Politics 210 LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS
Oberlin College
Fall 2014
TR 11:00-12:15pm, King 306
Full Course (4SS credits), CD

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00pm and Thursdays 1:00pm-2:30pm
Students can sign up for office hours at http://tinyurl.com/34ywc3f

Themes. This course provides an introduction to politics in Latin America. It is designed to provide students with a framework for understanding how major economic, social and intellectual trends have shaped the region’s political institutions and the distribution of political power among different societal groups since the late 19th century. Conceptually, the course emphasizes the role of the following as shapers of Latin American politics: the state; major theories and policies of economic development; the regimes and practices of authoritarianism, populism, and democracy; the military; and the United States. Country case studies focus on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba and Venezuela, but readings and discussion will extend to developments in other countries in the region.

Goals. Students will learn to use conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understand the major political processes in the region. They will also practice comparative analysis in studying several country cases in the region. Class discussions and writing assignments give students opportunity to hone their oral and written skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Regular attendance is requisite for the course. Please arrive on time.

Class Participation: Informed student participation and constructive debate in class are essential for a productive learning experience in the course. Please observe the following guidelines:

- Respect others’ rights to hold opinions
- Listen carefully to what others say
- It’s fine to disagree with others, but do so with courtesy; don’t interrupt
- Support your statements!
- Allow everyone the chance to talk

NOTE: Use of laptops or other devices throughout the class period is strongly discouraged, unless it is called for in a specific in-class task or to briefly look something up. I encourage you to take notes by hand on paper, as a growing body of research shows that students learn more effectively this way. Phones should be silenced before class begins.
Paper: Students will write one 6-7 page analytical paper, with a choice of topics to write on.

Two Short Research Assignments: one-page written presentations of a current key issue in one country’s 1) human rights situation and 2) relations with the United States.

Exams: The midterm and final are in-class exams; short answer essay format.

Grades are based on the following formula:
- Class Participation and attendance: 20%
- Two short research assignments (5% each): 10%
- Midterm Exam, in class on 10/7: 20%
- Analytical Paper (6-7 pages) due 11/25: 25%
- Final Exam, take-at-home on 12/18: 25%

Readings should be completed as indicated in the syllabus, before class. Most of the readings are in Blackboard. In addition, the text below, required for purchase, is available at the Oberlin College Bookstore (a copy will also be available in Reserves at Mudd Library).


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 assigned papers and exams in order to be eligible for a passing grade in the course.

Paper due dates and times are firm and not negotiable; you should plan ahead to be able to meet them. Late papers will receive a lower grade: one-step grade reduction (e.g., from B to B–) if submitted within 12 hours; 2-step grade reduction if submitted during the next 12-hour period, etc.; papers submitted more than 5 days late receive an automatic F. If you are unable to submit a paper to me as expected, please email it to me in MS Word. Please do not slip papers under my office door.

Exam times and dates: Students who fail to take a scheduled exam will have one opportunity for a make-up exam, which will count toward the course grade at 75% of the exam grade. Only extreme circumstances, such as medical or family emergencies, may warrant exceptions to these terms regarding papers and exams.

I request that students with a documented disability needing academic accommodations speak with Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services (440-775-8464) and with me as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.
SOME CURRENT EVENTS SOURCES

A good resource to consult for links including everything from online newspapers to government ministries is The Latin America Network Information Center, (http://lanic.utexas.edu).


US- and Canada-based think tanks producing timely publications and events with a significant Latin America focus include the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars (domestic politics, international conflicts, public security issues http://www.wwics.si.edu), Inter-American Dialogue (analysis of political and economic trends http://www.iadialogue.org) and the United States Institute of Peace (conflict resolution, includes database of peace accord documents http://www.usip.org). Also offering excellent analysis of regional trends is the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, FOCAL (http://www.focal.ca).

Among Latin American based research centers, for wide-ranging and timely scholarship see FLACSO (with sites in several LA countries) at http://www.flacso.org.

