

Oaxaca and Oaxacalifornia: Culture, Cuisine, and Biodiversity



Spring 2020, Dates:
e-mail:

May 18 - June 12th (May 18-11th in Los Angeles)
Portnoy@usc.edu

I. Course objectives:

- Experience firsthand the cultural, political, economic and spiritual value of Oaxaca's nature, agriculture, traditional and street art
- Investigate Oaxacan culture on both sides of the border: Los Angeles and Oaxaca
- Learn about the concept of responsible tourism and try to be responsible tourists throughout our stay!
- Discover traditional medical practice through Oaxacan herbs and other spiritual practices both in Los Angeles and in markets, villages of Oaxaca
- Explore permaculture (the development of agricultural ecosystems meant to be sustainable and self-sufficient) in the mountains, villages and coast of Oaxaca
- Explore the effects of immigration to Los Angeles on the culture of a largely indigenous community that has historically faced discrimination
- Learn about indigenous groups in Oaxaca that have developed local weaving cooperatives and small-scale ecological production.
- Get to know the coastal region and contrast its culture, cuisine and geography with the Central Valley and Sierra Norte Mountains
- Learn about the biodiversity of Oaxaca's mountains, Central Valley and coast.
- Participate and learn about conservation efforts in protected areas of the coast through turtle rescue.
- Become familiar with the economic activities in Oaxaca and learn first-hand about the causes of migration to the U.S. in this area.



II. Brief Course Description and Weekly Topics:

Oaxaca is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and is the most culturally and biologically diverse of Mexican states with sixteen different languages spoken in addition to Spanish, and environments as varied as desert, pine forest, and tropical rain forest.

The food of Oaxaca stands out as one of the richest and most diverse in all of Mexico. Based on a synthesis of Spanish and Indigenous legacies, Oaxacan cuisine is known for its many *moles*, complex sauces made of chilies, chocolate, herbs and spices; for its many corn products; for its mescal, a locally cultivated, distilled beverage made from agave; and for the rich Oaxacan chocolate.



During the Maymester, students will explore Oaxacan culture, food, art, agriculture and biodiversity and discover how they are used as a tool for sovereignty and empowerment.

III. Weekly Agenda

Week 1:

Since Los Angeles is home to the largest Oaxacan community outside of Oaxaca City (an estimated 80,000 economic migrants have come since the 1990s), the course will begin with a week in Los Angeles introducing students to Oaxacan culture and cuisine through lectures with a local activist, a tour of downtown Los Angeles' street art, a visit to Rocio Camacho's Oaxacan restaurant, etc. We will see how, in some cases, Oaxacan culture in Los Angeles has—in some ways---changed as a result of immigration, while at the same time maintaining its own unique culture and cuisine.

Week 2: The second week of the program will be based in the city of Oaxaca. We will begin with a tour of the city's center, a discussion on responsible tourism and a dinner at Oaxaca's most well-regarded restaurant, Casa Oaxaca. Next, we will have a bike tour of Oaxaca's street art and meet a few artists at their gallery afterwards. We will go hiking in beautiful Hierve El Agua, a petrified waterfall an hour's drive from Oaxaca. Finally, we will have a half-day for a cacao tour with *Chocosol*, a social enterprise that makes artisanal chocolate using organic, shade grown chocolate sourced from indigenous communities in the Oaxacan mountains. We will learn about *Chocosol*'s reciprocal relationship with local producers and how they benefit from it.

Week 3:

This week will focus on traditional Oaxacan cuisine and indigenous women's rights in Oaxaca. We will spend one night in the small town of Teotitlán del Valle with the Women's Cooperative where we will learn about their struggle for self-determination and empowerment.

We will also learn about ecotourism and traditional medicine during a two night/three days in one of the Pueblos Mancomunados, indigenous villages that developed a communal ecotourism project in the 1990s that has become a model for all of Mexico. We will hike a pre-Hispanic trade route between the villages, learn about traditional medicinal herbs, and take part in a ritual cleansing (temezcal).

Week 4:

The last week we will have a final dinner and then share our ethnographic research. The rest of this week will be devoted to the biodiversity of the coastal area—the birds, marine life, and cacao and coffee plantations. We will depart for the coast via the mountains and spend a night in the mountain town of San José del Pacífico on the way to the coast. The next day we will visit coffee plantations and arrive at the beach town of Mazunte where we will learn about the birds, marine life, and other mammals living in the coastal region, explore the coast and its natural environment, visit a turtle sanctuary, swim in the bioluminescence and enjoy the waves!

