

REPORT FOR

**Harvard Mellon
Urban Initiative**

Journeys Across the Pacific

**Visions of China in Modern Latin American
Literature**

CONTACT:

Rodrigo del Río

rodrigodelriojoglar@gmail.com



PROJECT SUMMARY

During the mid-20th century, Latin American countries dreamed of participating in world history. Developmentalism was the name intellectuals and policy makers gave this dream, a modernization theory that advanced economic growth by means of mass industrialization. Thus, the industrial city became the privileged site of political and cultural struggles.

While it is true that most modernization projects put western industrial cities as the paradigm of development, a group of Latin American writers gazed at different models. China, in particular, offered an alternative road to economic and social progress since the coming to power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

This summer, I studied and compiled a series of travel accounts Latin American authors wrote about Chinese cities when developmentalism was the dominating economic ideology, contrasting them with current literary and political texts on the contemporary relation between China and Latin America. These texts have been largely overlooked by historical accounts on Latin American developmentalism. I created an anthology and designed which deals with the impact of Chinese modernization projects over Latin American imagination in the developmentalist period and its ever-lasting effects on the present.

In the following pages, it is possible to find the 12 weeks course, with all of its pedagogical rationale, as well as the schedule for a semester.

COURSE RATIONALE

This is an advanced mid-low (ACTF) or intermediate / B2 (CEFR) culture and language course on the images Latin American writers and intellectuals produced about China during the 20th century. The course offers students an opportunity to deepen their Spanish language skills while seriously engaging with global scale issues. However, instead of an abstract defense of globalization, I prefer to frame the scale of the problem in terms of interdependency, that is, trying to understand the reciprocal effects of the interaction between specific regions at a global scale. Although it might seem counterintuitive to study Spanish looking at China, I believe this highly contingent historical link provides an invaluable chance to explore the sometimes productive, sometimes also profoundly biased and violent, gaze of Spanish-speaking writers and intellectuals when confronting difference. In this course, China operates as a mirror for different dreams of cultural, economical and political modernization. In their effort to face alterity, the writers we read acquire a deeper understanding of their own culture's strangeness. China also acts as a space for considering the organization of geopolitical desires in the region, asking what new horizons open in their creative encounter with China, but also what limits the writers impose on themselves when confronting cultural discomfort. More generally, exploring the Latin American imagination of China allows students to reflect on the virtues and difficulties of approaching a culture different from their own. The course provides a narrative arc that focuses on progressively constructing the Latin American vision of China from strangeness to intimacy. The course starts with a theoretical reflection on how to approach the transpacific scale from literary studies. Then, the students will read scenes of writers arriving to China for the first time. After that, the course follows a historical timeline from the first contacts of Latin American writers with China during the 20th century to contemporary accounts of Chinese migration to Latin America. Finally, students read the current conditions of the international relations between China and Latin America through exploring the Chinese government's policy paper on Latin America and the Caribbean region.

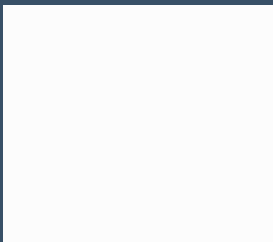
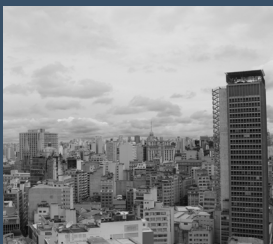
For creating the course objectives, I relied on the combination of international language learning proficiency guidelines (CEFR & ACTFL) with global citizenship education frameworks (UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development Goals & OECD's Learning Compass 2030). I think it is worth providing an example. One of the goals I created states "You will be able to obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialized sources to confront problems on an international scale and suggest solutions using your cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking skills." The first part of this goal depends on one of the descriptors for reading comprehension of the CEFR at the Intermediate / B2 level.

COURSE RATIONALE

The descriptor states "Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialized sources within his/her field." I developed the second part of the goal based on one of the transformative competencies described in the OECD Learning Compass 2030, namely, "reconciling tensions and dilemmas." The importance of this skill, according to the concept note, is that "understanding the needs and interests of others is essential to securing one's own well-being, and that of families and communities, over time. Developing the capacity to understand and work alongside the needs, interests and perspectives of others is therefore essential. The challenge is to reconcile multiple and often conflicting ideas or positions, and recognize that there may be more than one solution or method to finding a solution." In order to foster this skill, the concept note declares that it is key to develop the students' cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking skills, thus, remapping the politico-educational goal into pedagogic terms and constructs that can be assessed in the context of a classroom.

