced two of the major poets of the modern era, both of whom were awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature: Gabriela Mistral in 1945 and Pablo Neruda in 1971. Mistral joins the small handful of women worldwide who have received the prize in over a century of its existence. Other Latin American Nobel laureates include Miguel Angel Asturias (1967), a Guatemalan author whose book *El Señor Presidente* set the standard for depictions of egomaniacal dictators; Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez (1982), whose work, especially *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, popularized the "magic realism" literary genre; and

Mexican poet, novelist, and essayist Octavio Paz (1990), best known for *A Labyrinth of Solitude*, a meditation on modern Mexico and the unfulfilled goals of that nation's turbulent 1910 Revolution.

The breadth and depth of literary production in Latin America over the past two centuries is impressive. The list includes Cuba's José Martí, whose journalistic articles, essays, and poems were published in Spanish and English in the US, Latin America, and Europe during his exile from Cuba in the late nineteenth century. Martí epitomized the symbiosis of politics and art that is quite prevalent among Latin American artists and writers, while others, including Argentines Julio Cortázar, Jorge Luis Borges, and Luisa Valenzuela, exemplify artists' concern with individual and existential crises. More overtly political authors whose works are widely read in English include Chile's Isabel Allende, whose novel *The House of the Spirits* is often considered one of the best descriptions of the struggle against patriarchy. Julia Alvarez writes about life growing up in the Dominican Republic and the US and Rosario Ferré captures the impact of US colonialism on the lives of Puerto Rican men and women. The 2008 Pulitzer Prize for fiction went to *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Junot Díaz's comment on the heartache and hilarity of adjusting as a Dominican immigrant in Patterson, New Jersey, while keeping one foot back on the island.

Mexican novelist and political figure Carlos Fuentes; journalist and essayist Elena Poniatowska; and Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano have produced a prodigious body of work that combines history, lyricism, and sharp political analysis, mainly from the left. At the other end of the political spectrum, Peruvian novelist and politician Mario Vargas Llosa has long been an outspoken critic of the left. Finally, Augusto Roa Bastos of Paraguay shares with the Guatemalan Asturias a talent for capturing the personality of authoritarian Latin American leaders, as seen in his book *I The Supreme*. Brazilian writers Machado de Assis, Jorge Amado, and Clarice Lispector draw on timeless themes in that nation's history, including the treatment of women, the issue of racial and ethnic identity in a multicultural society, nature and realism, and the intersection of African and European-based spirituality in modern society.

Visual arts

While Latin American visual art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries borrowed closely from the traditions of Spanish, Portuguese, and French classical and baroque painting, much of it tied to religion, the influence of Africa and indigenous cultures permeates most artistic production. From the works of Colombian master painter Fernando Botero, whose fat cherubs are a biting criticism of Latin America's elite, to the photography of Sebastião Salgado, Brazil's contribution to the use of the photograph as a document, the world of Latin American visual art is as critical and joyfully diverse as its people. Another Brazilian, the architect Oscar Niemeyer, is considered one of the inventors of the modernist style and creator of the use of reinforced concrete for constructing some of the masterpieces of modern architecture, especially the United Nations in New York and, with urban planner Lucio Costa, the futurist capital city of Brasilia (Figure 1.2). In 1996, at the advanced age of 89, he completed the Niteroi



Figure 1.2 Brazilian National Congress being washed by rain. Architecture by Oscar Niemeyer. (Eurico Zimbres photo)

Museum of Contemporary Art, across the bay from Rio de Janeiro. A lifelong socialist, Niemeyer designed an elaborate monument in Salvador da Bahia at the grave site of the country's most famous communist (who had trained as an architect), Carlos Marighella.