IV. Course evaluation:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Participation | 15% |
| Week 1 quiz | 15% |
| Food Ethnography | 15% |
| Presentation | |
| Write-Up | 15% |
| Reflections | 40% |

(5% each, do 8 out of 9)

A. Attendance and Class Discussion (15%) -- Attendance at each session is mandatory. Class discussions will be focused on readings and larger questions for the daily topic of study. This part of the grade will be determined by a combination of attendance, and participation in class discussions. Attendance at all field trips and excursions is mandatory as well. Except in cases of serious illness, attendance at all of the classes/excursions is expected, as they are an important part of the course.

B. Reading Quiz –One reading and experiential quiz will be given at the end of week 1 – it is designed to ensure that students complete the readings, pay attention during talks and excursions, and come prepared for discussion.



C. Ethnography (Presentation and Written Observations)—In groups of 3, you will observe traditional practices in Oaxaca and its environs.

Suggested topics: a specific food or drink such as the tlayuda, mezcal, etc., the tradition of *alebrijes*, Street art, women artisans, traditional medicine, etc.

Each group will write up a short description and analysis of his/her observations, and answer the following questions in the course of your analysis:

If food is the focus, use the following questions to help guide you:

- How is the drink or dish prepared? Who prepared it?
- Who is dining? What binds the diners together?
- Is there an order to how the food is consumed?
- What choices have been made about what to consume and when?
- What ingredients are being used? Are they locally grown and purchased?
- Is there a history to the food being consumed? How do you know? Would this eating process have looked any differently three or five or ten decades ago?
- What supplements the food? Décor, conversation, etc.? Is the food secondary to the supplements? Or does the food come first?
- How are the food, ambience, or diners different in the U.S. from Oaxaca? Similar?

In **3-4 double-spaced pages**, record your observations and then draw conclusions about the role of these traditions and rituals in everyday life in Oaxaca and in Los Angeles. You will be graded on the vibrancy of your description and analysis and the details supplied. **Each group should also prepare a 15-minute presentation based on your observations.** This presentation should summarize the basics of your ethnography and then conclude with the most interesting analytical elements from your description—reflecting on the experience.

D. **Reflections.** You will write 8 out of 9 two page reflections on your experiences. These reflections should be detailed and reflect your reactions to experiences. What struck you? Why was this experience valuable? What did you learn about X? (More detailed instructions to follow.)

V. Lodging:

You will stay in groups of 2-3 in homes in the Center of Oaxaca arranged through a language school, **Becari** Conzatti Language School
Oaxaca, Oax., 68000 México
951 5038448 // cell phone: 9511518629

Suggested places to eat on your own: I will give you a longer list once we are there.

Itanoni

The owner is a great defender of native corn and they make many different dishes with their *masa*.

Boulenc-amazing bakery

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES/ACTIVITIES:

Readings for May 18th: (1-3 are short, esp. 2 and 3, #4 is longer, but good background on Oaxacans and migration, 5 is a 23 min. Documentary, and 6 gives background on Street art for Monday's tour!)

1. Portnoy, Sarah, Introduction, “From Tamale Wagons to California Burritos: A History of Latino Food in Los Angeles,” *Food, Health, and Culture in Latino Los Angeles* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 1-26. (See USC library for my e-book) (p. 1-6, 13-17,-21-26)
2. Portnoy, Sarah. “From Border Grill to Broken Spanish: The Evolution of Latino Cuisine in Los Angeles.” *Food, Health and Culture in Latino Los Angeles* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), (p. 34-39, 45-49 (USC library)
3. “Intrepid Chef Rocio Camacho Debuting Two New Restaurants in Paramount and Bell,” <https://la.eater.com/2017/7/5/15923478/rocio-camacho-new-restaurants-paramount-bell-mexican-oaxacan>
4. Kresge, Lisa, “Indigenous Oaxacan Communities in California: an Overview,” BB (focus on part related to L.A. Oaxacan community—up to p.7)

May 18, Monday (9-1:30 PM)

- 9-11 Review syllabus
- Lecture on Oaxacan culture and gastronomy, discuss readings
- Ethical Guidelines
- **11:30-1:30 Drive to Diosa de los Moles for hands-on cooking class with Chef Rocío Camacho**, sample moles, hands-on in the kitchen, discuss Oaxacan cuisine

Reading:

- “Introducing the *Street Art of Resistance*,” *Street Art of Resistance*, p. 1-16. USC Library.
- “Representations of Resistance: Ironic Iconography in a Southern Mexican Social Movement,” *Street Art of Resistance*, p. 277-297 (USC online)

May 19, Tuesday

12-2 Downtown Mural Tour: your tour will start at the corner of Colyton and Palmetto in the Arts District (527 Colyton St, Los Angeles 90013) Your guide will meet you at the park benches on the green.