After developing the goals using the process described above, I designed the assignments with the aim of truly blending the linguistic and the global citizenship skills the course is expected to teach. If we continue with the previous example, it is possible to link that goal with the broadcasting assignments in the syllabus. After reading specialized literature on Sino-Latin American relations, students then have to create a polyphonic media product in which they have to integrate in multiple ways other voices to their own reflection. For instance, while in broadcast 1 they have to create a news report as if they were on the radio, in broadcast 3 they have to simulate an interview with one of the writers they read. Occupying several positions in the communicative act not only trains them in diverse discursive genres, but also promotes their ethical imagination.

The main assessment is a full fledged proposal for a diplomatic conference. This entails the conference goals and structure, as well as its materialization in the conference marketing (conference call and video teaser). The diplomatic conference will be assessed in three different moments of the class. The stages are largely based on Johan Kaufmann's Conference Diplomacy: an Introductory Analysis, which describes in depth the organizational setting of a diplomatic conference. In groups, students will present the goals of the conference in the form of a written report, the structure and organization of the conference in the form of a pitch, and the complete elaboration of their proposal through the marketing materials and a presentation at the end of the course. It is expected that this effort will help them produce an independent project proposal which emulates the type of tasks and challenges students will encounter in contemporary global work environments.



While Cold War narratives divided the world in two poles, Latin American writers and intellectuals resisted polarization by looking towards the East. China offered Latin America an alternative road to participate in the fruits of modernization. Changing the coordinates from Western patterns of cultural modernization towards China provides a completely different image of the Latin American intellectual landscape. Instead of a dependent region following colonial powers, Latin America became a space of collision of a multipolar and interconnected world with China as one of its main nodes. Through the exploration of fictional and non-fictional literary texts, you will obtain in this course a deeper understanding of the challenges Latin American countries faced when establishing commercial ventures, cultural partnerships and diplomatic relations with China. You will also learn to research on Latin American sources to confront and propose solutions to problems concerning the region at an international scale. Finally, you will gain a rich set of concepts and vocabulary to critically speak about global issues concerning transpacific relations. We will consider a historical arc that starts from the first interactions of Latin Americans with China under Mao Zedong's rule to current issues of Chinese migration and international politics in the region. An attention to China connects the history of modern Latin America to its current political and economic situation. China has become one of the main economic partners of countries in the region, and it is becoming again a model for Latin American political, economic and cultural imagination. A Chinese modernization is arriving to Latin American shores; in this class, we will study its history.

ASSIGNMENTS

WEEKLY BROADCASTS

The class will have brief weekly asynchronous assignments meant to foster the exchange of ideas within the classroom. The assignments will consist of short media prompts that will ask you to create a video, an audio or a short text in the form of a news broadcast or interview, and then post it to the class social media platform (Canvas, Slack, Yellowdig). By consistently engaging with the materials through media, you will develop your collaboration, problem-solving and communication skills, while you acquire a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependency of Latin America with China, and learn to speak cogently about transpacific economic, political and cultural issues.

DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE

Over the course of the semester, you will design a proposal for a diplomatic conference between China and Latin America with a group of your classmates. The conference can concentrate on financial, cultural or diplomatic issues that demand a need for multilateral collaboration between China and Latin American countries. The aim of the project is to frame and apply the debates and discussions from class to an authentic context. During the project, you will test and improve your oral and written presentational skills, participating in formal and informal communicative situations, creating an independent workflow that requires linguistic proficiency to collaborate with your group and face challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events. The groups will define their own organizational structure, having at least one coordinator of the project. There will be three mandatory assignments related to the proposal:

1. REPORT ON CONFERENCE GOALS
2. CONFERENCE PITCH
3. VIDEO TEASER AND PANEL



LEVEL

Targeted level

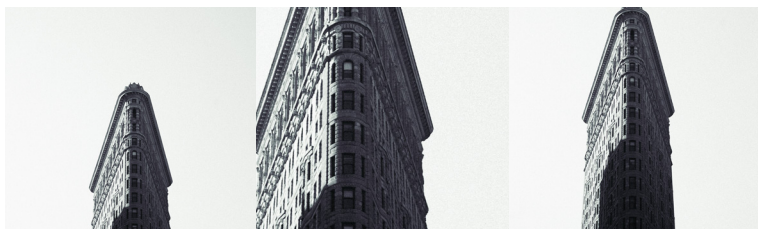
ACTFL: Advanced mid-low | CEFR: Intermediate / B2

OUR GOALS



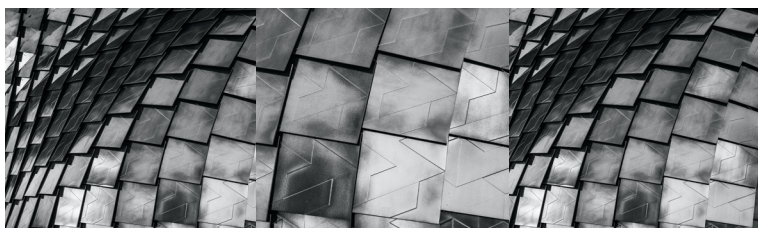
1 INTERPRET

You will be able to understand narrative texts, participate in formal and informal conversations, and write reports that identify the tensions and dilemmas Latin American governments and businesses confront when establishing international relations with China.



