

## Latin American Politics

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Political Science 3032-100  
The University of Colorado  
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Class Meetings: MTWRF 12:45-2:20  
Office Hours: MTWR 2:30-3:30

I am always available via e-mail.

For years Latin America lagged behind many regions in political and economic development. Volatile swings between democracy and dictatorship, growth and stagnation, stasis and revolution were the norm during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recently countries such as Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay have begun to enjoy the benefits of consolidated democratic government and stable economic development. By contrast, others such as Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Venezuela have remained mired in poverty and poor governance. Explaining the success of some countries and the failure of others is a challenge for scholars, policymakers and students alike. This seminar takes up the challenge as it explores the reasons behind Latin America's recent successes in political and economic development in some countries while addressing persistently poor governance and underdevelopment in others. The readings, lectures and classroom discussions begin with the numerous general explanations of Latin American politics and economics. Yet, general arguments only go so far- they cannot explain the experience of individual countries. We will debate broad theoretical arguments and situate them in individual Latin American countries throughout the semester. In this vein, I have selected cases offering unique examples of political and economic development and underdevelopment.

In this class we will begin by discussing the meanings of political and economic development in Latin America. For example, what makes a democracy consolidated and how that might be expected to impact indicators of human development, such as access to health care. Following this preliminary section of the course we will discuss why democracy failed in Argentina and Brazil (among others), what dictatorship entailed in those countries and how democracy was restored. Furthermore, we will address the ways in which governments in these countries helped or hindered their population during this timeframe in areas such as income distribution, health care and education. Second, this course will highlight outlying political systems, such as that of Mexico, which achieved political stability and economic development in very different ways than Argentina and Brazil. Finally, the course will explore the reasons behind some states' inability to achieve either political stability or economic development.

Ultimately, I design this course to assist students' professional development regardless of Latin America's direct relevance. Specifically, I require a semester-long research project to identify unanswered questions, perform independent research,

synthesize diverse information and reach plausible conclusions regarding a topic of one's choice. Furthermore, class participation requires students to disseminate information in a forum resembling a professional workplace. Students will benefit directly from these assignments: the skills developed in this course will carry one far beyond the academy and assist students' careers for years to come. I guarantee students will be well-versed in researching, presenting, discussing and analyzing issues in Latin American Politics by the end of the semester.

## **Course Requirements**

Your grade for this course is based on class participation, a mid-term exam, a research design, a final research paper and a final exam. The percentage of the grade allocated to each assignment follows below.

Class Participation	10%
Mid-Term Exam (Thurs, June 16 <sup>th</sup> )	25%
Final Exam (Thurs, June 30 <sup>th</sup> )	30%
Research Paper (Sat, July 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	35%

## **Class Participation**

Students are required to participate in class discussions. Attendance alone will **not improve** your participation grade. The beginning of each class will feature a discussion of current events in Latin America as reported by major newspapers/other media. While reading these media outlets is not an official course requirement, failure to keep up with current events will result in quizzes. Additionally, I expect you to have done the assigned readings and be ready to discuss them at a moment's notice. Failure to do so will result in lower participation grades and/or pop quizzes.

## **Exams**

The mid-term and final examinations are designed to measure your comprehension of the broad themes addressed in the course. They will consist of essay and short answer questions covering Latin American politics- primarily through political and economic development. The essay portion will constitute 50% of the test grades while 5 short answer/ID questions will make up the remainder. I will only allow you to make up a missed exam in the event of a medical emergency. I require documentation for any such emergencies necessitating your absence on exam days.

## **Research Design and Final Paper**

Each student will perform a study of one particular research question within Latin American politics. The specific subject will be your choice, but I must approve it at the research design stage before you can turn in the final paper. The research design is a plan of attack for the overall paper and must include the following: 1. A title describing the

question you wish to address in the paper. 2. A paragraph stating your central question and argument(s) in the paper. 3. A paragraph describing your central question's importance relative to the literature in your area of interest. 4. A list of steps describing how you plan to answer the question (single case study? comparative case study? broad statistical treatment?, etc) and how you will structure the paper. 5. A preliminary bibliography listing six or more academic sources (peer-reviewed journal articles, books and/or chapters) you have already read and believe will assist you in your research. I'll provide comments on your design within the next week, after which you may schedule meetings with me as you see fit to discuss your project further.

