Hello and welcome!

I’m Dr. Xavier Haro-Carrión (he / him; you can call me Xavier if you wish), your course instructor, who is eager to help you understand some fundamental knowledge of Neotropical Landscapes!

Email me at xharocar@macalester.edu
Visit me in CARN 104F

Your TA will be Elizabeth Trevathan. Email her at etrevath@macalester.edu.

Course learning outcomes

- Apply geographic and ecological concepts to evaluate the distinctiveness of Neotropical biomes and ecoregions, exploring both natural and human influences on these landscapes.
- Examine environmental threats impacting these landscapes and interventions (or the lack of) aimed at mitigating them.
- Construct and apply an interdisciplinary framework to the analyzes of landscapes incorporating biophysical, social, and environmental components.

Prerequisites

A lot of enthusiasm!

Course Description
Neotropical ecosystems offer a range of services, both locally and globally, including water sources, climate mitigation, and biodiversity conservation. They are also home to various human groups and support the livelihood of local and global human populations. This course provides students a basic understanding of the most important biophysical and social characteristics of the dominant landscapes within the Neotropical biogeographic region. Among others, these landscapes include the tropical rain forests of the Amazon, the montane forests and páramos of the Andes, and the temperate forests of Patagonia. For each of these landscapes, we learn about key ecological processes that govern their functioning. We also study the people living in them—indigenous communities, afro-descendants, and mestizo populations—and how they interact with the environment. Finally, using examples of these areas, we analyze human-environment processes including land-use change, biodiversity and/or cultural conservation, and climate change impacts and responses.

### Meeting times and office hours

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<th>Time</th>
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<td>09:30-10:30</td>
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<td>10:50-11:50</td>
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<td>Class times</td>
<td>Instructor Office hours</td>
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<td>2:00 – 4:00</td>
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<td>4:00 - 5:00</td>
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<td>TA Office hours (second floor of library, Idea Lab)</td>
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### Textbook

This class has no required textbooks. The following books are valuable sources of information for the topics that will be covered (all available in my office). Copies of chapters will be provided for a limited time. Additional sources, such as peer-reviewed papers, news articles, podcasts, are outlined in the “Detailed Weekly Schedule” section of this syllabus and will be accessible in Moodle.


### Course Details
Structure
Throughout the semester, I will employ diverse teaching approaches. Some classes will adopt a "flipped-classroom model," requiring students to engage with the material before class, allowing for more in-depth exploration during our sessions. In certain instances, a "blended-learning model" will be utilized, combining pre-provided material with in-class lectures. Traditional lecture-style delivery will be employed in some classes, while others will focus entirely on discussion. As the semester progresses, I encourage you to provide feedback on the teaching techniques you find most beneficial and engaging!

Class Activities
Nearly every class will feature a related activity, such as exit tickets, opening questions, summaries of previous class, paper discussions, and more. These activities have multiple functions: they ensure consistent review of class content, promote class engagement, foster a sense of community, and maintain the cohesion and commitment of our group. As these activities will be conducted almost daily, they will also contribute to tracking attendance. Generally, these activities are not subjected to make-up opportunities (but refer to Attendance policies below for exceptions). I acknowledge that unavoidable circumstances may occasionally hinder your attendance and full participation. To accommodate such situations, the lowest grades of class activities will be disregarded and will not factor into the final calculation of your Class Activities grade.

Exams
Two cumulative exams will be part of this course. One will be scheduled approximately midway through the semester, and the other will take place toward the end of the semester. These exams will encompass short-answer questions, brief essays, map interpretations and applied problem-solving questions. The purpose is to evaluate your knowledge and develop soft skills, such as the ability to work under time-limited and potentially stressful scenarios. People respond differently to these circumstances, and I am open to considering options to make the exam-taking experience as comfortable as possible, including scheduling exams outside of class in the Max Center or adjusting proposed exam dates to better accommodate other academic commitments.

