SPAN 3330 – Cultural Studies in the Andes (Cuzco, Machu Picchu and Lima)

Instructor: Heraldo Faclconi
Location: Cuzco, Machu Picchu, and Lima, Peru
Dates: May 8 – 31, 2019

Cultural Studies in the Andes will offer students an interdisciplinary course of study tailored to Vanderbilt’s curricular needs and the specific characteristics and interests of the students attending it. It will also offer students the opportunity to study and live in a small city that is both an ancient cultural capital and one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world.

In this course, students will explore different forms of cultural production in the Hispanic world, with a focus on the Andean region and a strong emphasis on hands-on learning. Some of the issues discussed will be the lessons of cultural anthropology and archaeology to explore the past and understand the present, popular and elite artistic production, the importance of festive culture in the region, as well as questions of gender and society.

All guest speakers and faculty members participating in the Maymester will be scholars associated with the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC) or the Universidad San Antonio Abad. This institutional arrangement will combine the dynamism of a new research center and think tank such as CBC with the institutional weight of the oldest university in the region that also houses the largest and most important Colonial archives in the Andes.

Classes will be taught in smart seminar rooms at CBC and students will lodge in the historic city center. Definite lodging arrangements will depend on our needs and local availability but choices range from dorm rooms, apartments, and local families with university-aged children, to community houses where indigenous artisans gather to receive training and sell their products through fair-trade schemes. Every effort will be made so that students have the opportunity to stay at historic buildings, some of which were built by Spaniards over the foundation of Inca constructions.

Aside from trips to Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas, students will visit more recently discovered archeological sites and will have a chance to attend some of the most important local festivals and ritual celebrations of the year. One of them is the colonial procession of Corpus Christi and another is Qoyllur Riti a festival of pre-Columbian origins. Additionally, during their stay in Peru students will learn about and participate in various social and service activities developed by local NGOs dealing with micro-finances, sustainable tourism, fair-trade and education. All extra-curricular activities will be guided, integrated into the program of study, and offer unique insights into cultural syncretism in the Hispanic world. The aim of this program of activities and excursions is to create for the student a meaningful experience we could call experiential tourism. All extra-curricular activities, workshops and excursions are included in the Maymester cost.

Students will receive credit for Span 3330: Cultural Studies in the Andes (Major: Culture/Elective; AXLE: INT; Prerequisite: Span 3301W and Span 3302.) Formal classes 2 (taught in Spanish) will meet during the week and weekends will be devoted to group activities and excursions.