

POLI 375 - Latin American Politics

Spring 2009

Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00-3:15, CCC 324

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 3:30-4:30pm
and by appointment

Course Description

Latin America, historically characterized by patterns of oppression, inequality, racism, and machismo, and long subject to domination by foreign powers, is changing. Democratically elected presidents in the region today include two women, an indigenous leader, a former union leader, and former political prisoners. This new generation of leaders is forging ties and promoting cooperation between their countries to a degree that is unprecedented historically. Social movements and left-leaning governments are challenging the U.S.-backed neoliberal agenda, seeking to carve out greater degrees of sovereignty at the international level and justice and equity at the domestic level. The larger countries in South America, in particular, no longer fit the stereotype of weak and vulnerable nations that receive aid and take orders from the North. And yet many challenges persist and the struggle for more just societies continues. As Obama assumes the presidency of the United States there is also guarded hope that U.S. policy towards the region will change. This is a dynamic and fascinating time to study Latin America!

In this course we will endeavor to understand these new developments, the historical processes that helped shape the present, and prospects for the future. We will also debate and discuss U.S. relations with Latin America and the impact of U.S. policies on the region. While we will be interested in evaluating U.S. policy, our primary focus will be on the viewpoints and agendas of the new social and political actors who have emerged in the region over the last couple of decades.

The course begins with an overview of the region's history and broad patterns of political and economic development up to the present. During the remainder of the course we will study important political developments in later half of the twentieth century as a prelude to examining contemporary political issues, struggles, and dilemmas of democracy in the following four countries: Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia. Four central themes will weave through our examination of politics in each of these countries:

- 1) **Democracy** - What are Latin American views and conceptions of democracy? What is the potential and the limits of democracy in terms addressing long-standing issues of poverty, inequality, and oppression?
- 2) **Civil Society and New Political Actors** – How is Latin American political culture(s) changing and what role is civil society playing in that change? How have new political actors, like women and indigenous people, developed political power and what role are they playing in politics and political/social change?
- 3) **Neoliberalism** - What have been the economic, political, and social impacts of neoliberalism?
- 4) **Sovereignty** – What is the relationship between sovereignty and democracy? Is sovereignty possible within the current context of globalization?

Course Objectives

- 1) Students will gain a working knowledge of the major patterns in Latin American political and economic development during the twentieth century and into the present.
- 2) Students will develop more in depth knowledge about four important countries in the region, each with distinct histories, challenges, and perspectives.
- 3) Increased knowledge about contemporary political issues will increase student interest in and ability to follow current events and to evaluate the implications of developments as they unfold for the U.S.

- 4) Students will hone their critical thinking skills by engaging in debate and reflecting on controversial contemporary issues in Latin American politics.
- 5) Students will hone their research and analysis skills through the process of developing a research topic and producing a research paper. They will have the opportunity to present their work to the class, thereby gaining some experience in making public presentations.
- 6) Students will gain an appreciation for the struggles, contributions and perspectives of Latin Americans, especially those who have struggled to create more just societies.

Required Texts:

- 1) John Charles Chasteen. *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America, 2nd Edition.* W.W. Norton & Co., 2006. (Text Rental)
- 2) Philip Brenner, Marguerite Rose Jimenez, John M. Kirk, and William M. LeoGrande, eds. *A Contemporary Cuba Reader: Reinventing the Revolution.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2008. (Available for purchase at the University Bookstore)
- 3) Benjamin Dangl. *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia.* AK Press, 2007. (Available for purchase at the University Bookstore)

Course Requirements and Grading

Grades will be based on student performance in the following areas:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Reaction Papers	10%
Précis	5%
Research Paper	20%
Research Presentation	5%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Attendance and Participation: Class sessions will combine both lecture and discussion, with the emphasis on discussion. Attendance and participation in class discussions is a crucial part of this course and will count towards 20% of your grade. You are expected to attend all class sessions and film screenings and to come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day. More than **2** unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade and **if you miss more than 6 classes during the semester (3 weeks) you will forfeit any points for attendance and participation.** In addition to regular attendance, active participation in class discussions is also vitally important. I will keep a careful record of student participation and will refer to this when I calculate this portion of your grade.

