Political Science 221, Latin American Politics

SYLLABUS

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"[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-led 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 contemporary history, politics, and social structures 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 classroom presentations, this class will invite students to write and orally communicate their observations about the substantive questions in the course.

What is Expected of Students

Students will be expected to read, think, criticize, and form arguments. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend 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 **four required books** for this course have been ordered and are presently on sale at the college bookstore. All are paperbacks. The texts are:


In addition to these texts, this course requires your study of a number of other readings and multimedia from diverse sources. These readings are all available on the course Moodle page. Additional resources are available on the course’s web page and my resources page. Films and video materials will be available on closed reserve. Select films will be shown at 7 p.m. in Library 344.

Grading

Assessment of the students in this course will be based on their performance on two light research papers, periodic diagnostic examinations, a comprehensive final examination, and classroom participation. The grade breakdown follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diagnostics (5% each)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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The Writing Assignments

Paper assignments in this course are of varying lengths. Yet they must all be typed, paginated, and double-spaced with Times New Roman font type, 12cpi font size, and one-inch margins.
These assignments must be turned in as PDF files unless otherwise indicated by 5 p.m. in the student’s hand-in folder on the Courses directory on the due date specified below. *Late work will receive no credit.* Technical problems involved in converting and uploading work onto Courses will not be accepted as reasons for late or improperly formatted work. Students are responsible for addressing all glitches unless they are systemic. Proper use of spelling, punctuation, and grammar is expected. Since ability to edit your own work and produce concise argument is a touchstone for assessing and developing your critical skills, students will not be allowed to surpass the required number of pages. A handout will be distributed with the particular parameters of each of these assignments well before the due date.

**Paper #1: An Empirical Test of Macro Approaches to Latin American Politics**

Students will choose *one* of the following eight countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia. In a light research paper of 7-8 pages, the author will assess the political and development history of the chosen country in light of the analytical frameworks set up by at least two major theoretical approaches (e.g., modernization, political culture, developmentalism, etc.).

**Paper #2: A Policy-Position Paper from the Perspective of a Latin American Government**

Students will choose *any* Latin American country (though not the same one used for Paper #1). Identifying a salient problem that calls for policy action, the student will compose an 8-10 page policy-position paper from the perspective of the chosen country’s government. This assignment will require prolonged study of the state structure, history, formal institutions, and society of the chosen Latin American country. Normally, work on this paper begins shortly before the first paper is completed. Periodic meetings with the professor are highly recommended.

**Diagnostics and the Comprehensive Examination**

Students are expected to prepare detailed notes on the readings and the class presentations (i.e., not just depend on jottings in the margins of their books – “Notes in the margins are marginal notes.”). Such growing expertise will be systematically tested throughout the term with short, 10-minute diagnostic examinations and a final, comprehensive examination with no more than 20-25 questions. Students who wish to challenge themselves, may opt to take a 20-minute oral examination in lieu of the final exam. A limited number of slots will be available for the oral exam. Students may choose to take the oral exam in Spanish or Portuguese in lieu of English.

**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. The following are structured presentation formats that will be used in this course:
(1) Debates using the collegiate structure of four versus four.
(2) A simulation on delegative democracy.
(3) Small group discussions on numerous topics.
(4) Extended discussions on Moodle and following some of the selected films.

Attendance

Consistent attendance in the course is required. If you know you will be absent due to a scheduling conflict involving athletic events, Model U.N., forensics, job interviews, or any other activity, please communicate that to me as soon as possible. Keep in mind that given the unique aspects of a class, you cannot really "make up" an absence.

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 the useful handout on “Avoiding Academic Misconduct,” available on the course webpage.

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, Understanding Historical and Cultural Foundations of Latin American Politics

What are Americans’ stereotypes of Latin America and its people? (April 1, Monday)


“South of the Border,” written by Gene Autry, sung by Frank Sinatra.

Historical Causes and Culturalist Approaches (April 3, Wednesday)


The Path Dependency Approach (April 5, Friday)


Geographical/Cultural Diversity and Clientelist Logics (April 8, Monday)

Ernesto Che Guevara, The Motorcycle Diaries (All).


Film: “Nine Queens (Nueve Reinas)” (Argentina). (April 8, Monday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Session 2: Patterns of Development and Structural Causes in Latin American Politics

Dependency and Development in Latin American History (April 10, Wednesday)

**Import-Substitution and Populism (April 12, Friday)**


**Neoliberalism and Post-neoliberalism (April 15, Monday)**

Javier Corrales, “The Backlash against Market Reforms in Latin America,” in Domínguez and Shifter.