Two major schools of painting that distinguish Latin American artists in the mind of the world today are the rich, colorful Haitian paintings that depict the complexity of everyday life, and Mexican murals of the 1930s and 1940s, which project a radical interpretation of history. In bold lines and dramatic colors, Haitian painting shows everyday people involved in commonplace events. Art historians assume this style of painting was common among artists as far back as the early nineteenth century, but it was not marketed commercially until the 1940s. Formulaic reproductions of standard scenes in wondrous colors can be bought from stalls in flea markets and on the streets of many cities of the world where Haitian artists peddle their wares; the highly skilled show their creations in the major galleries of the world, selling for six-figure dollar prices. Similarly, Mexican mural art links popular subjects and high-art world prices. The most famous muralists, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco, told the story of Mexico's history from pre-Columbian times to the twentieth century Revolution. They depicted the struggle for modernization and clash of cultures, races, and classes in bold murals commissioned by the government of Mexico. World famous for their political and ideological brashness and competitiveness, the muralists had a strong influence on Mexican and other Latin American art. Likewise, they set the standard for an art form that can be found on the walls of subways, aqueducts,

buildings, and fences throughout the world. Frida Kahlo, whose work is today one of the most popular products of that era, is famous for her self-portraits that spell out the physical and emotional pain she experienced in life and, some argue, stands as a universalized statement of women's oppression. Although her personal life was troubled, fraught with conflict with her husband Diego Rivera, whose art and fame overshadowed her career during her lifetime, Kahlo's paintings today command the highest prices of any Latin American artist.

The most widely known forms of artistic expression in many Latin American countries are handicrafts. Especially in countries with a large indigenous population (such as Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Mexico), textiles, pottery, embroidery, weaving, crochet, and other crafts are produced in homes and small workshops. In some parts of the country young girls are withdrawn from school after only a few years and put to work sewing, weaving, knitting and otherwise producing the elaborate crafts that fill the markets of small tourist towns, stops along the highways, stores, and the huge open-air markets of capital cities. The sheer quantity, variety, and ingenuity of crafts displayed in any one market can be mind-boggling, while the income from the sale of handicrafts is essential to the livelihood of entire families and regions.

In the 1970s a new handicraft, the *arpillera*, was developed and has since spread to many regions of Latin America. Chilean women imprisoned under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–90) created these three-dimensional textile pictures that depict a scene or tell a story. The women developed the *arpilleras* as a way of communicating with friends and families outside the prison. Into the intricately sewn pictures the prisoners incorporated sticks, pockets, pieces of aluminum foil and other found items, all providing hiding places for messages. The images in the *arpillera*, on careful examination, revealed scenes of the torture, abuse, and suffering that the women were enduring. Prison guards, assuming the *arpilleras* were simple women's sewing, did not suspect that hidden within the folds of the fabric the women were sending messages to the outside world of the repressive conditions in Chilean prisons. The craft form spread from prisons to neighborhoods on the outside, and later became a popular art form in communities in Chile, Peru, and eventually throughout Latin America. Today *arpilleras* represent a significant source of income for women in cooperatives and shantytowns. They narrate life stories, including events such as weddings and festivals, show the day-to-day life in which women live and work, plant and harvest crops, tend animals, cook, clean and care for children.

Music and dance

Latin America's diversity may be most readily apparent in the rich variation of musical and dance forms. The thin, austere chants of music from the Andean Altiplano reflect indigenous sensitivities and invoke the harsh emptiness of the highlands of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile, while the pounding drumbeat and percussion of Brazil and the Caribbean definitely draw their inspiration from Africa. The Americas in general have elaborated on and enhanced the world's repertoire of sound, combining the instruments of Africa with the strings and horns of European musical tradition. Latin

America's contribution includes the samba, marimba, merengue, cumbia, mariachi, reggae (and its contemporary hip-hop permutation, reggaeton), salsa, cha cha, bossa nova, and literally dozens of variations in between. Samba in Brazil and tango in Buenos Aires, as with jazz in the US, traveled a similar route from bawdy, back-alley association with promiscuity and hot sex to popularity on the world stage. Only after gaining acceptance abroad were these musical and dance genres embraced by their own national elites. Today, of course, they are considered the emblematic music of their respective countries, promoted and practiced among all social groups.

A key feature of Latin American music and dance is the intermingling of styles and forms, drawing on the wide variety of folk traditions and cultures developed in the countryside in both African and indigenous societies, from European imports, or blended with the latest in international pop or classical music. One of the earliest names to make its way to the world stage was that of classical composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959), who incorporated the native sounds of Brazil into classical European-influenced pieces. The most famous name in Latin American music is probably Carmen Miranda, a Portuguese-born Brazilian who sported wild, fruit-bowl hats in movies and stage acts. Extremely popular abroad (she was the most highly paid actress in Hollywood during the 1940s), her outlandish hats and “hot Latin” image were seen by many Brazilians as a demeaning stereotype.

