Hist 282: The City in Latin America

Today most residents of Latin America live in cities, but this was not the case when the first Europeans arrived. How, when, and why did these transformations occur? Over the past 500 years, Latin America’s cities emerged as home to people of all races and social strata, who lived and worked in closer quarters than in rural settings. People and ideas mixed, and cities became centers where much of Latin American culture was formed.

To some degree this course explores the physical city and how neighborhoods and layouts developed, but the focus is more on what it meant to live in a particular city at a particular time. It examines what people thought about cities and how they were supposed to function, how urban residents lived, some of the issues they faced, and how they interacted with each other and their surroundings. It gives special attention to the cities of Mexico, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil from the time of the European discoveries through twentieth-century mass urbanization.