The final paper should be a 15-20 page (Typed, double-spaced) expansion of your research design. I have included my grading rubric for this assignment below.

## Grading Rubric for Final Projects

**Explanation of the project's significance- 15%** (5 4 3 2 1 0)  
(What is your central issue? Why is it important? What does the literature say about your topic? You may also want to briefly describe your conclusions up front so your reader can follow along.)

**Description of methodology employed- 15%** (5 4 3 2 1 0)  
(How are you going to address your policy area? Why did you select these cases/these forms of evidence? What can they tell you that others cannot?)

**Presentation of evidence/Conclusion- 15%** (5 4 3 2 1 0)  
(What did your research uncover? What does this lead you to believe with regard to previous efforts in the policy area? Do you need more information to address the issue? Why/What type?)

**Internal Consistency- 15%** (5 4 3 2 1 0)  
(Did you do what you said you were going to do? Is the method appropriate for the question? Do your conclusions follow from your evidence?)

**Overall Clarity/Organization- 15%** (5 4 3 2 1 0)  
(Does the paper clearly describe the various aspects of the project? Did you present these aspects at the appropriate time?)

**Grading:** I will be happy to re-grade any examination or project material with the understanding that the revised grade could be higher OR lower than the first. However, you must first submit a written description of specific grievances/examples of why you deserve additional consideration. Note: these requirements do not encompass arithmetic mistakes on my part; simply point out any you discover and I will change the grade accordingly.

## Required Reading

We will use one textbook and many articles in this course- all class material will be posted online with the exception of the textbook. More information concerning how to access the readings will follow

Modern Latin America. 2010. Thomas Skidmore, Peter Smith, James Green. Oxford University Press.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 (Tuesday, May 31) Conceptualizing Political and Economic Development in Latin America**

(Wed) Chapters 1 and 2 in Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith's *Modern Latin America* 2010.

### **Modernization and Dependency**

(Thurs) Chapters 1 and 2 of Walt Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto*. 1960

(Fri) Chapters 1 and 2 of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's *Dependency and Development in Latin America* 1969.

### **Week 2 (Monday, June 6th)**

### **Geography and Culture**

(Mon) Ricardo Hausmann, "Prisoners of Geography," *Foreign Policy*, Jan./Feb. 2001

(Mon) Lawrence E. Harrison, "Culture Matters" *The National Review* (Summer 2000) pp. 1-11

### **Some Modern Updates and An alternative Approach**

(Tues, Wed) Chapters 1 and 7 in Hernando De Soto's *The Mystery of Capital*

(Thur) Chapter 1 from *The Economics of Microfinance* B Armendariz et. al. 2007.

**Week 3 (June 13th)**

Chile (Mon) Problems of Import Substitution: The Chilean Automobile Industry. LJ Johnson. 1967

Chapters 1 and 2 in *A Nation of Enemies: Chile Under Pinochet*. Constable and Valenzuela. 1993

Brazil (Tues, Wed)

“Walking the Tightrope: Lula’s accomplishments in Brazil.” *The Economist*. April, 2006

“The Broker and the Thief”

**First Exam, Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup>**

**BRING A BLUE BOOK**

**Week 4 (June 20th)**

**RESEARCH DESIGN DUE MONDAY, JUNE 20<sup>th</sup>**

Argentina (Mon, Tues)

“Argentina’s Fall: Lessons from the Latest Financial Crisis” Martin Feldstein, 2002. *Foreign Affairs* (Apr, 2002).

“From Kirchner to Kirchner” Levitsky and Murillo (2008) in *The Journal of Democracy*

Mexico (Wed, Thurs)

Chapter 3 in *Modern Latin America* "Mexico: The Taming of a Revolution"

"The Government and the Drug Lords: Who Rules Mexico?" Council on Hemispheric Affairs. 2007

**Week 5 (June 27<sup>th</sup>)**

Venezuela (Mon, Tues)

Venezuela Chapter in Skidmore and Smith

"Venezuela: Political Conditions and US Policy". *Congressional Research Service*. 2009

**FINAL EXAM REVIEW WEDNESDAY**

**FINAL EXAM THURSDAY, June 30<sup>th</sup>**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE SATURDAY, JULY 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Some Final Rules and Regulations**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, your participation grade will not deteriorate due to absences for religious purposes.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with

differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities.

All students of The University of Colorado are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). I require electronic submission of final projects so as to check them for plagiarism through online software.