Geography, Resources, and Environment of Latin America
Defining Latin America

• Term “Latin America” originally used by French geographers to differentiate between Anglo and Romance (Latin based) languages.

• Latin America has further been divided by language and location
  – Spanish and Portuguese speaking portions of Central and South America in the Latin America Region
  – The French, Dutch, and English speaking parts of Central and South America in the Caribbean Region
Boundaries of Latin America

- On the West
  The western boundary of Latin America is defined by the Pacific Ocean. There are few islands in the eastern Pacific. The major ones controlled by Latin American countries are the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador) and Easter Island (Chile). Although Spain controlled the Philippines and considered it part of its New World holdings, only recently has Latin America looked across the Pacific.
Boundaries of Latin America

- On the South
  The southern border of Latin America is Cape Horn, (actually the island of Hornos). Latin American countries claim Antarctica as well, but since 1959 claims for this region have been suspended by the Antarctic Treaty, which now has 25 signers and 14 observers. Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil have bases on the continent and Chile and Argentina have major claims.
Boundaries of Latin America

• On the East
  The eastern border of Latin America is marked by a string of British possessions in the Atlantic. These include the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Tristan da Cunha, St. Helena, and Ascension.
Boundaries of Latin America

- On the North
  Many of the islands in the Caribbean (including the small islands of the lesser Antilles, plus Jamaica and western Hispaniola) have become non Spanish or Portuguese in culture. The Bahamas to the north of Cuba are now independent and English-speaking. For the purpose of this course everything south of the United States is considered to be Latin America.
Regions of the West Indies

1 Bahamas, Caicos and Turks Islands
2 The Greater Antilles
3 The Lesser Antilles
4 The Continental islands
Cultural Aspects of Latin America

- It has a mix of peoples from Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- It was a site of civilizations and empires.
- Its greatest cultural contribution may have been the development of the basic crops of our modern diet, including corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, manioc, beans, tomatoes, and peanuts. It also contributed spices as chili peppers, chocolate, and vanilla, and such drugs as quinine, tobacco, and coca.
- It has the largest number of Native American groups in the world.
Cultural Aspects of Latin America

- It has the world's largest concentration of people speaking romance languages, derived from Latin (Hence, Latin America).
- Has the world's largest concentration of Catholics, and soon will have the world's largest concentration of Christians.
- But it also has the largest concentration of Africans outside Africa, and of Japanese outside Japan.
- The region is not only rich in tradition but also the scene of exciting developments in modern and postmodern culture.
Iberian Conquest

Spanish were the first to colonize the region
- Initial pursuit of silver and gold developed into a more diversified economy

Portuguese colonization occurred after the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494)
- The Treaty was delineated by the Pope and was meant to divide the world between the Spanish and the Portuguese
- The treaty was never recognized by the British, Dutch or French
- Brazil was initially a source of provisions but by the 16th century, it had developed into a land of sugar production

http://www.delsolmedina.com/TratadodeTordesillas3.ht
Guns, Steel and Germs

Microbes, horses, plants and more
The contact between the people, plants & animals of the old & new worlds has been called the Columbian Exchange.

Both sides were forever changed by the introduction of different species.
New Staple crops

The Spanish and Portuguese brought a number of crops with them

- Wheat (flourished in upland areas)
- Grapes, & olives (produced commercially in temperate zones of South America)
- Sugar cane became the dominant cash crop of the Caribbean and the Brazilian tropical lowlands
- Coffee emerged as a large export crop that was cultivated in the upland areas of Central America, Columbia, Venezuela, & Brazil

There were a number of crops that were transported to Europe

- Corn, potatoes & manioc (as well as hot peppers, tomatoes, pineapple, cacao, & avocados)
Diseases

- Native populations had no resistance to Old World Diseases, killing 50-90% of native populations.
- 50 epidemics in Valley of Mexico 1519-1820 often carried to villages by other natives, arriving before actual contact with Spanish: smallpox, measles, whooping cough, bubonic plague, diphtheria, influenza.
Domestic animals

- There were no large mammals in Middle America. South America had domestic llamas, and the wild vicuñas and guanacos.
- European introduced horses, pigs, sheep, goats, cattle, rats (spread disease, decimated native small animals)
- Livestock introduced new means of transportation, the horse became indispensable to plains Indians;
- New livestock provided also new sources of food

http://www.artgalleryoftexas.com/products/pop/Genus_a_indian_horse.html
Technologies introduced by Europeans