**The Arguments For and Against the “Washington Consensus” (April 17, Wednesday)**


**Debating Neoliberalism (April 19, Friday)**


**Debate:** Neoliberalism.
PART TWO:

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Session 3: Delegative Democracy or Petro-Populism Redux? Venezuela under Hugo Chávez

Understanding the Bolivarian Revolution under Chávez (April 22, Monday)


David Myers, “Venezuela: Delegative Democracy or Electoral Autocracy?” in Domínguez and Shifter.


PAPER #1 DUE (April 23, Tuesday)

Petro-Politics and Institutional Crisis? (April 24, Wednesday)


Assessing Prospects for the Post-Chávez Venezuela (April 26, Friday)


Guest Speaker: Javier Corrales (Amherst College).

Foro Latinoamericano on Venezuela (April 26-27, Friday-Saturday) with guests, Miguel Tinker Salas (Pomona College), Sujatha Fernandes (Queens College), and Javier Corrales (Attendance is required on Friday evening and Saturday morning).

Session 4: Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Argentina, Brazil, and Chile

The Collapse of Populist Democracy during the 1960's and 1970's (April 29, Monday)


Dirty Hands, Dirty Wars: The Organization of Authoritarianism (May 1, Wednesday)


Articles on Pope Francis and the Dirty War in Argentina.

Film: “Missing” (Showing May 1, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Transitions to Democracy and the Quality of Democracy (May 3, Friday + Special Evening Session, May 7, Tuesday, Weitz 231 9:30-10:50 p.m.)


MID-TERM BREAK (May 6, Monday)

EXTENDED READING/RESEARCH WEEK (May 7-10) – Brown Conference

Choose TWO of the following THREE cases of democratization and prepare for the May 13 class session.

Case #1: Argentina


Steven Levitsky, “Argentina: Democracy and Institutional Weakness,” in Domínguez and
Case #2: Brazil


David Samuels, “Brazil: Democracy under Lula and the PT,” in Domínguez and Shifter.

Film: “Lula, Son of Brazil” (Showing May 8, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Case #3: Chile

Peter Siavelis, “Chile: The End of the Unfinished Transition,” in Domínguez and Shifter.

Leticia M. Ruiz Rodríguez, “Chile: A Model Case?” in Levine and Molina.

Film: “Pinochet’s Last Stand” (Showing May 9, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Assessing the Quality of Democracy (May 13, Monday)

Jorge J. Domínguez, “Three Decades since the Start of the Democratic Transitions,” in Domínguez and Shifter.


Simulating Democratic Quality: The Delegative Democracy Dilemma (May 15, Wednesday)

Simulation: Delegative Democracy

Note: There are no readings scheduled for this meeting so that students may catch up on their readings and be ready for the next diagnostic examination.

Session 5: Neoliberal Reform and Its Discontents: The Case of Mexico

The Hegemonic Party System and Its Decline (May 17, Friday)

Beatriz Magaloni, “The Demise of Mexico’s One-Party Dominant Regime: Elite Choices and the Masses in the Establishment of Democracy,” in Frances Hagopian and Scott P. Mainwaring, eds. The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks, New York:

Recommended: Denise Dresser, “Mexico: Dysfunctional Democracy,” in Domínguez and Shifter.

Technocrats and their Policy Toys: Neoliberalism and the Mexican State (May 20, Monday)


Film: Frontline: “Murder, Money, and Mexico.” (Showing May 20, Monday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Social Effects of Neoliberal Reform: Poverty, Inequality, and Immigration (Special Evening Session, May 21, Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.-9:10 p.m., Weitz 231)


Session 6: The Problem of Governability and the Rise of Ethnic Politics: Colombia and The Central Andean Countries (Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador)

Colombia: Country on the Edge? (May 22, Wednesday)

Fernando Cepeda Ulloa, “Colombia: Democratic Security and Political Reform,” in Domínguez and Shifter.


The Drug Wars: The Transnationalization of the Governability Problem (May 24, Friday)


379-414.

Film: “Frontline: The Drug War.” (Showing Part I, May 24, Friday; Part II May 26, Sunday; both at 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Film (Recommended): “Killing Pablo” (History Channel) (Showing May 25, Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Decaying Democratic Institutions or Resurgent Popular Movements? Bolivia and Ethnopopulism (May 27, Monday)


Latin American Studies Association meetings in Washington, D.C. (May 29-June 1)

PAPER #2 DUE (June 1, Saturday)

Peru and the Rise of Ethnopopulism (June 3, Monday)


Ecuador and the Rise of Ethnic Politics (June 5, Wednesday)


COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM (scheduled exam period)