Research Paper Project: The major written assignment in the course is a 9-12 page research paper. Each student will present their paper to the class at the end of the semester. The purpose of this paper is to give you the opportunity to explore a political issue in more depth in relation to a specific country in the region. Detailed instructions and guidelines on the research project, including the précis, peer-editing session, and research presentation will be provided during the first few weeks of the semester.

Reaction Papers: Each student is required to write a total of six (6) brief reaction papers (1-3 double-spaced pages) during the course of the semester; five of them in response to assigned readings and one in response to one of the films. These reaction papers will be shared with the rest of the class and I may call on authors during class time either to read or discuss part of their paper. Reading reaction papers ***must be either posted on D2L or e-mailed to the class and to me by 9am on the day for which the reading is assigned.*** I will not accept a reaction paper after the class for which the reading is assigned. Likewise, you are to write no more than one paper per class. Barring some emergency, you must be in class to discuss your reaction paper on the assigned day. Film reaction papers will also be e-mailed to the class and will be due within a few days of the film screening. These papers will be graded with a check, check-plus, or check-minus.

Exams: The midterm and final will be in-class exams and study guides will be provided.

Current Events: We will begin every week by discussing current events in Latin America. Read the articles on Latin America in the *New York Times* each week and come prepared to discuss current events in the region in class on Tuesday. You can read the *New York Times* online for free at www.nytimes.com. Once during the course of the semester, each student will make a brief presentation at the beginning of class on an article of interest related to Latin American international affairs. A sign-up sheet will be passed around at the beginning of the semester. You will not be graded for this. In addition to the *New York Times*, other recommended newspapers with decent coverage of Latin America include: *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Guardian* (London), for a non-US perspective. If you read Spanish, *Pagina 12* (Argentina) and *La Jornada* (Mexico) are also excellent sources. All of these and most other major newspapers can be accessed for free on the web.

Movies: In an effort to bring to life the issues, countries, and people we will be studying, I will show 4 documentaries during the course of the semester. Due to their length, they will have to be shown outside of class. ***These movies are an important part of the curriculum, and viewing them is mandatory.*** If you cannot make an out-of-class screening please let me know so that we can make other arrangements for you to view the film.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 – Historical Legacies: The Conquest and Colonialism

1/20 - Introductions

1/22 – Conquest and Colonialism

Reading: Chasteen, Introduction and Chs. 1 & 2, “Encounter” & “Colonial Crucible”

Week 2 – Historical Legacies: Independence

1/27 – Independence

Reading: Chasteen, Chs. 3-5 “Independence”, “Postcolonial Blues”, & “Progress”. NOTE: In chapter 5 you can skip or skim the section on Mexico (pp. 152-158)

1/29 – The End of the Agro-Export Model and the Rise of Nationalism

Reading: Chasteen, Chs. 6 & 7, “Neocolonialism” and “Nationalism”

Week 3 – The Cold War to the Present & Argentina

2/3 – Latin America During the Cold War & The Rise of Neoliberalism

Reading: Chasteen, Chs. 8, 9 & 10, “Revolution”, “Reaction” and “Neoliberalism”

2/5 – Argentina - Peronism

Readings:

- 1) Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Ch. 15, p. 397-405. (E-reserves)
- 2) Daniel James, “Perón and the People.” In *The Argentina Reader*, Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo, eds. Duke University Press, 2002: 273-295. (E-reserves)

Week 4 – Argentina – From Military Rule to Neoliberalism in the 1990s

2/10 - The National Security State, State Terror & the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

Readings:

- 1) Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Ch. 15, p. 405-408. (E-reserves)
- 2) Marguerite Guzman Bouvard. *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. SR Books, 1994. Ch. 1 & 3. (E-reserves)
- 3) Hebe de Bonafini & Matilde Sánchez. “The Madwomen at the Plaza de Mayo.” In *The Argentina Reader*, G. Nouzeilles & G. Montaldo, eds. Duke University Press, 2002: 429-439. (E-reserves)

2/12 - Democracy and Neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s

Reading: Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*. Oxford University Press, 2006. Ch. 15, pp. 408-429. (D2L)

Film Screening: “The Take” (Running Time: 84 minutes)

Week 5 – Argentina: Collapse and Recovery (2001 to the present)

2/17 - The Economic Collapse of 2001

Reading: Hector Schamis, “Argentina: Crisis and Democratic Consolidation.” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 2002): 81-94. (E-reserves)