- alphabet, writing
- iron tools; didn't shatter like those made of obsidian by Indians
- farming equipment - plow; drastically changed agricultural practices
- wheel
- gunpowder
- ranching - changed landscape; walled ranches with tile roofs, adobe brick buildings surrounded by corrals and pastureland; cowboys, gauchos
Creation of new institutions

- Towns - relocated Indians from their land into villages and towns; and they used more wood and charcoal; it led to more deforestation
- Government structures and policies; encomienda system gave the right to a conquistador to collect tribute from Indians
- Religion (Catholic)
New People

- Spanish and Portuguese - main colonizers of Middle and South America
- African slaves needed as workers to replace decreasing native population; eventually replaced Indians as the dominant ethnic group in the Caribbean and Brazil; infused much of their culture into many areas of the Americas
- British, Irish, French, Germans, Dutch, Asians, Indians (from India)

The total number of African slaves moved to Brazil is estimated at 3.6 million, nine times the number brought to the thirteen English colonies.
Blending

• Blended Cultures
  – The dying of the native American population coupled with the immigration of new groups of people created new ethnic groups
  – After generations of intermarriage between different ethnic groups, four broad categories were established: Blanco (European ancestry), Mestizo (mixed ancestry), Indio (Indian ancestry), & Negro (African ancestry)
  – In most places, the majority of the population consists of mestizo people
  – Blancos (whites) are often overrepresented in the elite classes of society

• Blended Religions
  – Although the majority of the population practices Roman Catholicism, syncretic religions have been formed to include native beliefs into the Catholic faith
  – Syncretic religious practices are also found among places where there were once high concentrations of African slaves, particularly in Brazil; Macumba, Camdombe and Voodoo (Haiti).
Influences of the Iberian Peninsula

• A vast majority of the population:
  – Speak Spanish (approx 2/3) or Portuguese (approx 1/3)
    • Numerous native languages are still spoken in more remote places
  – Practice Catholicism
    • Protestant denominations are becoming more popular
L.A. Languages

Dominant/Official* Languages
- Spanish
- Portuguese

Indigenous Languages
- Aymara
- Embera
- Garifuna
- Guarani
- Quechua
- Kuna
- Mayan
- Miskito
- Mixtec
- Nawan/Spanish
- Pemong
- Zapotec
- Wahiros
- Yanomama

*Multiple Official Languages:
- Bolivia: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara, Guarani
- Peru: Spanish, Quechua

Scattered indigenous language communities
Legacy of Colonialism

- Spanish Colonies
  - They were initially focused upon the extraction of precious metals that were transported to Spain

- Portuguese Colonies
  - Early focus was upon tropical agricultural products such as sugarcane
Revolution & Independence

- Revolution movement reached Latin America in the second decade of the 19th century (1810-1826)
- The Spanish initially divided Latin America into two viceroyalties; New Spain and Peru
- Spanish Latin America gained its independence as a number of larger states that would eventually fragment into the current formation
  - Had Spanish America retained its coherence it would now be the third largest country (by population) in the world
- The evolution of Brazil into an independent state was more gradual and less violent than her Spanish controlled neighbors
  - Brazil was initially declared a separate kingdom with its own monarch, over time this would evolve into a republic
Modern Population

• Population consists of 490 million people
  – Over half of them live in two countries (Brazil 170m and Mexico 100m)

• Declining fertility rate
  – An average of 6 children/woman in 1960 to 3 children/woman in 2000

• Highly Urbanized population
  – 3/4 of the population lives in cities
    • A number of cities are classified as Megacities (more than 10 million people) such as Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paolo, & Buenos Aires
Population Distribution
Population Distribution

- Interior portion of South America sparsely populated

- Most people live in upland coastal regions

- In Central America most of the population lives in upland regions

- Most of the population lives in cites
  - During colonial era, preferential treatment was given to city dwellers, providing a motivation to move to the cities
Primate Cities in Latin America

Sao Paolo, Brazil

- A primate city is 3-4 times larger than the second largest city in the country. The primate city is almost always the capital city and center of culture for the country.
- There are high levels of urban primacy in Latin America. Some examples are Lima, Caracas, Mexico City.
- In the past 50 years, there has been a steady flow of people moving from rural areas to urban areas.
- Reasons for leaving rural areas include:
  - consolidation of lands, mechanization of agriculture, more opportunities in cities.
Post-Independence (early 19th century) Migration

• Recent European Migration
  – 8 million immigrants from 1870-1930
    • Majority of immigrants came from Italy, Portugal, Spain, & Germany
  – Most settled in southern part Latin America

• Asian Migration
  – Initial immigration from China and Japan
  – Many came to work on coffee plantations or formed agricultural colonies
  – More recent Korean immigration
    • Most settled in urban areas in Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina