



MIT 3955G: Environmental Crisis in El Salvador

**Faculty of Information and Media Studies
Wednesdays 3:30PM– 6:30 PM, WSC 240
Winter 2023**

**FIVE MEETINGS: January 11, February 8, February 15, March 1, April 5
TRIP TO EL SALVADOR: February 18-27, 2023**

**Instructor: Prof. Amanda Grzyb
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 – 3:30pm (before class)**

Prerequisites and Enrollment

Students are enrolled in this course by special permission of the instructor and participation is typically limited to 15 students in years 3 and 4 from across the university.

Synopsis of Course Content

As the country of El Salvador continues to recover from a long and bloody civil war (1980-1992), a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that it could be heading towards an environmental crisis if drastic measures are not taken to reverse degradation caused by pollution, deforestation and the chronic dependence on carbon fuels, pesticides and other agro-toxics. This course examines the intersections between historical memory of the war, popular political organizing, and contemporary environmental social movements. As community groups work to commemorate wartime massacres, strengthen democratic processes, and maintain control of their territories, they also face environmental threats ranging from the incursion of multinational mining companies to the privatization of water.

The perspectives for environmental recovery are challenging. With a territorial extension of only 20-thousand square kilometers, El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America and the most densely populated country in the hemisphere. The national levels of soil erosion are high due to its geographic location and the fact that more than 90% of the national territory is deforested. In 2010, a water quality study on

surface water resources conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) concluded that only 2% of the country's surface water is fit for human consumption and for the growth of aquatic life. The country placed number four in a 2012 report by German Watch of the 10 countries most affected by climate change. The report further claims that El Salvador is regularly featured on the list due to its frequent exposure to the impacts of the Atlantic hurricane season. Another report by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery claims that almost 90% of the national territory of El Salvador is presently at risk to extreme weather phenomena, 95% of the population live in risk zones, and 96% of Salvadoran gross domestic product (GDP) is produced in risk zones. Salvadoran government authorities have taken notice of the crisis and have begun to take measures to foster long term sustainability, but with an economy crippled by inequality, unemployment, codependence on foreign aid, globalized markets, and the legacy of a violent past, environmental conflicts threaten to bring further instability to the country.

This unique international educational opportunity will provide students with an opportunity to complete intensive background reading for five weeks, followed by a week-long trip to El Salvador to learn directly from Salvadoran community leaders at the forefront of the struggle for environmental justice and the preservation of historical memory. Students will keep a daily journal of field notes while we are in El Salvador **(due March 1)**. When they return from El Salvador, students will devise an individualized bibliography of readings **(due March 1)** engage in six weeks of intensive individual research that will culminate in summary research/project presentation **(April 5 in class)** and either A/ a multi-media project and accompanying paper of 2000 words or B/ a 4500-5000 word research paper **(due April 10)**.

Important Note

Due to the travel component, the Dean's Office has granted this course an exemption from the rule that 15% of the course grade must be returned by the senate stipulated date.

Faculty-Led Study Abroad Component

The course includes a one-week study abroad component in El Salvador during Reading Week in February 2023 co-led by Professor Amanda Grzyb and ACAFREMIN Coordinator, Pedro Cabezas. The trip will cost \$1300 plus the cost of airfare from Toronto to San Salvador. The fee covers all in-country transportation, accommodation, and meals. Students will pay a \$300 CAD fee to Western by September 15 and bring the remaining fees in US cash to pay directly to our Salvadoran partner. Both Western and our Salvadoran partner will provide receipts.

Laptops and Other electronic devices

The use cellular phones is generally not permitted in class. Laptops can be used to take notes, but wifi access must be turned off during lecture/discussion time.

Assignments

- Quality of Participation (10%)
- Travel Journal, due in class on **March 1** (25%)
- Annotated Bibliography & Individualized Research Plan, due in OWL Drop by 11:59pm on **March 1** (10%)
- Presentation: Summary of Research on **April 5**, five minutes long (15%)
- A/ Final Research Paper (4500-5000 words) or B/ Final Multi-Media project with short paper (2000 words) explaining content and methodology, due in OWL Drop Box on **April 10 at 11:50pm** (40%)

Paper Format

Students will be penalized for improper grammar, spelling, and formatting. Papers should be 1.5 spaced or double-spaced. Include a word count at the end of the essay. Please use consistent MLA or Chicago citation style.