Short essays
You will compose two concise essays, each comprising around four to five paragraphs or approximately 800 to 1,000 words each. Aligned with our completion of major units centered on specific landscapes, these essays will adhere to a structured format. This includes presenting a thesis statement, reinforcing your arguments through robust analysis, and concluding with insightful perspectives. The essay topics will encompass various aspects of the studied landscapes ranging from human impacts, forest conservation, climate change, to socio-environmental issues. Guidance and specific instructions will be provided throughout the semester.
Podcast
You will do a podcast in this class, which will account for a large percentage of your final grade. You will pick the general topic for your podcast based on the various landscapes of the Neotropics studied in class, but you will narrow it down to a specific case study—a region, country, national park(s), biosphere reserve—in other words, a “smaller landscape” than the ones discussed in class that will allow us to explore the topics learned in more detail. We will work during the course of the semester to define your topic and work on this assignment and we will be supported by the Digital Resource Center (DRC) at Macalester.
Here are some sources you will likely use during the entire semester that you should start exploring as soon as you can. How to Listen to a Podcast for Class provides some good tips on how to approach podcasts as a source of information in class. We’ll have at least one podcast as bibliographic material, so be prepared! Mac Digital is the general webpage of the Digital Liberal Arts (DLA) at Macalester, and Podcasting talks specifically about podcasts and lists all the resources that you’ll have available at Macalester to do your podcast. We will also do a short exercise to help prepare you to do your podcast. While probably time consuming, my intention is for this activity to be a fun learning experience.

Course policies and support

Resources
All course materials, including lecture slides, readings and book chapters, will be accessible on Moodle. We will utilize Module for submitting assignments that fall outside our regular class schedule, as well as for grade tracking purposes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)
In this course, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is permitted with certain guidelines. AI can be employed as a starting point for research and to simplify complex ideas, but it must be used cautiously. It is acceptable for checking grammar and proofreading, as long as the content reflects the student's own ideas and effort. AI can aid in understanding intricate readings and serve as a translation tool to facilitate comprehension and communication in English. However, students are prohibited from using AI to generate entire papers or assignments, and any information sourced from AI should be validated from reputable sources.

Attendance
You’re warmly invited and encouraged to attend all classes, as attendance is key to our learning journey. Your participation in in-class activities is essential, and these are generally unalterable. Yet, exceptions for academic/sports commitments, illness, or special circumstances can be considered. If religious observances create conflicts, kindly reach out within the first two weeks of class for possible solutions. Your engagement enriches our shared experience!

Late Assignments
Late assignments will be accepted, but there will be a 10% reduction in the final grade for each 24-hour period they are overdue. If you encounter any difficulties that might necessitate adjustments to this policy, please feel free to discuss them with me.

Office Hours
I will maintain regular office hours to delve into any questions, issues or concerns about the course or your experience as first-year students. If your schedule clashes with the posted office hours, we can coordinate an alternative meeting time. Beyond the designated office hours, feel free to contact me via email. I strive to respond promptly, mostly during work hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm on weekdays).

Diversity
I recognize that the scientific content in this course has historically been shaped by a limited subset of privileged perspectives, potentially leading to both overt and covert biases. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding of science, I am committed to actively diversifying the range of voices and experiences integrated into the curriculum. Beyond course materials, I am dedicated to cultivating an inclusive learning environment that respects your unique identities, encompassing factors like race, gender, class, nationality, and religion. Your feedback is essential in this endeavor. Please don't hesitate to share suggestions for enriching course materials, promoting diversity, and enhancing inclusivity, either through direct communication or anonymous feedback.

Disabilities
I am dedicated to providing all students, including those with disabilities, equal access to course content. If you are facing obstacles that we can address, please let me know. I'm eager to collaborate with you to ensure your success in the course.
For students with documented disabilities, reasonable accommodations are available. To discuss your individual needs, please reach out to the Disability Services office via email at disabilityservices@macalester.edu or by calling 651-696-6874 to schedule an appointment to discuss your individual needs.

