"[Latin] America is ungovernable!"

Simón Bolívar, on his deathbed in 1830.

Course Description

More than 150 years after the great liberator of Latin America, Simón Bolívar, uttered these immortal words, many scholars of the region opine that the caudillo’s sentiments have proven prophetic. The 20th century history of Latin America has been plagued by some of the worst afflictions of the human condition: persistent poverty, authoritarianism, social violence, and economic chaos. The search for governability in this region is a struggle that has led many Latin American countries to an array of different economic and political "experiments." These experiments have evolved as pendulum swings between competing modes of governance. Latin American countries have tried democracy and authoritarianism; state interventionist development models and market-oriented programs; economic policies fostering income distribution and others deepening inequality; reformist and revolutionary change.

The purpose of this course is to train students to think critically about the Latin American reality. In general, the course serves as an introduction for those who are unfamiliar with the history, politics, and social structure of the region. Instruction in this class, however, will go beyond a mere introduction to Latin American political history. It will challenge students to analyze complex problems in Latin American politics and development and encourage them to provide informed arguments on these matters. In addition to reading and listening to lectures, this class will invite students to write and orally communicate their observations about the substantive questions in the course.

This three-part course begins with an introduction to Latin American political history and some of the main theoretical approaches to understanding the region. After considering the colonial foundations and the modern development experience of the Latin American countries, students will examine particular country cases: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, the Central American countries, Chile, Cuba, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean nations. The study of these countries will be embedded in a broader discussion of thematic questions: transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, the causes of inequality, the prevalence of political violence, and the failures of revolutionary change. In the third section of the course, students will analyze and discuss recent research on some of these persisting problems in Latin American politics and development.

Students who complete this course successfully are encouraged to pursue further study of Latin America by taking the following courses: in political science - Political Economy of Latin America; in sociology - Ethnography of Latin America and Comparative Study of Developing Societies; in history - Modern Latin America, Mexico in Historical Perspective, Brazil from Colonial to Modern Times, and Revolutionary Change in Latin America; in economics - Economics of Developing Countries, as well as other courses in the Latin American Studies Concentration.

What is Expected of Students

Students will be expected to read, think, criticize, and form arguments. That will require keeping up on reading assignments and attending class regularly. Students must be fully prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts from previous lectures. The best students will be critical but balanced in their assessments, and will develop coherent arguments that they can defend in their writing and their in-class discussion.
**Reading Materials**

The five required books for this course have been ordered and are presently on sale at the college bookstore. The texts are:


In addition to these texts, this course requires your study of a number of other readings from diverse sources. In order to facilitate your access to these materials, I have prepared a compendium of these readings. You are free to borrow this compendium for photocopying. It is available at my office during the day. Students are advised to make readable copies of these materials early during the course. Also, in order to reduce your costs, I have placed the required materials, including books and photocopied essays on closed reserve.

In addition to the readings, this course recommends your use of select audio and video materials. These items include assorted National Public Radio reports accessible through the class web page, videos in the Annenberg/CPB "Americas" Collection on closed reserve, and a couple of feature-length films. Brief portions of these multimedia items will be presented during class as a part of the lectures, but you may view and listen to these materials in their entirety during off-class hours. In certain cases, I will offer showings of these multimedia items in a group setting and include a short discussion session afterwards (times and locations TBA).

I will occasionally distribute handouts and clippings from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Economist*, the *Miami Herald*, the Minneapolis/St. Paul newspapers, and the internet at the beginning of class. Students are also invited to check out links to course relevant web pages on the professor's web page and the class page. Materials on the course's web page will be updated during the semester and will supplement rather than duplicate the substance of the lectures and the readings.

Finally, for each session I have listed further readings that you might find useful in composing your written assignments and in your studies of Latin American politics in the future. These are recommended, not required, readings.

**Grading**

Assessment of the students in this course will be based on their performance on two exams, two short writing assignments, a single, long writing assignment, and in-class participation. The grade breakdown follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper #2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</table>
The Long Writing Assignment 25%
The Comprehensive Exam 30%
Class Participation 15%

The Writing Assignments

The purpose of the writing assignments is to provide the students with an opportunity to reflect more thoughtfully on both the theories and empirical cases of the course. These assignments must be turned in before or on the due date specified below. Late work will receive no credit.

