COURSE DESCRIPTION

Political power is traditionally conceived as functioning through formal institutions of the state (executives, legislatures, bureaucracies, etc.) and the rules they generate. Yet political power is also generated outside of state structures, by both popular and elite groups that can seek to transform the established rules and structures. In Latin America, both popular and elite forces on both the political left and right have long influenced the trajectory of politics in the region. This course studies a selection of the forces, both broadly conceived social movements, and more narrowly focused interest groupings, that have been influential in transforming politics in the region in the 20th and 21st century.

In identifying powerful movements for change in Latin America and elsewhere, scholars have distinguished generally between “traditional” social movements that focus on material/resource objectives and were prominent in the 1930s-1980s, and “new” social movements that focus on cultural/identity claims and have been prominent since the 1980s. Such social movements are usually understood as “power from below” and certainly also “from outside” the state. This course takes a broad perspective of movements for change, looking at— but also beyond— social movements as such. This semester we examine rural and urban armed movements, women’s movements, and indigenous movements, as well as the powerful organizing efforts of local capitalists, and the Catholic Church. We begin the course with a survey of the 20th century’s first revolution, the Mexican Revolution, which reflected core aspirations of land reform, social justice, political democracy, and national sovereignty that have remained prominent themes in later movements in Latin America.

The course requires at least an introductory understanding of Latin America’s political and economic development, so prior coursework, particularly in politics, history and economics, is generally prerequisite.

Goals. This seminar is designed to provide students with 1) a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of political movements for change in Latin America 2) an empirical base of knowledge about the historical and contemporary impact of particular movements in the
region and 3) guidance as they conduct research and write a substantial analytical paper on a topic related to the course.

Active and collegial student participation is an essential component of the course. For our weekly topical sessions, students will use Blackboard to propose discussion questions drawn from the readings for us to take up in class, and will write a short analysis of themes in the readings that can serve as a basis for discussion in the seminar. In the final weeks of the course, students will read and critique each other’s draft research papers, and each student will give a presentation from his/her research paper in the class. These activities are intended to provide you with the opportunity to refine your analytical skills, to shape and participate in class discussions, and to develop critical-constructive abilities in assessing the work of their peers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Regular attendance in each class, reading of the assigned texts well before class, and active discussion of the texts and issues are essential for success of the course. The readings require critical evaluation and debate in class, and provide theoretical and empirical stimuli for your research projects.

In addition to weekly preparations for class, students will complete a research paper (20-25 pages) on a topic directly relevant to the course. During the last weeks of the course, students will present core components of their research papers for discussion in the seminar. Papers should be theoretically driven by a research question and at least one specified hypothesis; they should also indicate the theoretical and practical implications of your findings.

Grades are based on three components of the course:

30% toward class participation. This includes:
- Regular attendance and involvement in class discussions.
- Weekly Blackboard posting of one question for us to take up in class discussion, posted by noon the day before class. Students can “pass” on this once.
- Weekly preparation of a 1-2 page (about 300-600 words) critical discussion (as opposed to description) of some element of the week’s readings. This too should be posted as a file in Blackboard by noon the day before class. Students can “pass” on this once.

20% toward presentation of your own project and discussion of other students’ projects during the last weeks of the course.

50% toward the research paper. This includes the research proposal (10%), annotated bibliography (5%), draft paper (given an interim grade to guide student expectations) and final paper (35%).

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

All academic work for the course must meet the standards of the Honor Code. Please be sure you are familiar with it and see me if you have questions about how it applies in assignments for the course.
Students must complete all components of the course in order to qualify for a passing grade.

The following terms apply to paper-related assignment due dates. Due dates are firm and not negotiable; you should plan ahead to be able to meet them. Late assignments will receive a lower grade (2-step grade reduction per day, e.g. from B to C+); assignments submitted more than 5 days (120 hours) late receive an automatic F. If you are unable to submit assignments to me as due in class, be sure to hand them in to me personally or email if necessary as a Word document. Do not shove papers under my office door!! Only extreme circumstances such as medical or family emergencies, may warrant exceptions to these terms.

I request that any students with a documented disability needing academic accommodations speak with Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (G-27 Peters Hall) and with me as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

READINGS

Required Readings. Several books are recommended for purchase, as noted below. In addition, there are a number of readings available in Blackboard. Assigned readings are available from at least one of the following sources: download from Blackboard (BB), purchase at the Oberlin College Bookstore (OC), borrow from Mudd Library reserves (R), access online through Mudd Library (E). It is possible that there will be some changes to the readings/topics scheduled in the syllabus.


Further Readings. Note also the following books, which are not required for the course but recommended for further study. The first three are major collected volumes on social movements in the region:


**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: February 8. Introduction to Approaches and Issues Latin American Social Movements**


Week 2: February 15. The First Revolution of the 20th Century

Beezley and MacLachlan, Mexicans in Revolution. Entire.

Week 3: February 22. Latin America as Testing Ground for US Strategy

Greg Grandin, Empire’s Workshop. Chapters 1-5.

Week 4: March 1. Rural Armed Movements


Week 5: March 8. The Church: Liberation Theology


Week 6: March 15. Library Research Session. Meet in Mudd, classroom TBA.
*************** Proposal for Research Paper Due.
Week 7: March 22. Urban Armed Movements


Week 8: No Class, Spring Break

Week 9: April 5. Local Capitalists: The Coffee Elite in Central America

In Jeffery Paige, *Coffee and Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): ch. 1; your choice of ch. 4 (Costa Rica) or 5 (Nicaragua); the corresponding ch. 7&8 (Costa Rica) or 9 (Nicaragua); ch. 10.

Week 10: April 12. Indigenous Rights, Transnational Linkages

************ Annotated Bibliography Due.


Week 11: April 19. “Radical” Women, Left and Right


2) Sandra McGee Deutsch, “Spreading Right-Wing Patriotism, Femininity, and Morality: Women in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1900-1940.”

3) Liesl Haas, “Changing the System from Within? Feminist Participation in the Brazilian Workers’ Party.”

4) Margaret Power, “Defending Dictatorship: Conservative Women in Pinochet’s Chile and the 1988 Plebiscite.”


************Draft of Research Paper due.


Final Paper due on Saturday, May 14, 2011 before noon (i.e., when classes officially end).