2 RESEARCH

You will be able to obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialized sources to confront problems on an international scale and suggest solutions using your cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking skills.



3 GLOBAL CONNECTION

You will acquire a critical and subject-specific vocabulary to raise awareness on the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations, promote global partnerships and create a vision for a sustainable global society.



COURSE SCHEDULE

1

APPROACHING THE PACIFIC

Day 1

Luna de Pekín. Juan L. Ortiz.

Day 2

“El Pacífico una historia desligada.” Laura Torres-Rodríguez.

“The PRC’s Cultural Diplomacy towards Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s.” María Montt.

2

SCENES OF ARRIVAL

Day 1

Un día perfecto. Piglia.

Day 2

Diario de oriente. Luis Oyarzún.

Broadcast 1: Un escritor en China.

3

OTHER WORLDS FOR LITERATURE

Day 1

La muralla y los libros. Jorge Luis Borges.

Day 2

El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan. Jorge Luis Borges.

Synology on the Edge. Rosario Hubert.

Broadcast 2: La muerte de Tsui Pen



First images of China as the plane lands: a square-sail boat in the river, among the trees, and then the white silhouette of a peasant in a round hat working alone in a rice field.

RICARDO PIGLIA





4

WRITING AS DIPLOMACY

Day 1

Diario de un viaje a la China nueva. Vicente Lombardo Toledano.

Day 2

Confieso que he vivido. Pablo Neruda.

5

DIPLOMATIC FICTIONS

Day 1

Muerte en Shanghai. Juan Marín.

Broadcast 3: Entrevista a un viajero

Day 2

Report on conference goals

6

ORIENTALISM AND GENDER

“

”



7

TRANSPACIFIC CROSSINGS

Day 1

600 millones y uno (selections). Bernardo Kordon.

Day 2

Lo que sabemos, hablamos... Testimonio sobre la China de hoy.

María Rosa Oliver.

Broadcast 5: Crónicas de Pekín

8

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

Day 1

"Historia del maoísmo en América Latina: entre la lucha armada y servir al pueblo." Miguel Ángel Urrego.

Day 2

No intenso Agora. João Moreira Salles.

Broadcast 6: Memorias de un maoísta.

9

INTIMATE STRANGERS

Day 1

Papeles recortados. Francisco Coloane.

Day 2

Conference Pitch



Moreover, for the Chinese people, even if they consider the dragon a fabled creature, they have a kind of bond or empathy with him, which manifests itself in an indissoluble bond, since it is always present in their daily lives.

FRANCISCO COLOANE





10

CHINA AND THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC IMAGINATION

Day 1

“China en el camino de su industrialización”
Hablemos de la China nueva. Olga Poblete.

Day 2

“Prólogo.” El modo de producción asiático.
Roger Bartra.

Broadcast 7: Breve informe económico

11

CHINESE MIGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA

Day 1

Mongolia (part 1). Julia Wong Kcomt.

Day 2

Mongolia (part 2). Julia Wong Kcomt.

Broadcast 8: Relato de migrantes

12

ORIENTALISM AND GENDER

Day 1

Reunión en Pekín. Jorge Zalamea.

Day 2

El Libro Blanco chino sobre América Latina y el Caribe.

Broadcast 9: Desafíos para el Pacífico.

ANTHOLOGY

Confieso que he vivido. **Pablo Neruda.**

Ojos de bambú. **Mercedes Valdivieso.**

Diario de oriente. **Luis Oyarzún.**

Flor de Loto. **Jesús Lara.**

Mongolia. **Julia Wong Kcomt.**

Diario de un viaje a la China nueva. **Vicente Lombardo Toledano.**

El Libro Blanco chino sobre América Latina y el Caribe.

Hablemos de China nueva. **Olga Poblete.**

No intenso Agora. **João Moreira Salles.**

Orientaciones transpácificas: la modernidad mexicana y el espectro de Asia. **Laura Torres-Rodríguez**

600 millones y uno. **Bernardo Kordon.**

Lo que sabemos, hablamos... Testimonio sobre la China de hoy. **María Rosa Oliver.**

La muralla y los libros. **Jorge Luis Borges.**

El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan. **Jorge Luis Borges.**

Reunión en Pekín. **Jorge Zalamea.**



A grayscale photograph of the Shanghai skyline, featuring prominent skyscrapers like the Shanghai Tower, Shanghai World Financial Center, and HSBC building. The image is partially covered by a dark blue rectangular overlay in the lower half, which contains white text.

CONTACT

Email: rodrigodelriojoglar@gmail.com