**Paper #1:** Students will be asked to prepare a short critical essay of five-six pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12cpi, one-inch margins) on a particular author's approach, a concept, theory, or the interpretation of an empirical case on any of the comprehensive themes discussed in this first section of the course (e.g., political culture, development, ethnic identity, dependency, etc.). The short essay must evaluate the consistency and usefulness of the author's main argument(s), pointing out strengths and weaknesses, and concluding with at least a one-page alternative approach, concept, theory or interpretation that would minimize the weaknesses of the author's main argument(s). The purpose of this exercise is to encourage the students to apply critical analysis rather than descriptive skills to the conceptual materials in the course. A brief handout will provide details on this assignment one week before the paper is due.

**Paper #2:** Students will choose two of the following eight countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia. In a short critical essay of five-six pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12cpi, one-inch margins), students will compare the selected countries to test at least one of the analytical approaches/theories discussed in the first section of the course. As with the first paper assignment, a brief handout will provide details one week before the paper is due.

**The Long Writing Assignment** - Students will be required to prepare one 10-12 page (typed, double-spaced, 12cpi, one-inch margins) paper on a book-length study of a Latin American country or issue. The scope and purpose of the paper are limited by the following:

- Must contain a review of the relevant literature (based on assigned readings and other articles, essays, etc. discovered in consultation with the professor).
- Must assess the contribution made by the work under review to the major debates in the literature.
- Complete endnote citation and bibliography must be included.

Beyond these constraints the student is free to select a topic/work, but **consultation with the professor during the first two weeks of the course is required.** The purpose of the long writing assignment is to give the students an opportunity to develop their knowledge of a particular country, issue, or scholarly work while exploring the utility of a variety of analytical approaches. An explanatory handout will be distributed. This assignment is due one week before the last day of class.

**The Comprehensive Exam**

This exam will be a cumulative, take-home essay exam. Students must choose two of four questions. The answer to each question must be five-six typewritten pages (double-spaced, 12cpi, one-inch margins). As a capstone exam for the course, it will be graded with higher expectations, hence the slightly larger grade percentage. The questions will be distributed one week before the last class and the final week of group discussion will be used to examine various strategies for answering the questions. Students will be required to work in study groups during this time.

Students should study comprehensively for this exam as its main purpose is to assess the students' progress in learning the theories, concepts, and empirical cases presented in the course. However, the exam will emphasize knowledge and application of broad approaches more than the details of empirical cases. The exam will also test the ability of students to critique and present their own arguments.

https://acad.carleton.edu/curricular/POSC/classes/POSC221/F99/index.html
Class Participation

Communicating your insight into the subjects analyzed in this course is an integral part of the learning experience. In no way do I consider class participation a residual category for subjectively determining the final grade. In this course, I will evaluate your performance in both formal, scheduled presentations and informal class discussion. All oral arguments and presentations will be assessed on structure, relevance, insight, and style.

Although I will lecture at the beginning of our study of each new topic area, I will do less lecturing as you read more on the subject and are better able to discuss materials, issues, and approaches in class.

The Grading Scale

I will be using the following grading scale in this course:

- 98-100 A+
- 94-97 A
- 91-93 A-
- 88-90 B+
- 83-87 B
- 79-82 B-
- 76-78 C+
- 72-75 C
- 68-71 C-
- 67/below D/F

Academic Misconduct

Given the fact that academe relies upon the ethical conduct of scholars, students are held to the same standards in their own work. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For further information, see Carleton College's *Academic Honesty in the Writing of Essays and Other Papers* and the section on "academic honesty" in *Academic Regulations and Procedures, 1999-00*. Both are available in Laird 140.

Special Needs

Students requiring access to learning tools/special schedules approved by Student Support Services should contact me at the beginning of the course.

NOTE: Readings must be completed for the dates assigned below.

PART ONE:

CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

Session 1: Breaking Stereotypes: In Search of the "Real" Latin America

What are America's stereotypes of Latin America and its people? (Sept. 13, Mon.)


What are the political sources of American stereotypes of Latin America and its people? Must these stereotypes be broken? If so, how? (Sept. 15, Wed.)

Rosenberg et al., pp. 278-287, 294-297, & 342-345.

Skidmore and Smith, Prologue (Skim).

Assessing Latin America from the U.S.: the problem of objectivity and ethnocentrism. (Sept. 17, Fri).


Further Reading:

Frederick Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas-Austin Press, 1992).


Session 2: Colonial History and the Cultural Foundations of Latin American Politics

Are Latin American politics shaped by a path dependent legacy from the colonial past? (Sept. 20, Mon.)

Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 1.

