

**GEOG 3030/PSCI 3908: INTERNATIONAL FIELD COURSE [SUMMER 2025]**  
**THE POLITICS OF SPACE IN MEXICO CITY**  
**Departments of Geography and Environmental Studies and Political Science**  
**Carleton University**



**Instructors:** Dr. Laura Macdonald (Political Science)  
Dr. Jill Wigle (Geography & Environmental Studies)  
**Class:** April 27 to May 11, 2025  
**Brightspace:** <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/339914>

**Course Description and Approach**

This intensive two-week field course critically explores the politics of space in Mexico City. Drawing on an interdisciplinary lens, the course investigates the political, geographical, and historical processes that have shaped – and continue to shape – the complexities of power, everyday life, and urban politics in Mexico’s capital city. By integrating course readings, class discussions, and site visits, the course connects theory with practice, and politics and space. This course offers the chance to get out of the classroom and meet with local experts, community leaders, and researchers engaged in struggles and analysis regarding the challenges of urban governance in an enormous global city. The course relies heavily on interactive, experiential, and participatory learning and requires students to actively engage in all aspects of the course. Our collective learning experience will be enhanced if we build together a respectful environment for every participant, including our guests.

**Prerequisite:** Third year standing in students' respective programs and application process.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Critically analyze the intersecting contours of politics and space in Mexico City.
- Analyze the relationship between municipal and federal politics in Mexico from a multi-scalar perspective.
- Understand the challenges faced by Mexico City residents, civil society organizations and government representatives in the current context.
- Develop skills for taking notes, articulating good questions, engaging in intercultural exchanges, doing an oral presentation and producing a final research project.

### Course Communications

Please use your Carleton email account for all course correspondence, placing the course code(s) in the subject heading. We will also be making use of a WhatsApp group for daily communication while in Mexico City.

### Course Materials and Brightspace

Course readings are available through our Brightspace site. The course outline, schedule of reading discussants, written assignment instructions, and any lecture slides will be posted on Brightspace. Students' confidential grades will also be posted on Brightspace.

### Evaluation

Component	Key dates/info	% of grade
Reading Discussion	As per sign-up sheet on Brightspace	10%
Reading Analysis	As per sign-up sheet on Brightspace	15%
Class Participation	To be evaluated during entire course	25%
Site Visit Critical Commentary	Due May 14, 2025 via Brightspace	20%
Research Paper	Due May 26, 2025 via Brightspace	30%

### ***Reading Discussion and Analysis (25%)***

Students will take turns acting as “discussants” for the assigned readings for a given day during the course. For these days, 2 students are expected to co-present the readings to the class, focusing on key ideas, arguments, concepts or other observations (10%). This presentation should be informal in nature and should not be more than 30 minutes. The students should also prepare questions to help guide class discussion. For the same day, each student is asked to submit an independently written 750-word analytical summary of the assigned readings (15%). A sign-up sheet for this activity will be posted on Brightspace. See Brightspace for further details.

### ***Class Participation (25%)***

Class participation involves asking questions and engaging with the course content, readings and guest speakers during our class time and site visits. It also means being on time and organized for all class outings as well as acting in a respectful and collegial manner with fellow students and guest speakers.

### ***Site Visit Critical Commentary (20%)***

Students are asked to submit a critical commentary on the site visit of their own choosing. The commentary should be approximately 1,200 words and can include your own photographs. See Brightspace for further details.

### ***Research Paper (30%)***

Students will write a research paper based on a topic related to the course materials and central themes. We **strongly** recommend that you discuss the topic for your paper and your approach with us in person. Length: 10-12 pages, 12-point font, one-inch margins. See Brightspace for further details and potential topics. Additional suggested topics may be added during the course.

### **Prohibitions on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools**

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g. ChatGPT) for the creation or submission of any graded work is prohibited in this course, including oral and written assignments.

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

Readings are listed in their suggested order of reading rather than in alphabetical order. It is essential to do some of these readings (e.g. when you are a reading discussant) before travelling given the busy schedule planned for our time in Mexico City. Depending on our partners or unexpected events in Mexico City, this schedule may change.

### ***Suggested Background Reading and Viewing***

Wilson-Forsberg, S., Monaghan, S. R., & Corrales, D. C. (2023). Witnesses to inhumanity on shifting terrain: Embracing an ethic of discomfort for optimal learning in an international field course. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 18(3), 344–363.

Hamilton, N. & Elizabeth Olsen, P. (2017). Mexico, in Vanden, Prevost & Stahler-Sholk, R. (Eds.), *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: Oxford University Press, 351-380.

Garza, G. (2019). Mexico City, in Orum, A.D. (Ed.) *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, John Wiley and Sons, 1-9.