Take Note: Related Course offered during Fall’s second Module (after fall break):

POLT 269 Latin American Politics Past and Present through Film (half course, CD, 2SS) Introduction, screening, and discussion of films from contemporary Latin American cinema that explore political and social conditions of both the dictatorship past and the democratic present. Emphasis on films from Argentina and Chile, both feature and documentary films; course content varies year to year. The course encourages interdisciplinary connections in the study of Latin America, bringing cultural and artistic ‘texts’ of film into dialogue with social science themes. Students participate in either of two discussion groups (Spanish or English) and write several short essays.

Enrollment Limit: 25
Consent of the Instructor Required: Yes

Prerequisites & Notes
Prerequisites & Notes: Concurrent enrollment in POLT 210 or HIST 293 or HISP 318 or similar course focused on Latin America; consult instructor.
Tuesday 9/2. Introduction to the Course

Thursday 9/4. Latin American Political Development I: Insights from Brazil

Tuesday 9/9. Latin American Political Development II: Historical Overview
- VP pp. 27-30, 38-39, and ch. 3 (in ch. 3, in the section on cases (pp. 55-64) you may read selectively, but at least 2 cases).

Thursday 9/11. The State and Citizenship in Contemporary Democracies
- UN Development Programme, Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens’ Democracy, 2005, pp. 49-73. BB

Tuesday 9/16 and Thursday 9/18. Chile
- VP ch. 17 (“Chile”).
- News: “In Chile’s All-Woman Presidential Race, Candidates are Childhood Pals Divided by Dictatorship,” (AP July 2013) http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/07/27/in-chile-all-woman-presidential-race-candidates-are-childhood-pals-divided-by/

Tuesday 9/23 and Thursday 9/25. Argentina
- VP ch. 16 (“Argentina”).
Tuesday 9/30. Transitional Justice and the Politics of Memory
Screening of portions of *Chile: Obstinate Memory* (documentary by Patricio Guzman, 1998)
- Preview clip in BB
PREPARE short research assignment for next class: current human rights issues in a Latin American country of your choice (instructions posted in BB)

Thursday 10/2. Presentations of your research assignments; short review for Midterm.

Tuesday 10/7. Midterm Exam in class.

Thursday 10/9 and Tuesday 10/14. Brazil
- VP ch. 15 (“Brazil”).
- News: “Leader’s Torture in the ‘70s Stirs Ghosts in Brazil” (NYT 2012) BB

Thursday 11/16. Populism Latin American Style

Week of 10/20: Fall Break, no classes.

Tuesday 10/28. US-Latin American Relations I
- VP ch. 11 (“US-Latin American Relations”)
PREPARE short research assignment for next class: current issues in relations with the United States for a Latin American country of your choice (instructions posted in BB)

Thursday, 10/30. US-Latin American Relations II
- Andy Baker and David Cupery, “Gringo Stay Here!” *Americas Quarterly* (Spring 2013). BB
Presentation of your research assignments.

Tuesday 11/4. The Military: Back in the Barracks?
Thursday 11/6. Economic Development I: Modernization and Dependency

Tuesday 11/8 and Thursday 11/20. Venezuela
- VP ch. 18 (“Venezuela,”).

Tuesday 11/25. Small-Group Presentation of Papers: Prepare a brief (5 minute) presentation of the paper you just submitted, including main questions/themes; what you found/argued; what resources you used; what was hardest (and what was most rewarding) about doing the paper.

Thursday 11/27. Thanksgiving Break, no classes.

Tuesday 12/2 and Thursday 12/4. Cuba
- VP ch. 14 (“Cuba”)
- News: “How Capitalist are the Cubans?” (NYT 2012) BB

Thursday 12/11. Conclusions from the Course

**Final Exam:** Thursday, December 18, 2014, 9-11am. Location: your choice – the exam will be emailed to you by 9 am and is due via email at 11am.