

EC 282 - Economics of Latin America
Fall 2025
Skidmore College

Instructor: Rodrigo Schneider

Lectures: W/F 10:10AM - 11:30AM TISCH 208

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Office Hours: Mondays from 10:00 – 11:30AM and Fridays 8:30 – 9:30AM

Location: 223 Filene Hall

Course Description and Goals

Economic growth is a field of economics that studies why some nations are more financially and institutionally successful than others. Public finance is a field of economics that studies public policies, politics and government expenditure creating a connection within these topics to provide policymakers with analysis that can help them improve their economies. In this course, we will merge these two fields of economics and apply them to explain the underdevelopment of Latin American countries and discuss effective public policies helping them to catch-up with developed nations. In the process, students will not only learn about economics, power, and inequality in Latin America, but also get a chance to think comparatively about power, justice, and identity in the contemporary United States.

This course will, therefore, be divided into two parts. First, we will cover economic growth attempting to understand why this is an important field to be studied; how to explain economic growth theoretically; and how to apply these theories. Second, we will analyze public policies in Latin America, their relationship with institutions and voting behavior and finally, their effectiveness. To build a bridge with the United States, we will constantly contrast the Latin America experience with the United States. Finally, we will learn how to use data to analyze economic growth and public policies. Thus, students can expect to learn theoretical and empirical tools that will help them to evaluate economics, power, and inequality.

At the end of the course, you should have a good understanding of:

- Economic Growth
- Institutions
- Latin American Economic History
- Power, justice, and identity in the contemporary United States
- Public Policies
- Voting Behavior
- Political Economy
- How to measure the effectiveness of a public policies

In addition, you should be able to further polish the following general skill sets as part of the goals for the course:

- Quantitative problem-solving skills
- Presentation skills
- Teamwork skills
- Communicate using graphical representations

- Ability to critically read peer reviewed papers in relevant topics
 - Analyze datasets
 - We will address issues of race, power, and justice in the contemporary United States in four fundamental ways
1. Analysis of the voting enfranchisement, biased toward poorer voters in Latin American countries after the end of the 1970s-1980s military dictatorial regimes and compare it with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the United States that generated dramatic increases in black voter registration across the South.
 2. Analysis of gun violence in South America and, more specifically, examination of the ban of right-to-carry laws in Brazil that disproportionately benefitted young black males living in violent areas and how, in the United States, empirical examination shows that facilitating access to guns increases gun-related homicides especially among young black males living in crime ridden areas.
 3. Analysis of Latin American immigration in the United States and how empirical examination show that the immigration of Cubans to the United States did not decrease the wages of American citizens as it is assumed to be true.
 4. Analysis of domestic violence in Latin America and discussion on how conditional cash transfers mitigates this issue, while laws increasing the penalty for perpetrators of domestic violence escalate the problem of intimate partner homicides as the United States experience shows empirical evidence of.

Readings

Readings for weeks 1-2 and 7 are drawn from the following book (available for purchase):
 Easterly, William. 2002. *The Elusive Quest for Growth*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Readings for weeks 4-5 and 8-9 are drawn from the following book (available for purchase):
 Baer, Werner. 2014, 7th edition. *The Brazilian Economy: Growth and Development*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Additional readings come from articles available online through the Skidmore Library System (also posted on The Spring).

Course Requirements and Grading

Semester Project (30%): Groups of at most seven students will write a short paper (more details on The Spring) analyzing one chosen area of public policy (e.g., gun policy) that was both enacted in a Latin American country and in the United States (the paper will be worth 40% of the semester project final grade). This analysis will be focused on institutions, economic performance, and the effectiveness of a chosen public policy. In this project, students should be able to connect how the effectiveness of the public policy affected race, power and justice and the differences between the application of the policy in the chosen Latin American country and in the United States. For instance, students can choose to analyze the introduction of electronic voting in Brazil in 1998 and how it enfranchised poor and illiterate voters in Brazil and contrast it with the 1965 Voting Rights Act in the United States that enfranchised many black voters in this country. Then, students would

contrast the Brazilian outcomes with the United States outcomes using institutional analysis to explain similarities and differences in the effectiveness of the policy. The idea is for students to understand how public policies are implemented and how they affect political power and social justice. Taking the 1965 Voting Rights Act as an example, students would examine outcomes of this policy, most of them suggest an improvement in blacks' relative position through increased public employment, fiscal redistribution, as well as through implementation and enforcement of group-favoring labor market policies, such as affirmative action. This can be compared to the introduction of electronic voting in Brazil which improved health outcomes of the poor through increase in intergovernmental transfers sent to places where the enfranchisement of the poor was relatively larger. For the final two lectures, each group will have 25-30 minutes to present their semester project (the presentation will be worth 30% of the semester project final grade). Students' groups will then create a poster summarizing their findings and present their work to the Skidmore community to fulfill the practice component of this course (the poster presentation will be worth 30% of the semester project final grade). The poster will be divided into three parts: One with the motivation, contrasting the Latin American and the U.S. experience with a given policy; another part with the data showing a graph and/or table contrasting the effectiveness of the policy in both contexts; and finally, a third part showing the relationship between the outcome of the policy and social justice and power.

Homework (20%): Problem sets mostly involving analysis of papers covered in class and datasets containing socio-economic outcomes using excel.

Midterm Exam I (25%): The first closed-book midterm will be held on October 3rd. It will cover material through lesson 9.

Midterm Exam II (25%): The second closed-book midterm will be held on November 12th. It will cover material through lesson 18.