Readings for Thursday, May 19th.

Theme—responsible tourism

- Documentary intro to Responsible tourism: “Crowded Out: An Overtourism Documentary,” <https://www.responsiblevacation.com/copy/overtourism-documentary>
- Manifesto: <http://www.oaxsessions.com/manifesto-beyond-tourism/> (What is interculturalism? What are some ways to be a responsible tourist? What is regenerative tourism?)
- “Oaxacalifornia dreaming: L.A. library mural project looks at a visual language that transcends borders,” <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-ca-cm-oaxacan-murals-central-library-20170920-htmlstory.html>
- “A Simple Guide to Ethnography,” <http://www.dguth.journalism.ku.edu/Ethnography.html>
- Overview of OAX: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oaxaca>

- Study guide for quiz
- Overview video antes de partir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4OEmME-u6o>

May 21, Thursday

- Griffith Park morning hike
- Discussion on readings at Griffith Park

Readings for Fri:

- Stephen, Lynn, “Transborder Communities in Political and Historical Context: Views from Oaxaca,” and “Mexicans in California,” *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Duke University Press, 2007), Ch. 1- p. 1-23, you can skim over dialogue, just get main concepts about migration and transborder (BB Content)
- *Anyone Speak K’iche’ or Mam? Immigration Courts Overwhelmed by Indigenous Languages*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/19/us/translators-border-wall-immigration.html> (A conversation)
- “An Ode to Oaxacan LA, “Friday Nights at Poncho’s,” <http://www.lataco.com/an-ode-to-oaxacan-l-a-friday-nights-at-ponchos-tlayudas/> (this is a fun piece that as you get further down talks about Oaxacan culture in LA)
- “A Delicious Link to Oaxaca in South Los Angeles,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/04/dining/oaxaca-food-los-angeles.html>

May 22, Friday

- 4 PM-Conversation with Odilia of the Discussion with Odilia Romero, President, FIOB, Frente Indígena Organizaciones Binacionales
- 5 PM- Poncho’s Tlayudas (have your Friends/family meet us)
- Quiz #1 (on your own to upload to BB)

May 23, Saturday

- Meet at airport, VOLARIS FLIGHT is at 1:48
- travel day-land at 8 PM.

May 24, Sunday

- 10-1:30-Búsqueda de tesoro para descubrir la ciudad con **Coyote Aventuras—incluir el Mercado BJ—Pasillo del Humo, nieves, etc.**
- Comida en casa
- Conversación sobre Turismo responsable con Chris 4:30-5:15
- Introducción a Tierraventura y Coyote -**Carlos (5:30-6:15)**
- Cena de introducción en Quince Letras, Celia (8-10)

Readings and Video for Monday and Tuesday

1. Ted Talk with founder of Chocosol: “Reclaiming Chocolate: Chocosol Traders and Chocolatiers.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un80UxuCcno>

2. “Ted-Ed talk on the history of chocolate” <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-history-of-chocolate-deanna-pucciarelli#review> (4 minutes)
3. Sophie and Michael Coe, “The Birth of Chocolate: Mesoamerican Genesis,” *The True History of Chocolate*, 33-64 (BB)
4. “Setting the Anthropological Table,” To think about for ethnography (You can skip the Trifle section p. 10-11ish)
5. Manifesto Maize
6. To Eat *Chapulines* in Oaxaca, Mexico: One Food, Many Flavors .BB
7. The Taste of Oaxaca: It’s to Die For!

