

# Latin American Politics

Fall 202X

MWF 10:20-11:20 am, Memorial Building 205

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 03:00pm-05:00pm

Thursdays 11:20am-1:20 pm

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Latin American politics courses have traditionally focused on political regimes and the implementation of ISI and neoliberal economic models. While these topics remain important and are covered in this course, Latin American politics have evolved, and new dynamics have emerged that are essential to understanding the region today. This course will therefore explore a broader range of processes shaping contemporary Latin America, with particular emphasis on current issues such as the persistence of criminal economies, the rise of both progressive and conservative social movements, corruption, narco-politics, lawfare, and anti-identity politics.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify and describe the main challenges facing Latin America as a region.
2. Analyze the causes and consequences of key sociopolitical phenomena prevalent in Latin America.
3. Develop a foundational understanding of the economic, social, and political dynamics of at least two specific Latin American countries.
4. Recognize what makes Latin America distinctive in comparison to other world regions such as Africa, Asia, or Western Europe.
5. Compare political dynamics in Latin America and the United States, identifying both similarities and differences, and consider how this comparative perspective can deepen understanding of American politics.

## COURSE CORE VALUES

1. No memorization
2. Case-oriented learning
3. Comparative-based and non-Eurocentric contents.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Attendance** is non mandatory. **As an adult**, I expect you to manage your own class duties. However, please note that class participation is graded each session, and some class content

will be included in evaluations. **It is entirely your responsibility if you receive low grades due to absences.**

- **No cell phone use, email checking, or procrastination is allowed during class.** Activities such as chatting, texting, playing online games, or reading unrelated material show a lack of respect for Prof F and for the class as a whole. Please be respectful, and if you find the class to be unengaging or believe it could be improved, you are welcome to share your feedback during the three (anonymous) feedback sessions scheduled throughout the semester.
- **There is no required textbook for this class.** However, you are expected to complete the assigned readings before each session in order to fully participate in discussions and improve your participation grade. **All readings are posted on Canvas.**

## COURSE EVALUATION

| Weight              |      | Grading policy |              |            |            |
|---------------------|------|----------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Final Project       | 20%  | Excellent      | A: 94-100    | A- : 90-93 |            |
| Final Exam          | 10%  | Good           | B+ : 87-89   | B : 84-86  | B- : 80-83 |
| Monitoring Exams    | 40%  | Fair           | C+ : 77-79   | C : 74-76; | C- : 70-73 |
| Class Participation | 10%  | Poor           | D+ : 67-69   | D : 64-66; | D- : 61-63 |
| Total               | 100% | Fail           | F : 60 and > |            |            |

### 1. Final Project (20%)

Each student is required to submit a 10-page research paper, due on **Sunday, December 1st** via Canvas. Papers must be **double-spaced**, use **12-point font**, and follow standard formatting. Your paper should focus on a topic covered in this course. If you wish to explore a topic not directly discussed in class, you must obtain my approval before beginning your research. The paper must involve a **comparative analysis of a specific topic** (e.g., democracy) in **two Latin American countries**. To do this effectively, you should:

1. Provide a brief **background** on each country, including key indicators such as **location, population, and GDP per capita**, among others.
2. Conduct a **literature review** summarizing relevant scholarly debates and findings on the chosen topic.
3. Develop a **clear and compelling argument** (e.g., Chile functions as a stable democracy, and Peru exhibits features of a hybrid regime).
4. Support your argument with **evidence** drawn from scholarly sources, reliable statistics, and reputable news reports.

To ensure that you are approaching this project thoughtfully and progressively, you will be required to submit and present four memos with portions of your work (10% of the grade) on **specific dates stated in the class schedule** (at the end of this syllabus). I will return your

work with **comments and feedback**, which must be **incorporated into the final version** of your paper (the other 10% of the grade).

## **2. Final Exam (30%)**

The Final Exam will take place in class and is designed to assess your achievement of the course's main learning objectives. It will be a written, closed-book evaluation, with no access to books, notes, or external sources, and will follow a **format similar to the Monitoring Exams**. The exam **will cover the entire content of the course**.

## **3. Monitoring Exams (40%)**

To assess your understanding of course concepts, you will complete four **Monitoring Exams** throughout the semester. These in-class, written assessments will evaluate your ability to apply key concepts to the analysis of major challenges in Latin America, as well as your engagement with the assigned readings and lecture materials. These are **not memorization-based evaluations** and must be completed **without the use of notes or other sources**.