*Watch:* H2OMx (2013) available through Kanopy streaming at CU library.

### **Class meetings**

On the days indicated, we will meet in the *Casa de la Primera Imprenta* at Licenciado Francisco Primo de Verdad #10 in the historic Center of Mexico City, near the Cathedral. This site is part of the *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM)*. Most of the reading discussant exercises will take place on these days. The Casa is booked for: April 28-30, May 1, and May 8-9.

<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Topic &amp; Readings</b>
1. Mon, April 28	<p><b>Downtown Redevelopment &amp; Displacement(s) (JW)</b></p> <p>Lear, J. (1996). Mexico City: Space and class in the Porfirian Capital, 1884-1910. <i>Journal of Urban History</i>, 22(4), 454–492.</p> <p>Leal Martinez, A. (2020). Securing the street: Urban renewal and the fight against “informality,” in D. Asher Ghertner, et al. (Eds.) <i>Futureproof: Security Aesthetics and the Management of Life</i>. Duke University Press, 245-270.</p> <p>Correa Lara, F. (2023). What does gentrification look like in Mexico City? <i>Greenzine</i> (March 13). Available at: <a href="https://www.greenzine.org/post/gentrification-in-mexico-city-policy-solutions-community">https://www.greenzine.org/post/gentrification-in-mexico-city-policy-solutions-community</a></p> <p><i>Watch: El Tercer Socio</i> (turn on English subtitles) at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Z8B8oz8nUM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Z8B8oz8nUM</a>.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting, Casa de la Primera Imprenta. <b>Student presentations today</b> <b>PM:</b> Site visit and guided tour with guest speaker Carlos Acuña, Mexico City journalist and anti-gentrification activist (<i>Calle Madero, Bellas Artes, the Alameda, Mercado San Juan, Colonia Juárez</i>). Meeting place TBD.</p>
2. Tues, April 29	<p><b>México-Tenochtitlan &amp; its Transformation I (JW)</b></p> <p>Holler, J. (2007). Conquered spaces, colonial skirmishes: Spatial contestation in sixteenth-century Mexico City. <i>Radical History Review</i>, (99), 107-120.</p> <p>Sosa-Rodriguez, F.S. (2010). Impacts of water-management decisions on the survival of a city: From ancient Tenochtitlan to modern Mexico City. <i>International Journal of Water Resources Development</i>, 26(4), 675–87.</p> <p>De Coss-Corzo, Alejandro. (2023). The infrastructures of internal colonialism: State, environment, and race in Lerma, Mexico. <i>Antipode</i>, 55(3), 810–29.</p> <p><i>Look at:</i> A digital 3D Portrait of the transformation of Tenochtitlan-Mexico City (<a href="https://tenochtitlan.thomaskole.nl/">https://tenochtitlan.thomaskole.nl/</a>)</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting, Casa de la Primera Imprenta. <b>Student presentations today</b> <b>PM:</b> Site visit (<i>Zócalo, Catedral, Museo de Templo Mayor</i>)</p>

<p>3. Wed, April 30</p>	<p><b>Federal Politics, Mexico (LM)</b></p> <p>Silva, V. (2023). A new dawn or a false hope for Mexico’s Left? Overcoming neoliberal legacies in an uncertain world. <i>Latin American Perspectives</i>, 50(2), 4-14.</p> <p>Sánchez-Talanquer, M &amp; Greene, K.F. (2021). Is Mexico falling into the authoritarian trap? <i>Journal of Democracy</i>, 32(4), 56-71.</p> <p>Listen to: A recent episode of Soberanía podcast:  <a href="https://mexicosolidarity.com/soberania/">https://mexicosolidarity.com/soberania/</a></p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting, Casa de la Primera Imprenta. Guest speaker is José Luis Granados Ceja, Mexican journalist, Podcast <i>¡Soberanía!</i></p> <p><b>Student presentations today</b></p> <p><b>PM:</b> Site visit and guided tour of the <i>Palacio Nacional</i>.  <a href="mailto:visitas_guiadas@hacienda.gob.mx">visitas_guiadas@hacienda.gob.mx</a></p>
<p>4. Thurs, May 1</p>	<p><b>Mexico City Politics &amp; Governance (LM)</b></p> <p>Gerlofs, B. (2023). <i>Monstrous Politics: Geography, Rights, and the Urban Revolution in Mexico City</i>. Vanderbilt University, Chapters 1 and 2.</p> <p>Cruz Ruiz, E. (2021). Underrepresented groups and constitution-making: The Mexico City case. <i>Political Studies Review</i>, 19(2), 164-170.</p> <p>Morton, A. D. (2021). Memorializing monuments: State space and state rollback under neo-liberalization in Mexico. <i>Art &amp; the Public Sphere</i>, 10(2), 195–209.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting in hotel.  Guest speaker is Fernando Cortez Vázquez, <i>Escuela Nacional de Trabajo Social</i>, UNAM Tlaxcala.</p> <p><b>Student presentations today</b></p> <p><b>PM:</b> <i>Día de Trabajo</i> (Labour day) in downtown Mexico City.</p>
<p>5. Fri, May 2</p>	<p><b>Mexico-Tenochtitlan &amp; its Transformation II (JW)</b></p> <p>Conway, R. (2012). Lakes, canoes, and the aquatic communities of Xochimilco and Chalco, New Spain. <i>Ethnohistory</i>, 59(3), 541–568.</p> <p>Rey-Hernández, C., &amp; Bobbink, I. (2022). Chinampas agriculture and settlement patterns: The contemporary relevance of Aztec floating gardens. <i>Blue Papers</i>, 1(2), 90–99.</p> <p>Wigle, J. (2010). Social relations, property and “peripheral” informal settlement: The case of Ampliación San Marcos, Mexico City. <i>Urban Studies</i>, 47(2), 411–436.</p> <p><i>Look at:</i> the maps in Hodge, M. (1984). Xochimilco, in <i>Aztec City-States</i>. University of Michigan, 81-97.</p> <p><b>All day site visit</b> to the chinampas zone with the local NGO, <i>Sanctuario Ajolote</i> (<a href="https://www.santuariajolote.com/">https://www.santuariajolote.com/</a>), 1 hour of volunteer work, and then to the historic center and public market in Xochimilco. Meet NGO at the <i>Embarcadero Fernando Celada</i> at 10:30 am.</p>