Late Papers and Missed In-Class Assignments

Papers are due **at the beginning of class** on the assigned due date. Late papers without accompanying documentation of illness or emergency will receive a penalty of 5% a day for up to four days; on the fifth day, the paper will receive *an automatic FAIL*.

Detailed Reading Schedule

MEETING #1: WED JANUARY 11

Introductions and Historical Overview

- Introduction and overview of trip itinerary, responsibilities, recommended packing list
- GUEST LECTURE: PEDRO CABEZAS (via video from El Salvador)
- UN Truth Commission for El Salvador final report, "From Madness to Hope" (1993): <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf>
- Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (read entire book): http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More_Books_and_Reports/Open_Veins_of_Latin_America.pdf

MEETING #2: WED FEBRUARY 8

Local Resistance to Mining Multinationals and the National Mining Ban

- Jennifer Moore & Stuart Kirsch, "Mining, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Conflict: OceanaGold and the El Dorado Foundation in El Salvador" (2016): <https://ips-dc.org/mining-corporate-social-responsibility-conflict-oceanagold-el-dorado-foundation-el-salvador/>
- Robin Broad & John Cavanagh, "Poorer Countries and the Environment: Friends and Foes" (2015): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X15000662>
- Damien Kingsbury, "Gold, Water, and the Struggle for Basic Rights in El Salvador" (2014): <https://www.business-humanrights.org/es/node/105644>
- Zakrisson et al, "The Perceived Consequences of Gold Mining in Postwar El Salvador: A Qualitative Study" (2015): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4605151/>
- Osgoode Hall Law School, REPORT: *The Canada Brand: Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America* (2016): https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2886584

MEETING #3: WED FEBRUARY 15

Environmental Vulnerability and the Water Crisis

- Video: *Perfect Storms: Dark Age Volcano* (watch online before class): <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ed0wm>
- Guest Lecture: Giada Ferrucci – "The Struggle Against Water Privatization"
- Miguel Huezo Mixco, "The Vulnerable Imagination: Diaspora and Natural Disasters in Salvadoran Culture"
- Thomas R. Hughes, Jose Roberto Acosta, Jaime Lochhead, "Large-Scale Sugarcane Production in El Salvador" (2016): <https://voiceselsalvador.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/large-scale-sugarcane-production-in-el-salvador.pdf>

MEETING #4: WED MARCH 1

- Trip debriefing
- Group discussion about final projects/papers
- Annotated Bibliography and Individual Research Plan due in class
- Travel Journal due in class

MEETING #5: WED APRIL 5

- Presentations: Summary of Individual Research Projects in class (5 min each)
- Final paper/project due APRIL 10 at 11:59pm

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2023

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Academic Accommodation

Students with disabilities work with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

Medical Consideration

Students who have medical grounds for academic consideration for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth **10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provided

documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or during office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that **individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student**, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire, or some other exceptional crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave should contact their Academic Counsellors with valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Advisor. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). The gender-based violence and survivor support case managers are located in Thames Hall (3114-3127 office suite.) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of supports.

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

[FIMS UGSS](#): academic advising; career services

[Psychological Services](#): Information about accessing mental health supports

[Medical Services](#): Student health related services

[Office of the Registrar](#): Financial Information, Timetable, Exam Schedules, Academic Calendar Information

[Academic Support and Engagement](#): Central Academic Supports, including [Writing Centre](#), [Learning Development](#), [Transition and Leadership Supports](#), and [Careers and Experience](#)

[Accessible Education](#): Assessment and recommendations for students with disabilities

[Accessibility Information](#): Information to help support barrier free access, including floor plans, accessible washroom locations, service disruptions etc.

[Indigenous Student Services](#): Includes information about financial support, indigenous self-identification, orientation, and tutor support

[Western International](#): Information and support for international students and students seeking to go on exchange

FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy:

First year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.

Second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%. The third year required (MIT 3100) is expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar**. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.