May 25, Monday

Chocolate Tour: cacao’s spiritual and culinary role in Oaxacan culture (9AM-1:30 PM, half of the group—lunch included, other half Tues May 21st)

- We will explore Oaxaca City's centro histórico, includes three local markets, three chocolaterías and local churches/parks. While touring Oaxaca's various markets, parks, and chocolatiers, we trace the history of chocolate not only through Mexican and world history, but through flavors. Via pre-Hispanic hot and cold cacao drinks, local seeds and chocolate tastings, we follow the mysteries and the path of the humble cacao bean from its beginnings to its modern incarnations today, its relation to Maize, and finally how chocolate is made.
- **Other Half:** Chocolate Making Workshop at Chocolate Rebellía (10-1)
- **4:30-meet to get your bikes**
- Street Art in OAXACA bike ride from 5-9, we will see and discuss 20 different murals or images of street art
- Reflexión #2 sobre Cacao/Taller/Street Art due by midnight

May 26, Tuesday

- Cacao Experience (9-1:30—mitad de la clase)
- Taller de hacer chocolate (9-12—otra mitad)
- **Visita a COMIAC o Consorcio Oaxaca/Actividad interactiva allí 4:30-6:30**
- Reflexión #3 sobre COMIAC

May 27, miércoles

- 8 AM- Prehistoria de Oaxaca—Mitla—cuevas, ruinas, Yagul--Coyote Aventuras (Dormir en San Lorenzo)

May 28—jueves

- **7 AM-Hierve El Agua-amanecer, Hike y cascada y desayuno, Convite Palenque a la una**
- Tarde libre en OAX

Readings on Amaranth:

- “Amaranth” from *Cambridge World History of Food*. BB
- Why Mexican Chefs, Farmers And Activists Are Reviving The Ancient Grain Amaranth,” <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/05/01/526033083/why-mexican-chefs-farmers-and-activists-are-reviving-the-ancient-grain-amaranth>
- Puente: <https://www.puentemexico.org/en/content/why-amaranth>
- Short video on Puente: <https://vimeo.com/66408400>

May 29—viernes

Agricultural Production and Food Sovereignty

- 9:15- Salir de OAX para Villa de Etla
- 10- 1--Discussion with Puente about amaranth production
- 11-1 Visit Etla to visit the fields and make amaranth products
- **1:30—2:30- Ecological Lunch in Etla with the community**
- 3-4 -Visita fábrica de papel Vista Hermosa and Centro Cultural San Agustín
- 4 PM—return to OAX
- **Reflexión #4 due**

May 30—sábado

- Monte Albán-**Coyote**/comida/hacer alebrijes (8:30-5)
- 3 PM—During the afternoon we will make our own alebrijes (painted wooden animal figures from Coco)
- Bicicleta nocturna (opcional)
- Reflexión #5 due by midnight

Readings:

- Cohen, Sanchez, and Montiel-Ishino, “*Chapulines* and Food Choices in Rural Oaxaca,” *Gastronomica*, Winter 2009. BB/Insects reading.
- “BEING A CONSCIENTIOUS TOURIST AT OAXACA’S TLACOLULAMARKET,” <http://www.themijachronicles.com/2010/12/being-a-conscientious-tourist-at-oaxacas-tlacolula-market/>
- <https://www.lapl.org/whats-on/exhibits/oaxaca>

May 31--domingo

- 9:30 AM—partir para Tlacolula (Spend 2 hours at largest Oaxacan market in the town of Tlacolula
 - 10-11 Tour de murales con Tlacolulokus
 - 11:15-1:30 Mercado de Tlacolula—explorar por tu cuenta el mercado
 - 2- volver a OAX
 - Tiempo para etnografías en la tarde

June 1, lunes and June 2, martes

Zapotec Cooking Class in Teotitlán del Valle and visit to Women Weavers (9 AM-3 PM)

Lunes

- Teotitlán—salir a las 9:15-30

- 10:00-11:30 aprender sobre Women's Weaving Cooperative, natural dyes, etc.
- 11:30-12 Visita a la iglesia
- 12-3:30 tiempo con las familias
- 4-6 Limpia y temezcal (ritual cleansing with indigenous women)
- 6-8 subir Picachu (highest local peak—optional!)
- Reflexión #6 (WIFI PERMITTING)

martes, 2 de junio

- 9:00 AM Arrive to Reyna Mendoza-- local market tour, hands-on cooking class in Reyna's outdoor home kitchen followed by a sit-down group meal
- We will learn about traditional cooking tools including a clay *comal* (flat griddle used to roast ingredients), a *metate* (large stone tool used to grind maize, chocolate, or dried chiles and spices for mole), and a molcajete (stone pestle and mortar) to make salsa.
- 2:30 PM leave for the mountains (Latuvi)
- Visit local traditional artists