## **4. Class Participation (10%)**

Active participation in class is required. To perform well, you should **contribute at least once each week regarding the readings and concepts**. Although there is no exact quantifiable rubric for participation, evaluations will consider the following parameters:

5. Strong Participation (3 points): Demonstrates thorough reading and understanding of key concepts.
6. Mild Participation (2 points): Shows commitment to the materials with a basic grasp of concepts.
7. Incipient Participation (1 point): Displays enthusiasm and willingness to learn but with minimal conceptual understanding.

## **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

The University makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of the Dean of the College. Students requesting accommodations for this course should present an official accommodation letter within the first two weeks of the term and schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and to follow up about accommodation arrangements.

## **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

The University affirms that diverse perspectives and backgrounds enhance our community. We are committed to the recruitment, enrichment, and retention of students, faculty, and staff who embody many experiences, cultures, points of view, interests, and identities. As engaged citizens in a global and diverse society, we seek to advance a positive learning and working environment for all through open and substantive dialogue. Please read the [Politics Department Statement on Diversity and Inclusion](#).

## [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination](#)

The University prohibits and this policy addresses discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran's status, and genetic information in its educational programs and activities and with regard to employment. Additionally, the University prohibits retaliation against any individual who brings a good faith complaint under this policy or is involved in the complaint process. Students, faculty, and staff found to have violated this policy will be disciplined appropriately, up to and including termination from employment or dismissal from the University.

### **Sexual Discrimination & Misconduct Policy**

The University prohibits all forms of sexual misconduct-which includes sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, domestic and dating violence, and stalking-and retaliation. This policy provides guidance to assist those who have experienced or been affected by sexual misconduct, whether as a complainant, a respondent, or a third party. It includes detailed information about what conduct is prohibited, confidential and reporting resources, and resolution procedures.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

- **The highlighted activities are graded, and participation in all of them is MANDATORY.**
- **Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each session. These readings will be evaluated through the four Monitoring Exams (but not in the Final Exam).**

### BLOCK 1: INTRODUCTION

August 26: Class introduction and course overview

- No readings assigned

August 28: Why studying Latin America?: Introducing Latin American countries and key issues (Colonial legacies, inequality, and weak institutionalization)

- Lange, Matthew (2006) Colonialism and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and British Colonies, pp. 1412-35.

August 30: Why studying Latin America?: Latin America and the US

- Kaufman, Robert and Stephan Haggard (2019) Democratic Decline in the United States: What Can We Learn from Middle-Income Backsliding? pp. 417-432.

**September 1<sup>st</sup>: First Final Project Memo (Countries selected and topic, justifying the selection)**

### BLOCK 2: DEVELOPMENT

September 4: From raw material exporters to industrializers (ISI strategy)

- Hirschman, Albert (1968) The Political Economy of Import-Substituting Industrialization in Latin America, pp.1-32.

September 6: From industrializers to informal-based economies (Neoliberal strategy)

- Bogliaccini, Juan Ariel (2013) Trade liberalization, deindustrialization, and inequality: Evidence from middle-income Latin American countries, pp. 79-105..

September 9: From informal-based economies to criminal economies (Anarchic development)

- Toledo, Zarai (2022) Informal Gold Miners, State Fragmentation, and Resource Governance in Bolivia and Peru, pp. 45-66

September 9: Peru (Case study)

- No readings assigned

**September 13: Monitoring Exam #1**

### BLOCK 3: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

September 16: The fight for property rights in Latin America: Peasant social movements

- Teubal, Miguel (2009). Agrarian Reform and Social Movements in the Age of Globalization: Latin America at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century, pp. 9-20.

September 18: The fight for labor rights in Latin America: Blue collar social movements

- Collier, Ruth and David Collier (2015) The Labor Movement and the State in Latin America, pp. 40-58.

September 20: The fight for post-modern rights in Latin America: Feminist and new conservative social movements

- Rodríguez, Ana (2025) From Human Rights to Emancipation: Four Decades of Feminist Movement Configurations in Latin America, pp. 56-79.

September 23: Brazil (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### September 1<sup>st</sup>: Second Final Project Memo (Country's background)

#### **BLOCK 4: POPULISM**

September 25: Elite politics in Latin America: Political parties and interest groups

- Kitschelt, Herbert et al. (2010) Latin American Party Systems, pp. 1-13.