Course Outline*

Lecture	Topic(s)	Readings	HW
L1 - 09/03	Why growth matters	William Easterly ch 1-2	
L2 - 09/05	Solow's model	William Easterly ch 3	
L3 - 09/10	Explaining growth	William Easterly ch 4-5	1
L4 - 09/12	Institutions – I	Douglass North	
L5 - 09/17	Institutions - II	Daron Acemoglu	
L6 - 09/19	Resource Curse	Paper#1	2
L7 - 09/24	Game Theory	Slides	
L8 - 09/26	Economics of the colonialism	Werner Baer ch 2	
L9 - 10/01	Case Study: Coffee in Brazil	Paper#2	3
10/03	<u>Midterm I</u>		
L10 - 10/08	Early industrialization	Werner Baer ch 3	
L11 - 10/10	Celso Furtado by Mauro Boianovsky	Paper#3	4

L12 - 10/15	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	CEPAL Review	
L13 - 10/17	Interventionism	William Easterly ch 11	
L14 - 10/22	Import Substitution Industrialization	Werner Baer ch 4	
L15 - 10/24	Hyperinflation	Werner Baer ch 6	
L16 - 10/29	Immigration – David Card	Paper#4	5
L17 - 10/31	Neoliberalism/Inequality	Werner Baer ch 16	
L18 - 11/05	Corruption	William Easterly ch 12	
11/07	<u>How to produce a poster?</u>	Poster Session	
11/12	<u>Midterm II</u>		
L19 - 11/14	Enfranchisement - Thomas Fujiwara	Paper#5	6
L20 - 11/19	Violence – Gun Policy	Paper#6	7
L21 - 11/21	Conditional Cash Transfers and Women Empowerment	Paper#7	8
12/03	Presentation – Day 1		
12/05	Presentation – Day 2		
12/10	Poster		

*Course outline is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Website:

Courses materials including readings will be posted in The Spring (Brightspace).

Attendance Policy

This course meets twice a week. Attendance is essential to perform well in the course. After four absences, including absences due to illness, there will be an overall lowering of grade by at least 10%. On extended absences the Student Academic Handbook states that: “Any student who misses more than a third of the [class] sessions may expect to be barred from final examination. In such cases, course grade will be recorded as F”.

Special announcements that are made during lectures will carry the full force of assignments and instructions contained in this syllabus. The student is responsible for any missed information.

There will be no extensions of deadlines and no make-up for exams or missed homework assignments. In particular, Skidmore College policy does not allow any make-up finals or any rescheduling of final examinations. Conflict midterm/final examinations will be given only to students who get approved exceptions from the University. Please notify me well in advance of the exam.

Grading Policy

At the end of the semester, a student’s final grade will be determined by the following grading scale: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F (plus/minus when applicable).

Any LATE WORK will only be accepted if approved at least 24 hours PRIOR to assignment due date; all late work will be graded down 1/3 of a grade (i.e. B+ to B) for each late business day (5pm).

Laptops, Cell Phones & Emails:

Please use your laptops only if instructed by the faculty. Please no cell phones. Please check your email and The Spring (Brightspace) at least twice a day for class communications. Please check your email in the morning before each class meeting in case there is a last-minute change of plans.

Honor Code

You are expected to fully abide by the Skidmore Honor Code, which can be found here:

[HonorCode](#).

Academic Accommodation

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from [Meg Hegener](#), Coordinator of Student Access Services. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150 or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

Diversity and Inclusion

Skidmore College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community in which members develop their abilities to live in a complex and interconnected world. Consistent with our educational mission, we recognize ourselves as a community that respects individual identities based on varying sociocultural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, first language, religious and spiritual tradition, age, ability, socioeconomic status and learning style. We strive to create a socially just world that honors the dignity and worth of each individual, and we seek to build a community centered on mutual respect and openness to ideas—one in which individuals value cultural and intellectual diversity and share the responsibility for creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment. We recognize that our community is most inclusive when all members participate to their full capacity in the spirited and sometimes challenging conversations that are at the center of the college's educational mission.

Title IX

Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students' personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore's values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal and state regulations. Skidmore College faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore's faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and options for reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, the Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates (anonymous) are all options available.

More information can be found at the Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct [**website**](#) or by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, Joel Aure ([**jaur@skidmore.edu**](mailto:jaur@skidmore.edu)), 580-5708, or

Deputy Coordinator for Student Affairs, Gabriela Melillo (gmelillo@skidmore.edu), 580-5022.

Conscientious Religious Observance Policy

If religious observances cause absence from class, campus employment, athletic practice, and/or game days or necessitates accommodations, students should notify their faculty, coaches, or supervisors prior to the date(s) of their absence. New York State policy and Skidmore College policy mandates that students be allowed to make up academic work and/or campus employment requirements without penalty. These accommodations should not reduce the overall expectations of a course nor unduly burden the student requesting accommodation. Faculty must permit students to take a makeup examination without any penalty if they have to miss an examination due to religious observances. Similarly, faculty must permit students to submit missed assignments by an agreed upon due date, without penalty.

Although not required, the College highly recommends that students submit written notification of the pending religious observances at the start of the semester or at least one week before the date. As an option, students may use this **form**. Distributing the written notification during the first week of classes, campus employment, or the start of the athletic season gives students, faculty, coaches, or supervisors time to prepare for the absence.

If a student, supervisor, coach, or faculty member feels the policy is being violated, they should contact the Dean of Faculty Office at 518-580-5705 (Palamountain 416), the Dean of Students Office at 518-580-5760 (Case Center 313), or Human Resources at 518-580-5800 (Barrett Center first floor).