Junio 3, miércoles

- Caminata/Hike de Latuvi a Lachatao
- Dormir en Lachatao

Junio 4, jueves

- Visitar el Cerro del Jaguar con Oscar
- Aprender sobre medicina tradicional
- Temezcal
- **Reflexión #7**
- Consultar sobre plan para tu etnografía
- 5—volver a OAX

Junio 5, Viernes

- Día libre para trabajar etnografías/Consultas

Junio 6, Sábado

- Día libre
- Cena final Casa Oaxaca 8 PM

Junio 7, domingo

- 10-12 Presentaciones finales
- Comida con la familia
- 1:30- Partir para la costa/San José del Pacífico- 4 horas
- Comida en San José
- Caminata a la Cascada—opcional
- Reflexión #8

Junio 8, Lunes

- Yoga (opcional)
- 8:30-Partir para la costa de San José (4 horas)
- Visitar cafetales (café y cacao) en el camino
- Llegar a Mazunte beach

Junio 9, martes

- Mañana libre en playa
- Afternoon- Aprender sobre aves y los animales del ecosistema de la costa y la laguna con aves
- Aprender sobre el programa del gobierno para rescatar las tortugas que están en peligro de extinción y soltar las tortugas que acaban de nacer
- nadar en la bioluminescencia por la noche

10, miércoles

- 8-11- ver delfines y tortugas en el mar
- Tarde libre en la playa/Surf class (optional)
- Sunset hike en Mazunte
- **Reflexión #8**

11, jueves-

- Visitar una galería de arte
- Sunset--aguas termales
- Cena de despedida en la playa

June 12, viernes

- **Airport drop off**
- **Reflexión #9 FINAL**

HOME!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Health Insurance

All USC students are required to have sufficient health and accident insurance protection during their study abroad program. All students on international special sessions will have USC coverage while abroad. Students who have waived out of USC-provided insurance for the spring semester will be enrolled in the USC additional ACE insurance for \$92/month. There is no deductible on this plan. However, the USC insurance policies work on a reimbursement system, which means you will generally be expected to pay for your medical care and prescriptions out of pocket and then file a claim for reimbursement. When you submit a claim, you need to attach all of your receipts for payment. If your receipts are not in US dollars, you must also submit exchange rate information. If you do not have enough money to pay for service out of pocket, you can call International SOS to request

guarantee of payment to the health service provider. Both types of USC health insurance include International SOS coverage. International SOS is a company that is on call to provide worldwide assistance 24 hours a day. International SOS coverage includes referrals to physicians, dentists, psychologists, clinics, and hospitals; medical evacuation; repatriation; and a range of other services. Students receive an International SOS card prior to studying overseas. Some important health-related websites:

http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/Health_Center/ms.travel.clinic.shtml

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

Basic Safety Rules

Remember that in the country you are visiting you are a guest, thus always behave with this fact in mind. Be aware that all student conduct policies listed in SCampus apply while you are overseas. This includes the University's policies on alcohol and drug use, as well as sexual misconduct. <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/>

Recognize that the rules and recommendations given by your overseas program are in existence for good reason, and are often based on real-life experience. Be aware that being "foreign" does not excuse you from knowing and obeying the laws of your host country. Make sure the director of the program, who is assigned the responsibility for your welfare, always knows where you are and how to contact you in an emergency. Give her your flight itinerary and other schedules if you are traveling by yourself.

If you decide to go out by yourself, always let your director and group mates know where you are going. Avoid impairing your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol. Remember that, at all times, you are representing USC and USA.

Health and Safety Information to Keep in Mind when Traveling To Mexico

Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California urges students and parents to stay informed of conditions that may affect the health and safety of USC students abroad. Traveling and living in a foreign country always present an element of risk. In a study abroad program as in other settings, students' own decisions and behaviors can have a major impact on their own health and safety. There are many resources available to help students and parents better understand risks associated with traveling and living in foreign countries as well as precautions that can be taken. To aid students and parents in their consideration of potential health and safety risks, we have put together some information and provided links to readily accessible web sites that address issues of health and safety while abroad:

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/health-and-safety/>.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms

of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.