

Master of Arts in Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Why study Latin American and Caribbean studies?

Knowledge of Latin American and Caribbean culture, environment, and society is crucial to U.S. hemispheric relations and world understanding.

The Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) offers an interdisciplinary MA program to students interested in exploring and advancing knowledge in the histories, cultures, and social, political and economic affairs of the region. Our program is distinguished by its quality and long term national recognition, facilitating graduate research at home and abroad, sponsoring events that promote transcultural competence, and development of outreach resources to regional educators. For over 50 years, the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies (CLACS) has provided KU students the opportunity to study this region and its people, and encourage the development of foreign language, research, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Graduate Programs

The Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies administers an interdisciplinary program of substantive and language courses leading to the Master of Arts degree. (<https://latamst.ku.edu/overview-ma>) Students may pursue the M.A. as a terminal degree for careers in the public or private sector or as preparation for additional graduate study. The MA degree requirements exhibit an interdisciplinary perspective, emphasizing language competency and supervised field research. There is a thesis option (for students planning to continue in a PhD program) and a non-thesis option for those seeking professional employment.

With more than 100 core, affiliate, and research faculty members, the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies offers a graduate certificate (<https://latamst.ku.edu/overview-graduate-certificates>) for students who want to cultivate a knowledge of Latin America and the Caribbean and to develop cultural fluency and intellectual flexibility. A graduate certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies is also available with three tracks: general, Central American and Mexican Studies, and Brazilian Studies.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (<http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies>) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (<http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences>) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Graduate Admission

Eligibility criteria for admission to the Master's program follow Graduate Studies' admission policy (<http://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study>). Non-native speakers of English must meet English proficiency requirements as described here (<http://graduate.ku.edu/english-proficiency-requirements>).

M.A. admission requires a Bachelor's degree, preferably in one of the social sciences or humanities, and language proficiency in either Spanish or Portuguese as demonstrated by completion of a fourth-semester course or the equivalent. For all applicants, please check the application requirements through the LA&CS Admission page. (<https://latamst.ku.edu/admission-ma-0>)

Domestic and international applications must submit a complete online graduate application (<http://graduate.ku.edu/application-process>). For additional questions regarding program requirements and application processes, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Cecile Accilien (<https://latamst.ku.edu/c%C3%A9cile-accilien>). Applicants may also contact the department directly:

The University of Kansas
Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies
Bailey Hall, Room 320
1440 Jayhawk Blvd. | Lawrence, KS 66045

785-864-4213 | latamst@ku.edu

M.A. Degree Requirements

Course Work

A minimum of 30 graduate credit hours (500 level or above) is required in social sciences or humanities courses with Latin American content.

Requirements are meant to provide training in research design, content breadth, disciplinary breadth as well as exposure to discipline-specific methods and problems, independent research, and language competence.

- 1. Research Design:** Research Design in International Area Studies (LAA 710) **3 hrs**
- 2. Area Content:** 7-8 courses with Latin American / Caribbean content, which must meet the following requirements (an individual course may count towards multiple requirements) **21-24 hrs**
 - 12 hours (4 courses) of the area content courses must be at the 700-level or above
 - 12 hours (4 courses) must be selected from the program's list of approved courses with *at least* 50% Latin American / Caribbean content
 - Courses must be drawn from at least two separate disciplines
 - 9 hours (3 courses) must constitute a "specialization cluster" designed to prepare the student for the thesis / comparative research paper. The specialization cluster may be in a topic / issue, in a geographical area, in a particular discipline, etc., and is designed in consultation with the student's advisor and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.
 - For students who will only enroll in 3 credit hours of LAA 899, the remaining 3 credit hours (to complete the 30 required) must be selected from the program's list of approved courses with at least 25% Latin American / Caribbean Content.
- 3. Thesis Hours:** 3-6 hours of Thesis Research and Writing (LAA 899) **3-6 hrs**

- a. MA Thesis option students must enroll in at least 3 hours
- b. Comparative Research paper option students must enroll in only 3 hours

academic study abroad programs in Latin America is the Kansas program at the Universidad de Costa Rica.

Language Proficiency

M.A. candidates must demonstrate comprehensive proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese. This includes aural, speaking, reading, and writing ability. Completion of SPAN 424 and SPAN 428 or a higher-level course constitutes comprehensive proficiency in Spanish. Comprehensive proficiency in Portuguese requires completion of a 500-level or higher literature course.

The language requirements should be satisfied as early as possible. Students also must complete two semesters in a second language (SPAN 104 and SPAN 108; PORT 104 and PORT 108), or the equivalent (e.g. PORT 611). Quichua, Kaqchikel Maya, or Haitian Creole may be substituted as the language of reading proficiency with approval of the director.

M.A. Degree Options

Thesis and nonthesis degrees are offered. The thesis degree is most appropriate as preparation for a doctoral program and dissertation. Students must declare their intention to write a thesis before the end of the first year and form a committee of three faculty members, each from a different discipline. The student defends the completed thesis in an oral examination before this committee. A student must enroll in at least 3 credit hours of thesis. Students may count up to 6 credit hours of thesis toward the degree.

The nonthesis M.A. degree is suitable for a career in public service or business. The culmination of the nonthesis M.A. is an oral examination during the last semester of the student's program. The Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies produces a handout, Nonthesis M.A. Degree Option: Oral Exam Guidelines.

According to the continuous enrollment policy of the College, once the student's course work is completed, the student must enroll in at least 1 credit hour of thesis/nonthesis (LAA 899) a semester (excluding summers) until the thesis and its defense or the oral examination is completed.

Recommended Graduate Courses

For a list of recommended Graduate Courses with 25-100% Latin American or Caribbean Content please visit the department website (<https://latamst.ku.edu/courses>). Courses with a blank (____) at the end of their titles are typically topics or seminar courses that may be repeated for credit. Usually these courses offer different topics each time they are taught. Students should check with the course instructor about the requirements to take the course and what the topic will be when it is offered.

Study in Latin America

The Center encourages students to study and do research (<https://latamst.ku.edu/study-abroad-0>) in Latin America or the Caribbean. Intensive language institutes in Portuguese and Spanish are held in Salvador, Brazil; and Puebla, Mexico; respectively. The Center has helped develop exchange relationships with universities in Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru and Brazil. One of the oldest and most successful