2/19 – The Kirchners: Economic Recovery & Argentine Democracy Today

Readings:

- 1) Andres Gaudin. “The Kirchner Factor.” In *Dispatches from Latin America: On the Frontlines Against Neoliberalism*, Vijay Prashad & Teo Ballvé, eds. South End Press, 2006. (E-reserves)
- 2) Alexei Barrionuevo. “Argentine Church Faces Dirty War Past.” *New York Times*. Sept. 17, 2007. (D2L)
- 3) Vinod Sreeharsha. “Fiscal Chaos Aside, Start-ups Bloom in Argentina.” *New York Times*. December 25, 2008. (D2L)
- 4) Alejandra Sarda. “Resisting Kirchner’s Recipe (Sometimes): ‘LGBTTTT’ Organizing in Argentina.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (March/April 2007). (D2L)

Week 6 – Midterm Exam & Women in Latin American Politics

2/24 – MIDTERM EXAM

2/26 – Women in Latin American Politics

Readings:

- 1) Mala Htun. “Women in Latin America: Unequal Progress Toward Equality.” In *Readings in Latin American Politics: Challenges to Democratization*, Peter Kingstone, ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006: pp. 147-155. (E-reserves)
- 2) Marcela Rios Tobar, “Chilean Feminism and Social Democracy from the Democratic Transition to Bachelet.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (March/April 2007). (D2L)

Week 7 – Castro & the Cuban Revolution

3/3 – Cuba – Historical Background

Reading: *A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Introduction and Chs. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-44)

3/5 – Politics in Cuba

Reading: *A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Part II – Politics, Section Introduction (45-49) and Chs. 3 – The Cuban Nation’s Single Party; 5 – On Cuban Democracy; and 7 – Society, Civil Society, and the State

Film Screening: “Fidel: The Untold Story” (Running time: 94 minutes)

Week 8 – Cuba: Economy & Society

3/10 – Cuba’s Economy

Reading: *A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Part III. Economics, Section Introduction (111-116) and Chapters 10 – Development as an Unfinished Affair; 13 – The Political Economy of Leisure; 14 – Going Against the Grain; and 15 – *Vale Todo*

3/12 – Cuban Society

Reading: *A Contemporary Cuba Reader*, Part V. Society, Section Introduction (275-280) and Chapters: 29 – Social Impact of the Economic Measures; 30 – Cuban Youth; 33 – Heroines of the Special Period; 34 – The Status of Cuban Women; 35 – Recreating Racism; & 36 – The Status of Gays in Cuba

March 14-22 – SPRING BREAK!!!

Week 9 – U.S.-Cuban Relations and Venezuela

3/24 – Cuba’s Foreign Relations and U.S. Cuban Relations

Reading: A Contemporary Cuba Reader, Part IV. Foreign Policy, Section Intro (193-198) and Chapters 17 – Neoliberalism, Global Inequality, and the Irreparable Destruction of our Natural Habitat...; 18 – Cuba and the *Pax Americana*; 19 – Cuba’s Counter-Hegemonic Strategy; 20 – Like Sisyphus’s Stone; 21 – Advancing the Day When Cuba Will be Free; 22 – Fidel’s Final Victory; and 23 – Wanted: A Logical Cuba Policy

3/26 – Venezuela: Historical Background

Readings:

- 1) Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America*, Chapter 17. Oxford University Press, 2006: pp. 469-483. (E-reserves)
- 2) Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski. “Dismembering and Remembering the Nation: The Semantics of Political Violence in Venezuela.” In *Politics in the Andes*, Jo-Marie Burt and Philip Mauceri, eds. Pittsburgh University Press, 2004. (E-reserves)

Week 10 – Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution

3/31 – Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution

Readings:

- 1) Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America*, Chapter 17. Oxford University Press, 2006: pp. 484-493. (E-reserves)
- 2) Sheila D. Collins. “Venezuela: The Bolivarian Revolution.” (E-reserves)
- 3) Gioconda Espina. “Beyond Polarization: Organized Venezuelan Women Promote Their Minimum Agenda.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (March/April 2007). (D2L)

4/2 – “Sowing the Oil” – Chavez, Oil, and the Venezuelan Economy

Readings:

- 1) Dick Parker. “Chavez and the Search for an Alternative to Neoliberalism.” In *Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an “Exceptional Democracy.”* Rowman and Littlefield: 2007, pp. 60-74. (E-reserves)
- 2) Steve Ellner. “Toward a ‘Multipolar World’: Using Oil Diplomacy to Sever Venezuela’s Dependence.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (Sept./Oct 2007): 15-22. (E-reserves)
- 3) Simon Romero. “Chavez Lets West Make Oil Bids as Prices Plunge.” *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 2009. (D2L)

Film Screening: “The Revolution Will Not be Televised” (Running time: 74 minutes)

Week 11 – Venezuelan Democracy & The Indigenous Politics in Bolivia

4/7 – The Debate over Democracy in Venezuela

Question: Is democracy in Venezuela under Chavez deepening or is the country moving in an authoritarian direction?

Readings:

- 1) Anthony Peter Spanakos. “New Wine, Old Bottles, Flamboyant Sommelier: Chavez, Citizenship, and Populism.” *New Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 2008): pp. 521-544. (E-reserves)
- 2) Javier Corrales. “Hugo Boss.” *Foreign Policy* (Jan./Feb. 2006): 32-40. (E-reserves)
- 3) Julia Buxton, Sheila Collins, Dan Hellinger, and Miguel Tinker-Salas. 2006. “Is Chavez a Sinner or a Saint?” *Foreign Policy* (March/April): 6.

4/9 – The Indian Question in Latin America & Bolivia

Reading: Dangel, Introduction and Ch. 1, “Revolution in Reverse”

Recommended but not required, especially if you are doing a reaction paper:

Deborah J. Yashar. “Indigenous Protest and Democracy in Latin America. In *Readings in Latin American Politics*, Peter Kingstone, ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006: pp. 155-176. (E-reserves)

Week 12 – Bolivian Social Movements & Peer-Editing

4/14 – Coca and the Water and Gas Wars

Reading: Dangl, Chs. 2, 3 & 6, “More than a Leaf: Coca & Conflict in Bolivia”, “Water War in Cochabamba”, and “The Wealth Underground” 4/21 – Coca and the Water and Gas Wars

4/16 – Rough Drafts Due – Peer Editing Session

Film Screening: “Cocalero” (Running Time: 94 minutes)

Week 13 – Bolivia: Revolutionary Times

4/21 – Revolutionary Moment: How Social Movements Toppled the Bolivian Government

Readings:

- 1) Dangl, Chs. 7 & 9, “El Alto” and “Continent on a Tightrope”
- 2) Xavier Albo. “El Alto: Mobilizing Block by Block.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 40, No. 4: 34-38. (E-reserves)

4/23 – Evo Morales in Power: A Revolution in Democracy?

Readings:

- 1) Dangl, Ch. 10, “Bolivian Moment”
- 2) Federico Fuentes. “The Struggle for Bolivia’s Future.” *Monthly Review*. Vol. 59, No. 3 (July-August 2007): 95-109. (E-reserves)
- 3) Bret Gustafson. “By Means Legal and Otherwise: The Bolivian Right Regroups.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (January/February 2008): 20-25. (E-reserves)
- 4) Jennifer Collins. “‘Stalemate’ as Counter-Revolution in Bolivia.” *NACLA: North American Congress on Latin America Website*. August 25, 2008. <http://nacla.org/node/4931> (D2L)

Week 14 – Obama & Latin America; Student Research Presentations

4/28 – U.S.-Latin American Relations Going Forward

Questions: Should/could U.S. relations with Latin America change? What changes would you recommend? How should the U.S. relate to the leaders of the countries we have studied?

Readings:

- 1) Christopher I. Clement. “Confronting Hugo Chavez: U.S. ‘Democracy Promotion’ in Latin America.” *In Venezuela: Hugo Chavez and the Decline of an Exceptional Democracy*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2007: 185-205. (E-reserves)
- 2) Greg Grandin. “Beyond the Four Freedoms: Obama and Sovereignty.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January/February 2009): 27-29. (E-reserves)
- 3) Roger Burbach. “Treating Bolivia as a Sovereign Partner.” *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January/February 2009): 27-29. (E-reserves)

4/30 – Student Paper Presentations

Week 15 – Student Research Presentations and Conclusions

5/5 – Student Paper Presentations

5/7 – Conclusions and Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MAY 12, 12:30-2:30PM