6. Sat, May 3	<p><b>City-making from “Above &amp; Below” (JW)</b></p> <p>Whitney, R.A., Hess, P., Sarmiento-Casas, C. (2023). Livable streets and global competitiveness: A survey of Mexico City. <i>Journal of Planning Education and Research</i>, 43(4), 783–98.</p> <p>Wigle, J. Macdonald, L., Luccisano, L. &amp; Maurutto, P. (2023). Struggles over city-making in Mexico City: The community program for neighborhood improvement. <i>Journal of Urban Affairs</i>, pp. 1–20.</p> <p>Zamorano, C. (2021). Appropriating the concept of the Right to the City: Politics, politicians, and collective actors in Mexico City. <i>City &amp; Society</i>, 33: 71-90.</p> <p><b>All day site visit</b> to Tlacotal Gabriel Ramos Millán and <i>Casa de la Cultural Las Jarillas</i>, Iztacalco. Guided tour with community leader Don Miguel. Meet at <i>Casa Las Jarillas</i> (Lateral de Plutarco Elías Calles s/n Esquina con Sur 109).</p>
Sun, May 4	<p><b>No Class</b></p>
7. Mon, May 5	<p><b>Labour Rights in Mexico &amp; Transnational Labour Organizing (LM)</b></p> <p>Anner, M., Fischer-Daly, M. &amp; Quintero Ramírez, C. (2024). Between labour control and worker empowerment: Authoritarian innovations and democratic reforms in Mexico. <i>Journal of Industrial Relations</i>. 66(4), 578-603.</p> <p>Polaski, S., Nolan García, K. &amp; Rioux, M. (2022). The USMCA: A ‘new model’ for labor governance in North America? in Gilbert Gagné, G., &amp; Rioux, M. (Eds.), <i>Nafta 2.0: From the First NAFTA to the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement</i>. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Location TBD. Guest speaker: Hector de la Cueva, Centro de Investigación Laboral y Asesoría Sindical (CILAS).</p> <p><b>Student presentations today</b></p> <p><b>PM:</b> Site visit to <i>Monumento de la Revolución</i>.</p>
8. Tues, May 6	<p><b>Gender &amp; Human Rights in Mexico (LM)</b></p> <p>Wright, M. W., &amp; Filipe-Narciso, C. (2025). Raising justice: Political autonomy and a decolonial feminist relandscape of Mexico City’s Reforma. <i>Political Geography</i>, 116, 103251.</p> <p>Lamas, M. (2021). Feminism in Mexico City, in Bohn, S. &amp; Levy, C. (Eds.), <i>Twenty-First-Century Feminisms: Women’s Movements in Latin America and the Caribbean</i>. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 25-47.</p> <p>De Marinis, N. (2018). “Political-affective Intersections: Testimonial traces among forcibly displaced Indigenous People of Oaxaca, Mexico, in Macleod, M. &amp; De Marinis, N. (Eds). <i>Resisting Violence: Emotional Communities in Latin America</i>. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 143-161.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Roundtable with Natalia De Marinis and Dolores Figueroa, professors with Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios en Antropología Social (CIESAS) and doctoral students in Laboratorio de Antropología de las Justicias y las Violencias (LAJUVI). Meet at: CIESAS, Casa Chata, Juárez 87, Tlalpan Centro.</p> <p><b>Student presentations today</b></p> <p><b>PM:</b> Site visit to the colonial centre of Tlalpan.</p>