September 27: Clientelism in Latin America: "Controlling" the poor by targeted benefits

- González-Ocantos, Ezequiel, and Virginia Oliveros (2019) Clientelism in Latin American Politics, pp. 1-13.

September 30: Charismatic politics in Latin America: Persistent inequalities, crisis of representation, and the seek for an avenger

- Andrews-Lee, Caitlin (2019) The Power of Charisma: Investigating the Neglected Citizen–Politician Linkage in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, pp.298-322.

October 2: The populist strategy: "Bad" elites versus "good" people

- Weyland, Kurt (2001) Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics, pp. 1-22.

October 4: Venezuela (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### October 7: Monitoring Exam #2

#### **BLOCK 5: THE STATE**

October 9: State Building in Latin America: Center and Periphery politics

- Soifer, Hillel. State Building in Latin America, pp. 1-23.

October 11: State capacity in Latin America I: Fighting poverty and inequality under social programs

- Garay, Candelaria (2016) Social Policy Expansion in Latin America, pp. 1-27.

October 14: State capacity in Latin America II: Fighting crime under "mano dura" policies

- Flores-Macías, Gustavo and Jessica Zarkin (2021) The Militarization of Law Enforcement: Evidence From Latin America, pp. 519-538.

October 16: Mexico (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### October 17th: Third Final Project Memo (Literature review of your first four scholarly sources and your central argument)

#### **BLOCK 6: CORRUPTION**

October 18: Why corruption is so prevalent in Latin America?

- Balán, Manuel (2011). Competition by Denunciation: The Political Dynamics of Corruption Scandals in Argentina and Chile, pp. 459-478.

October 21: Different forms of corruption in Latin America

- Morris, Stephen (2011) Forms of Corruption, pp. 10-14.

October 23: Corrupt but popular? The use of identities to skip punishment

- Klačnja, Marco, Noam Lupu, and Joshua Tucker (2021) When do Voters Sanction Corrupt Politicians? pp. 161-171.

October 25: Argentina (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### **October 28: Monitoring Exam #3**

#### **BLOCK 7: POLITICAL REGIMES**

October 30: Autocracy in America Latina

- O'Donnell, Guillermo (1979) Tensions in the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy, pp. 285-300.

November 1: Democracy in Latin America

- Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959) Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy, pp. 69-85.

November 4: Hybrid regimes in Latin America

- Levitsky, Steven and Jeremy Loxton (2012) Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism: The Case of Fujimori's Peru, pp. 160-181

November 6: El Salvador (Case study)

- No readings assigned

**November 7th: Fourth Final Project Memo (Presentation of early findings that support your central argument)**

#### **BLOCK 8: VIOLENCE**

November 8: The failure of movements, elites, the state, and closed regimes

- Feldmann, Andreas and Maiju Perälä (2004) Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America, pp. 101-132.

November 11: Ideational-based violence: Relative deprivation, guerrillas, and anarchism

- Wood, Elizabeth (2001) An Insurgent Path to Democracy: Popular Mobilization, Economic Interests and Regime Transition in South Africa and El Salvador, pp. 862-888.

November 13: Economic-based violence: Criminal economies and narco politics

- Trejo, Guillermo, and Sandra Ley (2018) Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? pp. 900-916

November 15: Colombia (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### **November 18: Monitoring Exam #4**

#### **BLOCK 9: CURRENT LATIN AMERICAN TOPICS**

November 20: The politicization of ethnic identities

- Madrid, Raul (2010) The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America, pp. 1-34

November 22: Deepening democracy: "Normal" people taking power

- Carreras, Miguel (2012). The Rise of Outsiders in Latin America, 1980–2010: An Institutional Perspective, pp. 1451-1482.

November 25-29: No classes. Happy Thanksgiving.

### **December 1st: FINAL PROJECT DUE DATE**

December 2: The judicialization of politics and the growth of political polarization

- Urribarri, Raul (2016). Politicization of the Latin American Judiciary via Informal Connections, pp. 325-340.

December 4: The politicization of anti-identities

- Meléndez, Carlos (2022). The Post-Partisans: Anti-Partisans, Anti-Establishment Identifiers, and Apartisans in Latin America, pp. 22-29, 36-38, 40-48

December 6: Bolivia (Case study)

- No readings assigned

### **FINAL EXAM: TBA**