



Semester in Mexico Program

Engage in service projects, field research, and academic courses while living in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Program Overview

ProMexico and *Western Washington University* share in a vision of empowering university students to make valuable contributions in Mexico through the study abroad volunteer program. The Semester in Mexico enhances students' global perspectives through a blend of academic coursework, field studies, and hands-on development project experience.

Program courses, taught by Mexican and foreign professors, offer authentic and insightful perspectives while deepening students' understanding of Mexico and the Spanish language. Courses are taught in conjunction with the Southwest Center for International Studies. Community development projects, field work, and adventure activities complement classes, creating an integrated program experience.

The program headquarters is the Instituto Welte, a private research center with an outstanding library on Oaxaca. Here the students meet and study, have access to the collection, and some of the courses are held on its premises. Language classes are held at Amigos del Sol, a language school which stresses oral proficiency, and other classes may meet according to arrangements made by local faculty. Local professors are scholars of national reputation in Mexico experienced in teaching international students.

All classes are taught in Spanish. Spanish tutoring support is available throughout the program. Additionally, the first month is spent exclusively on Spanish to help prepare the students for the remaining academic program.

Field Studies and Experiential Learning

The Semester in Mexico courses provide a balance of classroom and field instruction. Examples of field studies include:

- Mexico City field trip to visit museums and the National Museum of Anthropology
- Field visit to the state of Veracruz to compare patterns of history, society, and development with those of Oaxaca

- Trip through the southern mountains of Oaxaca to the Pacific coast, in an explicit comparison with the themes and issues examined in the trip to Veracruz
- Site visits to rural communities to compare patterns of social service, resource use, household economics, and other topics with what we have seen in urban settings

In the Field Development Projects

Students engage in community projects throughout the semester. Semester projects are chosen by Site Directors based on needs of communities. Some project options include:

- Building or renovating schools, community centers, and clinics
- Constructing drinking water systems and irrigation canals
- Establishing micro businesses and micro credit systems
- Providing basic medical services
- Environmental protection projects

CLASSES AND CREDITS

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester in Mexico students are enrolled at Western Washington University in the core curriculum for 16 credits. Western Washington University accredits the program and provides transcripts upon successful completion. Courses are delivered in collaboration with Dr. Jack Corbett and the Southwest Center for International Studies. ProMexico offers the following curriculum:

INTERMEDIATE OR ADVANCED SPANISH — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

This course begins with a thorough written and oral Spanish evaluation, placing each student with other students of his or her level. Conversation, reading, and discussion of texts in private and small classes emphasize enrichment of vocabulary for daily conversational needs as well as more traditional instruction concentrating on grammatical structures.

CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN MODERN MEXICO — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

As Mexico enters the 21st century, its long history of one-party domination draws to a close and its search for autonomy gives way to visions of globalization. This course addresses the impacts of development work and the political and economic changes reshaping Mexico, balancing the legacy of the Mexican Revolution against the multiple tensions unleashed by new needs and expectations.

HEALTH AND SOCIETY IN MEXICO — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

From traditional health practices to contemporary issues such as AIDS and aging, this course provides an unusual perspective on one of the most critical areas of concern in modern Mexico. Students supplement classroom work with field visits and opportunities for direct observation of health problems and health care.

MESOAMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

This course combines the study of Oaxaca as a case study in Mexican archaeology with opportunities for a practical introduction to archaeological field methods. Students examine changing settlement patterns, monumental architecture, archaeological heritage protection, and other themes which provide the basis for comparisons with different regions of Mexico. Surveying and mapping, site recording, materials analysis, and interpretation are explored during field trips.

ADDITIONAL COURSES AND ELECTIVES

Semester in Mexico students may choose to add additional courses or alter their core curriculum upon approval from ProMexico. The following non-core courses are offered:

LAND AND SOCIETY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

Human use of the landscape and its resources structures this exploration of Mexican history from the Conquest to the present. The overarching theme integrates the organization and persistence of indigenous communities, rural struggles and rebellion, gender roles, and rights and linkages between local and transnational interests. The course includes multiple short field trips and speakers.

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

Mexican migration to the United States creates new social networks and transforms communities on both sides of the border. Oaxaca is a major contributor to the current migrant stream, and this course offers a well-grounded understanding of the dynamics of the migration process and its significance for different social participants.

FIELD STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY MEXICO — 4 SEMESTER CREDITS

Students engage in independent or small group research under the supervision of a local advisor. Projects must fall into one of the following topic areas:

- (a) Ecology and environmental systems
- (b) Political economy
- (c) Social or economic anthropology

Course Master List

Course/Section	CRN	Course Title	Credits	Instructor
Spanish				
Span 337S 663	41163	Advanced	4	
Anthropology				
Anth 437A 667	41161	Mesoamerican Archaeology	4	Nelly Robles Garcia
Anth 437D 650	41377	Health & Society in Mexico	4	Javier Mendez
Anth 337A 652	42018	Social Dimensions of International Migration	4	Jack Corbett
Sociology				
Soc 337C 655	42017	Social Dimensions of International Migration	4	Jack Corbett
International Studies				
Intl 337T 667	42767	Field Studies	4	Jack Corbett

Program Summary

Projects: 4 to 6 group development projects
 Orientation: Intensive group orientation
 Living: Homestay family
 Academic Classes: 4 to 5 days a week

Semester Credits: 16

Total class hours: 256
 Project hours: 56
 Average class hours per credit: 16
 Accreditation: Western Washington University
 Language of Instruction: Spanish and English

Excursions

A mix of adventure and cultural activities
 Coastal Oaxaca
 Craft and Migrant Communities of the Central Valleys
 Remote community cultural events
 Exploring rural Zapotec villages