The 1960s Brazilian movement called *tropicalismo* – developed by Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil (later appointed as the Minister of Culture), Gal Costa, Maria Bethânia, Tom Zé and others – was an expression of the fusion of various musical forms, from Portuguese *fado* to samba and bossa nova to contemporary Latin and international rock and pop. Jon Pareles, music critic of the *New York Times*, in an article recommending Veloso's albums *Estrangeiro* and *Livro*, has called Caetano Veloso “one of the greatest living songwriters.”

As with Latin American literature, its music has played a central role in criticizing conservative politics and human rights abuses and as a tool for bolstering movements for social change, many of them on the left. Victor Jara, a famous Chilean folk singer who was tortured and killed in the early days of the 1973 military coup against Salvador Allende's socialist government, was part of a Latin America-wide folk revival, the New Song Movement (*la Nueva Canción*). The movement was inspired by the work of Argentine folk singer Mercedes Sosa and Chile's Violeta Parra. The large instrumentalist and choral groups Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani popularized the music of the New Song movement in concerts throughout the world, both during the heady days of the Allende government and later during the Pinochet dictatorship as they traveled the world in exile.

Today's music scene has seen a blending of styles from Latin America, the United States, and Europe. The borders that previously separated the Americas are now porous for both people and music; Latin American rhythms regularly float from mainstream US and European radio. Carried with the migrant culture, Latin pop has introduced new forms of hip-hop that bears the stamp of *plena* and *bomba* styles from Latin America, incorporates the strong social critique often expressed in US rap music and, regrettably, a fair share of misogynist and violent lyrics. The rhythm of Latin music

accompanies the migration of people from Latin America into major urban areas and even into the more sparsely settled Midwestern heartland.

Cinema and television

At the 2006 Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles, critics were abuzz with commentary on the “Three Amigos,” an adaptation of the title of a 1986 slapstick comedy starring Steve Martin, Chevy Chase, and Martin Short. In 2006 the “three friends” were Mexican film directors Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón. Each had directed and produced movies that were in contention for the top prizes, including Best Picture. That these filmmakers had Oscar-nominated movies was not as novel as the fact that the movies in contention (*Pan’s Labyrinth*, *Children of Men*, and *Babel*) were not based in Mexico, nor did they star or pertain to Latin American personalities or themes. Their earlier movies, such as *Y tu mamá también*, *Amores Perros*, *21 Grams*, had brought actors Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna to the attention, and admiration, of a young US audience. The fame of today’s Latin American directors builds on a line of cinematic achievements stretching back to *Black Orpheus*, the 1959 Brazilian movie by French director Marcel Camus. This adaptation of the classic Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice set in Rio de Janeiro during Carnival introduced the world to Brazilian culture, music, and racial themes. It won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival, as well as an Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film (for France).

The 1960s and 1970s brought international success to Argentine director Fernando Solanas (*Hour of the Furnaces*) and Chilean Patricio Guzmán (*Battle for Chile*), whose powerful political documentaries captured the imagination of young people in the US and Europe. The directors interspersed news footage with a montage of symbols from political struggles in other countries, as well as snippets of acting and drama, to create *cinema vérité* documentary films. Argentina had been a leader in the early years of the twentieth century, but suffered under the military government from 1976 to 1983 only to re-emerge with an Academy Award-winning film, *The Official Story*, in 1985. The country has since begun a frenzy of filmmaking, with a number of critically acclaimed movies, including *Social Genocide*, Solanas’s 2004 exposé of corrupt politicians who sold off Argentine resources and bankrupted the economy.

Brazil’s film industry, the largest and best financed in the region, has produced well-known directors such as Walter Salles (*Central Station*), Bruno Barreto (*Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*), Hector Babenco (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*), and several well-received films about harsh life in the *favelas* (shantytowns) and on the streets of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, including *Pixote*, *City of God*, *Bus 174*, and the most controversial, *The Elite Squad*, winner of various film festival prizes. Finally, Cuban films, such as *Memories of Underdevelopment*, a studied meditation on the role of the intellectual in the early days of the Revolution and the choice between staying in Cuba or going into exile, along with *Strawberry and Chocolate*, *Lucía*, *Portrait of Teresa*, *Before Night Falls*, and *The Last Supper*, have won for Cuba a place in the international cinema arena. This is quite astonishing considering Cuba’s tiny size, small capacity for filmmaking, scarce resources, and the intrusive oversight of official censors.