Rosenberg et al., pp. 24-31, 33-38, & 40-47.

What are the cultural (ascriptive) foundations of Latin American politics? (Sept. 22, Wed.)


How strong are historical and cultural path dependencies? Can they be broken? (Sept. 24, Fri.)


Rosenberg et al., 157-159 & 167-172.


Further Reading:


Session 3: Development and Crisis in the 20th Century

How did patterns of development shape Latin American politics in the 20th century? (Sept. 27, Mon.)

Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 2.

Rosenberg et al., pp. 54-59 & 62-65.

How was Latin American society incorporated into development models? (Sept. 29, Wed.)


Rosenberg et al., pp. 66-69.


Is the neoliberal development model an improvement on the past? Can development models be changed from below? (Oct. 1, Fri.)


Debate #1: Neoliberalism

Further Reading:


SHORT PAPER #1 DUE (Oct. 1, Fri.)

PART TWO:

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Session 4: Brazil and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, & Paraguay)

Why did democracies collapse into authoritarianism in Brazil and the Southern Cone during the 1960's and 1970's? (Oct. 4, Mon.)

Skidmore and Smith, Chapters 3, 4, & 5.


How was authoritarianism organized in these countries? (Oct. 6, Wed.)

Rosenberg et al., pp. 82-93.

Mary Helen Spooner, Soldiers in a Narrow Land: The Pinochet Regime in Chile, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), Chapters 1-5.

NCCLA Meeting, St. Olaf (Oct. 8-9, Fri.-Sat.) - Assignments due on Monday, Oct. 11.

How were transitions from authoritarianism to democracy possible in the 1980's? (Oct. 11, Mon.)

Spooner, Chapters 6-10.

Rosenberg et al., pp. 195-199.


Recommended: Video #5: The Annenberg/CPB "Americas" Collection: "In Women's Hands" (This tape is approximately 1 hour long).

How can Brazil and the Southern Cone cope with the legacy left by authoritarianism? (TBA)

Film: "The Official Story" (Argentina).

Further Reading:

Maria Helena Moreira Alves, State and Opposition in Military Brazil, (Austin, TX: University of Texas-Austin Press, 1985).


Session 5: Mexico

How did the institutionalization of the Mexican Revolution unravel in the Lost Decade of the 1980's? (Oct. 13, Wed.)

Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 7.

Rosenberg et al., pp. 308-313.

Why did the Mexican state fail to deal with these persisting problems? (Oct. 15, Fri., Oct. 20, Wed.; No class on Oct. 18, Mid-term break)

Are Mexico's problems too deep for the state to matter? The causes and meaning of the Chiapas revolt. (Oct. 22, Fri.)


Debate #2: Chiapas.

Further Reading:


Session 6: Venezuela, Colombia, and The Central Andean Countries (Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador)

What are the threats to sovereignty in Venezuela, Colombia, and the Central Andean states? (Oct. 25, Mon.)

Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 6.


Rosenberg et al., pp. 144-150 & 154-157.


Do the failures of these states open the way to alternative systems of governance? (Oct. 27, Wed.)


Handout: Articles on Hugo Chavez.

Philip Mauceri, Chapter 6, "Villa El Salvador: Popular Organization and the State in a Lima Shantytown."

**Can democracy survive attacks on the sovereignty of these states? (Oct. 29, Fri.)**

**Simulation #1:** Delegative Democracy

**SHORT PAPER #2 DUE (Oct. 29)**

**Further Reading:**


**Session 7: Cuba, the Caribbean, and Central America**

**Are the small states of Latin America hopelessly dependent? (Nov. 1, Mon.)**

Skidmore and Smith, Chapters 8, 9, & 10.


**Is revolution a way out of dependency? (Nov. 3, Wed.)**


**Simulation #2:** U.S. Intervention

**Further Reading:**


PART THREE: PERSISTING PROBLEMS IN LATIN AMERICA

**Session 8: The Fragility of Democracy**
Nov. 5 (Fri.)


**Session 9: Social Inequality: Can Latin American States Address the Problem? 'Responses from Above'**
Nov. 8 (Mon.) & 10 (Wed.)


**LONG PAPER DUE and Comprehensive Exam Questions Distributed (Nov. 10, Wed.)**

**Session 10: Social Inequality: Can Latin American Societies Address the Problem? 'Responses from Below'**
Nov. 12 (Fri.) & 15 (Mon.)


**COMPREHENSIVE EXAM DUE (Nov. 22)**