10. Wed, May 7	<p><b>City-making &amp; Care in Iztapalapa (JW)</b>  Gilbert, L., &amp; De Jong, F. (2015). Entanglements of periphery and informality in Mexico City. <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i>, 39(3), 518–532.  Cortés, L. F. R., &amp; Breña, M. O. (2017). Building citizenship: The struggle for housing in eastern Mexico City. <i>Latin American Perspectives</i>, 44(3), 176–190.  Navarro, A. (2024). Inside the ‘Utopias’ of Mexico City. <i>CityLab, Bloomberg</i> (15 October).</p> <p><i>Look at:</i> Limits: On foot along the edge of the megalopolis of the Valley of Mexico by Feike de Jong, see “limits.mx”.</p> <p><b>All day site visit</b> to the Municipality of Iztapalapa and the UTOPIAS program.  <i>Possible guest speaker and meeting place is pending.</i></p>
11. Thurs, May 8	<p><b>Urban Agriculture in Mexico City (LM)</b>  El Ouardi, M., &amp; Montambeault, F. (2023). Collectively gardening the urban public space in Mexico City: When informal practices interact with the State. <i>International Journal of Urban and Regional Research</i>, 47(2), 201–220.  Hayden, T. B. (2021). Street food as infrastructure: consumer mobility, vendor removability and food security in Mexico City. <i>Food, Culture, &amp; Society</i>, 24(1), 98–111.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting, Casa de la Primera Imprenta.  <b>Student presentations today</b>  <b>PM:</b> Site visit <i>La Roma Verde</i>. Guest speaker is Dr. Iveth Moreno, <i>Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Cuajimalpa)</i>.</p>
12. Fri, May 9	<p><b>Class Reflections and Wrap-up</b>  Students to share their reflections on the politics of space in Mexico City and discuss their Site Visit Critical Commentaries.</p> <p><b>AM:</b> Class meeting, Casa de la Primera Imprenta.  <b>Student presentations today</b>  <b>PM:</b> The anti-monument tour</p>
13. Sat, May 10	<p><b>Final Day in Mexico City</b>  Site visit to <i>Museo de la Antropología</i> and <i>Parque Chapultepec</i>.</p> <p>Group dinner in the <i>Centro Histórico</i>. Domingo Santo Restaurante, Plaza de Santo Domingo, República de Cuba 96.</p>
14. Sun, May 11	<p><b>Departure for Ottawa</b></p>

## Grades

In accordance with the Carleton University Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59	F = < 50
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56	
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52	

ABS = student absent from the final exam; DEF = Deferred; FND = failed, not deferred; GNA = grade not available; WDN = withdrawn from the course. Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the professor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## Late Assignments and Deferred Exams

Assignments turned in late without an approved accommodation will be subject to a reduction of the overall mark at the rate of 5% for each calendar day past the due date. Assignment extensions will be considered for extenuating circumstances beyond your control (e.g. illness). In such cases, contact the professor to discuss possible accommodations *before* an assignment is due and complete the *Self-Declaration for Academic Considerations* form. For details on the proper use of this form and policy, students should consult the *Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations* and read about the procedure for requesting academic accommodations.

## Copyright and Intellectual Property

All slides, assignments, exams, and other course materials created by the professor for this course are the intellectual property of the professor. Students are *not* permitted to reproduce or distribute any of the course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without the express written consent from the copyright holder(s). Audio or video recording of lectures is *not* permitted without the permission of the professor. Students are to refrain from recording, copying, or re-posting course materials or class sessions. A student who publicly posts or sells a professor's work, without the professor's express consent, may be charged with misconduct under Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy and/or Code of Conduct, and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.

## Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for reading and familiarizing themselves with Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy. This policy is available here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

## Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation

or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, research results, diagrams, material on the internet and/or conversations. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT).
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment.
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement.
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

### **Academic Standing and Conduct**

Students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning academic standing and conduct in the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar. This document can be accessed online at: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/>.

### **Academic Accommodations**

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website ([students.carleton.ca/course-outline](https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)).

### **Statement on Student Mental Health**

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a link that may be helpful: <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

### **Other Carleton Resources for Students**

All student support services at Carleton: <https://students.carleton.ca>  
Indigenous Gathering Site: <https://carleton.ca/indigenous/>  
International Student Services Office: <http://www.carleton.ca/isso>  
Student Experience Office: <http://www.carleton.ca/seo/>