Well-Being
At Macalester, valuing your well-being is paramount. By dedicating time to self-care, you'll enrich your academic experience. Remember, you're more than a student – you carry your own experiences, emotions, and identities. Acknowledge any stressors you face, whether mental, emotional, physical, or financial, and understand their potential academic impact. Recognize your body's needs. During class, stay hydrated, take breaks as needed, and prioritize emotional well-being. Beyond class, prioritize sleep, movement, and connections with peers to foster resilience at Macalester. If well-being challenges arise, feel free to contact me or explore support resources here.

Academic Support
You can access personalized tutoring, academic support, and study skills assistance through Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX). These resources are designed to aid you, and I strongly urge you to utilize them.

**Academic Integrity**
Students are required to independently complete and submit their own work, adhering to established academic conventions for appropriately using and citing external materials and ideas. Participating in cheating or plagiarism will lead to a failing grade for the course. Further details about Macalester’s academic integrity can be accessed here. I recommend thoroughly reviewing this information.

**Public Health**
If you do not feel well, please do not come to class. When we're on campus for class, we will be following the Mac Stays Safer Community Commitment.

**Title IX**
Macalester prioritizes a secure and inclusive environment for all. Those experiencing sexual harassment, violence, or stalking are encouraged to seek help. As faculty, I must report such disclosures to the Title IX Office to ensure support. Rest assured, your privacy is respected, and the report is confidential. You can contact Macalester’s Title IX Coordinator directly at titlexicordinator@macalester.edu.

### Grading

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<tr>
<td>Short essays</td>
<td>20% (averaged)</td>
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<td>Exam II</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0% to &lt; 93.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0% to &lt; 90.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td>80.0% to &lt; 83.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0% to &lt; 80.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73.0% to &lt; 77.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0% to &lt; 73.0 %</td>
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Detailed Weekly Schedule

Disclaimer: This schedule represents my current plan and objectives. Details about pre-class assignments, readings and specific dates might be added / adjusted as we progress in the semester with the goal of enhancing your learning experience.

Week 1: Welcome
January 19

Learning outcome. This week, we’ll outline the scope of the course.

- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:
  
  Haro-Carrión, X. 2024. Neotropical Landscapes Syllabus Spring 2024

Week 2: Key Concepts
January 22, 24 and 25

Learning outcome. We’ll study what’s a landscape, what are the Neotropics and learn key ecological and social concepts for studying landscapes.

This week:
We’ll study what’s a landscape and what are the Neotropics.

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:

  

  

- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:


- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:

### Week 3: Tropical Rainforest – The Amazon
January 29, 31 and February 2

**Learning outcome.** We’ll start of exploration of Neotropical landscapes with the Amazon, one of the world’s last strongholds for uncontacted indigenous communities.

**This week.**

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:
  

- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:

  Povos Indígenas no Brasil. (n.d.). Mebêngôkre (Kayapó)—Indigenous Peoples in Brazil
  
  Retrieved August 26, 2021, from https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Meb%C3%AAng%C3%B4kre_(Kayap%C3%B3)


- **Friday.** Come to class having read and listed to the following:


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### Week 4: Tropical Rainforests - Beyond the Amazon
February 5, 7, and 9

**This week.** Tropical rainforests also encompass other landscapes, such as the Atlantic Forest and more. We’ll study some of them this week.

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:

  Fagua, J. C., & Ramsey, R. D. (2019). Geospatial modeling of land cover change in the Chocó Darien global ecoregion of South America; One of most biodiverse and rainy areas in the world. PLOS ONE, 14(2), e0211324. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211324

• **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:


• **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:

  Invited speaker: Megan Butler, Macalester College

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**Week 5: Montane Forests, Páramo and Puna**  
February 12, 14, and 16

**Learning outcome:** Altitude can profoundly impact landscapes! This week, we'll learn about mountain landscapes and their inhabitants.

