

FIFTH YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SEMINARY ONLINE COURSES

This past summer marked the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Online Course program of Augsburg Lutheran Seminary in Mexico City, where I work. I have served as Coordinator of the program since it started. During this time our group of professors of the online courses increased from two to six. The other five professors working with me are all previous students of mine at the Seminary and the Theological Community of Mexico, of which the Lutheran Seminary forms part.

In 2011, we began offering two brief courses that people can enroll in for free: Introduction to the Bible and Martin Luther and the Reformation. The purpose of these two courses is to allow students to become acquainted with our online course program and to come to view the Bible, the church, and the Christian faith in a new light. The courses contrast many of the beliefs and teachings that lead to oppressive practices in many churches with a view of God, the church, and the faith that is liberating and transforming. We have had almost 1,200 people enroll in these courses from all over Latin America as well as the U.S. and other countries. About a third of those who enroll finish their courses successfully—because these two courses are free, many of those who enroll do not complete them.



Our hope is that many of the students who take the free courses go on to study one of our two Diploma programs: the Diploma program in the Christian Faith, which includes general courses in history and Bible, and our Diploma program in the Lutheran Tradition, which focuses on the key aspects of Lutheranism from a Latin American perspective. Almost 70 students have enrolled in the Diploma programs, and about 75% of them have finished their courses successfully.

THE CHANGING REALITY OF IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

When many people in the U.S. think of immigration to the U.S., they think primarily of Mexicans, especially undocumented Mexicans. However, the situation has changed dramatically in the last decade.

According to private and government sources in Mexico (ENIF), the number of Mexicans immigrating “illegally” to the U.S. fell from almost 700,000 in 2007 to less than 100,000 in 2014. According to the same sources, in 2014, the number of Mexicans entering the U.S. “legally” (with a U.S. visa) was larger than the number of Mexicans entering the U.S. “illegally.”



According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program, China overtook Mexico in 2013 as the country which sends the most immigrants to the U.S. The American Community Survey done in 2013 estimated that in that year, 147,000 people from China immigrated to the U.S., 129,000 from India, and 125,000 from Mexico. By 2013, the percentage of non-Hispanic Asians in the U.S. had increased to 40.2 percent of the total immigration flow, while the percentage of Hispanics had dropped to 25.5 percent.

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection statistics, in 2014, the number of non-Mexican unauthorized immigrants apprehended at the U.S./Mexico border—primarily from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—was greater than the number of Mexican unauthorized immigrants apprehended there.

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