Although film has achieved international commendation, most Latin Americans watch television far more than movies. Not all Latin American households have a refrigerator, but most have a television – essential for watching soccer games, news, and the nighttime soap operas or *telenovelas*. The *telenovela*, one of the most widespread expressions of popular culture in Latin America, is a basic staple of both daytime and nighttime programming and the main source of support for many channels. Like soap operas, which some consider a distant North American cousin, the *telenovela* examines personal and family themes. Plots revolve around power relations in work and domestic settings, “bad” women, love rivalries and triangles, and paternity disputes. According to sociologist José Antonio Guevara, the typical *telenovela* theme is the struggle to found a traditional family: falling in love, marrying, and having children. It pursues this theme by showing the contrasting lives of rich and poor, good and evil. From this tension the melodrama develops its plot, which is often based on a projection of reality drawn from an historical event or torn from the pages of the news, like some police, courtroom, and hospital dramas shown on US television. Whereas soap operas never end (unless they go off the air) since the events with which its characters struggle are timeless and cannot be solved, the goal of the *telenovela* is to solve the problems of society, usually in a three-to-four month series, and even to teach a way to resolve the tensions inherent in the progress of human events.

Since *telenovelas* play at night, they are a main source of entertainment for entire families, even entire communities and nations (including millions of US Hispanic households). The plot will be discussed at the office the next day and become part of the analogies, references, and metaphors around which day-to-day life is constructed. The *telenovela*, to borrow a phrase from Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), is, in terms of entertainment, hegemonic; that is, it depicts and preaches the “shared common sense” of Latin America culture.

Sports

Latin America has a broad and varied array of athletic competitions, although *fútbol* (called *futebol* in Brazil and soccer in the United States) is probably the most widespread national pastime. British sailors introduced soccer to most South American countries in the latter half of the nineteenth century when they played pick-up games while on shore leave, sometimes among themselves and then increasingly with local youths. Charles Miller, the son of a Paulista merchant, is thought to have brought two soccer balls from England to Brazil in the 1890s with the purpose of setting up matches between teams of young British employees of the Gas Company, the London and Brazilian bank, and the São Paulo Railway Company. In Brazil, as in other Latin American countries, European football was eventually absorbed into the lives of working men and boys. A game that can be played anywhere, requiring only a ball and a few eager players, it was easily adopted by the working poor, some of whom made do with less than a ball. Today innovative boys can be seen on vacant lots or in the street, passing wadded up balls of paper or string, crushed cans, or some other makeshift ball with the same fancy footwork one might expect to find in an official

game with a regulation ball. Brazil is the only country to have won five World Cups, but its lackluster performance in 2006 and charges of corruption in the coaching and team selection process have led to some disillusionment with the team. As with many teams from Latin America and Africa, Brazil's performance may suffer because the team only plays together during World Cup competitions every four years, since most players live abroad while pursuing lucrative professional careers with teams in Europe, Canada, and the US. Nonetheless, soccer remains the top spectator sport in most Latin American nations, dominating the airwaves and, some might argue, the national psyche.

In parts of the Caribbean and Central America *beisbol* outshines soccer in terms of popularity. The sport took hold especially in the Dominican Republic and Cuba in the late nineteenth century, when sugar companies imported cane cutters from the British Caribbean. The workers played cricket in their free time, but later, during the long periods of US military occupation, cricket gave way to baseball and rapidly assumed widespread popularity, although cricket remains the favorite in the British Caribbean. Baseball has the greatest following in those nations occupied at length by the US military, especially, Nicaragua, Panama, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. These countries have also emerged as sources of baseball talent, since many players hone their skills on local teams, or in "academies" managed by the US Major Leagues to cultivate the most promising young men for their own teams.