**This week.**

• **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:


• **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:


• **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:


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**Week 6: Wetlands (or wet savannas) and Mangroves**  
February 19, 21, and 23

**Learning outcome:** This week we’ll cover two landscapes in which water plays a critical role, wetlands and mangroves.

**This week.**

• **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:


- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:


- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:


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### Week 7: Tropical Dry Forests
February 26, 28, and March 1

**Learning outcome:** The tropics can also be dry too, and in fact, dry landscapes are among the most endangered due to human activities. This week, we’ll examine some of these landscapes.

**This week.**

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:


  TBD
### Week 8: Dry Grasslands, Savannas and Shrublands
March 4, 6 and 8

**Learning outcome:** We’ll continue examining dry landscapes, but focus more on places dominated by grasses.

**This week.**

- **Monday.** Come to class having listened to the following:
  

- **Wednesday.**
  
  TBD

- **Friday.** Exam I

### Week 9: Spring Break
March 11, 13 and 15

**Learning outcome:** Appreciate the importance of taking a break, enjoying doing things outside of academic commitments and taking care of yourself. Enjoy the break!

### Week 10: Deserts and “Cono Sur”- Temperate Landscapes of the Neotropics
March 18, 20, and 22
Learning outcome: Did you know that the driest place on Earth is in the Neotropics? This week, we’ll learn about deserts! We’ll also start studying Neotropical temperate landscapes, focusing first on grasslands.

This week.

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:
  


- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:
  

- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:
  
  TBD SOMETHING ABOUT TEMPERATRE GRASSLANDS, STEPPE, PAMPAS

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**Week 11: “Cono Sur”- Temperate Landscapes of the Neotropics**

March 25, 27, and 29

Learning outcome: Not all the landscapes of the Neotropics lie within the tropics. In fact, temperate Neotropical areas are the only ones in the planet that make it so far south! We’ll take a week to learn the basics about them.

This week.

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:
  

- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:
  

- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:
  

Week 12: Climate Change and the Neotropics
April 1, 3 and 5

Learning outcome: Climate change affects the Neotropics in various ways, both ecologically and socially. Similarly, the Neotropics impact the planet’s climate and could hold significant roles in adaptation and mitigation. This week we’ll examine and discuss these themes.

This week:

- **Monday.** Come to class having read the following:
  


- **Wednesday.** Come to class having read the following:


- **Friday.** Come to class having read the following:


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Week 13: The trial of the hippos – understanding Neotropical conservation through a unique case study
April 8, 10 and 12

Learning outcome: Through the semester we have explored numerous conservation cases associated with the landscapes we’ve studied. This week we’ll immerse ourselves in a lively debate concerning a slightly unconventional conservation challenge, but that will hopefully shed light on the intricacies of doing conservation in the Neotropics and beyond.

This week:

- **Monday.** Exam II

- **Wednesday.** Background information and course preparation. Come to class having read the following:


Pablo Escobar’s love for animals—How to handle Colombia’s narco-hippos | The Americas | The Economist. (n.d.). Retrieved January 6, 2020, from https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2019/10/24/how-to-handle-colombias-narco-hippos?fbclid=IwAR322bLxf5eI0NgFlcIIODyJAkc1CRNJYi-SpYJ-INP0Td2e0435uKacsY

- **Friday.** The trial

### Week 14: Podcast preparation
April 15, 17 and 19

**Learning outcome:** We will dedicate all this week to prepare our podcasts

**This week:**
- **Monday.** DRC
- **Wednesday.** Podcast independent work.
- **Friday.** Podcast independent work.

### Week 15: Podcast Presentation and Discussion
April 22, 24 and 26

**Learning outcome:** Ever been to an indie film festival, discussing films with directors afterward? Our podcast session will be like that. After listening to each other's podcasts, we'll have a 'light' discussion to delve deeper into our projects.

**This week:**
- **Monday.** TBD
- **Wednesday.** Podcast presentation and discussion
- **Friday.** Podcast presentation and discussion

### Week 16: Course Evaluations
April 29

- **Monday.** Course Evaluations