"[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 **three 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>
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<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.

Electronic Equipment Policy

For years I have allowed students to use laptops in class to take notes. However, based on much scientific evidence as well as personal experience, it is evident that such practices encourage inattention and multitasking that degrades the ability of students to learn. There is also plenty of scientific evidence that taking pen-and-paper notes is far superior to note-taking on laptops. The use of laptops and tablets in this class will be strongly discouraged unless a student can prove that they absolutely need such a device in the classroom. Preference will be given to students who have an officially sanctioned accommodation (see Special Needs below), but students without such accommodations may also be given permission to use laptops and iPads for approved purposes. Use of such devices in class does not designate any student as having special needs.

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” on the course webpage.

Special Needs

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with
students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services, by calling 507-222-5250 or sending an email to cdallager@carleton.edu to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

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? (March 27 and March 29, Monday and Wednesday)


Film: “Nine Queens (Nueve Reinas)” (Argentina). (Showing on Thursday, March 30, and Friday, March 31; both screenings are at 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Culturalist Approaches (March 31, Friday)


Geographical/Cultural Diversity and Clientelist Logics (April 3, Monday)

Ernesto Che Guevara, The Motorcycle Diaries (All).


The Path Dependency Approach (April 5, Wednesday)


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

Dependency and Development in Latin American History (April 7, Friday)


Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism and Neoconservatism (April 10, Monday)


Neoliberal Populism and The Backlash Against Neoliberalism (April 12, Wednesday)


The Rise of the New Left (Part I: Causes) (April 14, Friday)


**The Rise of the New Left (Part II: Consequences) (April 17, Monday)**


**PART TWO:**

**COUNTRY EXPERIENCES**

**Session 3: Brazil – Democratization and Inequality**

*Authoritarianism and Democratization* (April 19, Wednesday)


*Governability and the Quality of Democracy* (April 21, Friday)

Montero, *Brazil: Reversal of Fortune*, Chapters 3-4. (Chapter 1 recommended).

*Economic Development and Social Policy* (April 24, Monday)

Montero, *Brazil: Reversal of Fortune*, Chapters 2, 5-6.

Evening special lecture on the current Brazil crisis (7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Weitz 233)

**Session 4: The Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay)**

*Dirty Hands, Dirty Wars: The Organization of Authoritarianism* (April 26, Wednesday)


Film: “Missing” (Showing on Tuesday, April 25 and Wednesday, April 26; both screenings are at 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

**PAPER #1 DUE (Thursday, April 27)**

**NO CLASS – FRIDAY, APRIL 28 (LASA in Lima, Peru) + MIDTERM BREAK (May 1, Monday)**

**Neoliberal Adjustments and the Turn to the Left (May 3, Wednesday)**


Peter M. Siavelis, “Chile: Beyond Transitional Models of Politics,” in Domínguez and Shifter.

**Session 5: Delegative Democracy or Petro-Populism Redux? Venezuela Under and After Hugo Chávez**

**Understanding the Bolivarian Revolution under Chávez (May 5, Friday)**


**Petro-Politics and Institutional Crisis or A New Mode of Incorporation? (May 8, Monday)**


Session 6: The Central Andes – The (Re)awakening of Indigenous Politics

Origins of the Indigenous Reawakening (May 10, Wednesday)


Decaying Democratic Institutions or Resurgent Popular Movements? Bolivia, Ecuador and Ethnopopulism (May 12, Friday)


Comparative Observations of Indigenous Politics – Why the Peruvian “Exception?” (May 15, Monday)


Excursis on Party System Decay and Collapse in Latin America (May 17, Wednesday)


Recommended #1: Steven Levitsky, “Peru: The Challenges of a Democracy without Parties,” in Domínguez and Shifter.


**Resource Conflicts and Popular Mobilization (May 19, Friday)**


**Session 7: Colombia and Mexico - Governability Crises, Insecurity, and Narcotraffic**

**Colombia: From Country on the Edge to a New Normal? (May 24, Wednesday)**

Eduardo Posada-Carbó, “Colombia: Democratic Governance amidst an Armed Conflict,” in Domínguez and Shifter.


Film (Recommended): “Killing Pablo” (History Channel) (Showing on Tuesday, May 23 and Wednesday, May 24; both screenings are at 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

**The Drug Wars in Mexico: The Transnationalization of the Governability Problem (May 26, Friday)**


Film: “Frontline: The Drug War.” (Showing Part I on Friday, May 26 and Part II on Sunday, May 28; both screenings are at 7:30 p.m. Library 344).

Session 8: Deepening Democracy? Participation and Mobilization in Latin America

Participatory Governance (May 29, Monday)


PAPER #2 DUE (Tuesday, May 30)

Movements and Contentious Politics (May 31, Wednesday)


COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM (scheduled exam period)