Critics charge that the Major Leagues exploit players from poor backgrounds, signing them to contracts at prices far below what US players would command and robbing small, much poorer, countries of their best talent. Others argue that players now negotiate through shrewd lawyers and agents to obtain top-rung salaries. Both baseball and soccer create, nurture, and then export great players for the sports industry in developed countries – a process not unlike that accorded to other Latin American "commodities." Only in Cuba does a top-notch national team compete on its own turf and in international competitions, winning numerous gold medals at the Olympic Games. Nonetheless, even Cuba contributes talent to the Major Leagues, most recently through the defections of players such as José Contreras, and half-brothers Liván and Orlando (El Duque) Hernández. The drain of sports talent, like that of Latin America's skilled professionals, workers and the poor, will probably continue as long as the dramatic income inequalities between the US and countries to the south persist.

All in Latin America is not soccer and baseball, however. A look at the competitions and medal winners at the last few Olympic Games illustrate the breadth of sports in the region. For example, although Argentina is a perennial powerhouse in soccer and produced one of the game's legendary players, Diego Maradona, it was the Women's Field Hockey team that brought home the most Olympic medals from Sydney (2000), Athens (2004), and Beijing (2008). The women returned to Argentina as national heroes, especially Vanina Oneto who scored four goals in the championship match against New Zealand. The Argentine women's field hockey teams are among the best in the world, followed by the men's teams. Peruvian and Brazilian women's volleyball teams are top

contenders in international matches, while in wrestling, boxing, and many powerful track and field events Cuban men and women rank first or second in the world.

The Olympics and Pan-American Games have served as a showcase for a variety of talented athletes, although the Olympics were only once hosted in Latin America. The 1968 games in Mexico City entered the history books for several firsts, including the first time a woman, Enriqueta Basilio, a Mexican hurdler, lit the Olympic Torch. It was also the first time that African distance runners swept up the medals, in part because they had trained at high altitudes and were not handicapped by Mexico City's location at 6,000 feet above sea level. The 1968 Olympics elicited the most protests, including the Black Power salute on the winners' block from the US medalists as a mark of solidarity with the African-American Civil Rights movement. Finally, the 1968 games were preceded by a brutal massacre of students in Tlatelolco Square, in downtown Mexico City, a month before they opened. The event drew attention to the repressive single-party government that had ruled Mexico since the 1930s and which had poured massive amounts of money into preparations for the international athletic competition while the majority of Mexicans continued to live in desperate poverty.

Despite Latin American nations having fielded many teams in the Olympics, the games have never returned to the continent and the Olympic Torch only passed through Latin America for the first time in 2004 on its way to the games in Greece. On June 13, 2004, one of the world's foremost athletes, Edson Arantes do Nascimento, known to the world as Pelé, ran through the streets of Rio de Janeiro with the torch before passing it on. Pelé, one of the most skilled players in the history of soccer, led his team to two World Cup victories in the 1960s and is frequently credited with bringing Brazil to the forefront of world competition. In July 2008 at the age of 67 Pelé opened the game in Cape Town, South Africa at a world soccer match commemorating former president Nelson Mandela on his 90th birthday.

Latin America: Past and Present

Today it is impossible to consider the future of the United States without taking into account the countries of Latin America. Whereas politics, wars, perennial crises, major celebrations and commemorations in other parts of the world may take center stage at one time or another, the people and cultures of Latin America remain one of the foremost external influences on life in the US. From concerns over drug trafficking in Colombia and Mexico to the latest Latin American singing sensation, to the never-ending debate over border patrols and immigration policy, the past, present, and future of the United States and Latin America are interwoven, straddling their respective political, economic, and cultural landscapes. For that reason alone it is essential that US students (large numbers of whom trace their origin to the countries of the Caribbean, Central and South America), as well as the general public, learn and understand the history of this vital region of the world.

Latin America is not simply a neighbor to the United States. It has produced world-class athletes, artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers, scientists, inventors, politicians,

and more. The fate of its rivers, wetlands, and rainforests, and of the thousands of plants, animals, and natural resources they produce, matters to us all and affects the quality of life on Earth. Latin America is a tremendous repository of resources, but it is likewise a land whose people, along with the languages they speak and the cultures they reflect, are having a major impact on the entire world, not just its northern neighbors.

