**MEDIA AND POWER IN LATIN AMERICA**

**SPAN 4410/6410**

Professor: Dr. Paul Alonso

Office: Swann 217

E-mail: paul.alonso@modlangs.gatech.edu

**Description:** What is the role of the media and journalism in Latin American democratic societies? After the military dictatorships of the 70s and the wave of democratization in the region during the 80s, what were the challenges to develop a watchdog press that informs the citizens and keeps power accountable? This course explores the tensions among the commercial nature of private media companies, the government pressures, and the ideal public service ethos of the press. It also analyzes the constant struggle for freedom of the expression in the new realities of Latin American countries. The course will be conducted in Spanish.

Topics that will be covered include:

* How the democratic wave in the region during the last quarter of the 20th Century affected journalism in countries that for generations had been under dictatorship and strong censorship;
* The problem of violence against journalists in the hemisphere, especially in cases related to organized crime, drug trafficking and political motivated crimes;
* The impact of the Internet and other digital media on journalism and freedom of expression in the region;
* How corruption, traditionally widespread in some countries, affects the practice of journalism;
* The relations between the press and governments that do not understand or accept the role of independent journalism in a democracy;
* Media monopolies and concentration of media ownership;
* Alternative journalism/media as social resistance.

**Learning Outcomes**

**Students will**

1. analyze media and journalism in Latin American countries, including the cultural, political, economic and historical aspects that shape the profession
2. understand the evolution and challenges of media and journalism in countries that have been struggling for democracy and freedom of expression
3. describe the importance of the media and the press and its role in a democratic society, as part of its checks and balances, and how the Digital Revolution is affecting journalism and its role in a democracy
4. demonstrate oral proficiency at the intermediate high level or higher, able to present and engage audiences, to engage in reflective and research writing, and able to understand, analyze and interpret authentic media texts
5. work in a global context grounded upon a theoretically informed and comparative understanding of languages, media, cultures, and technologies

**EVALUATION**

Participation: 10%

Writing assignments (2): 20%

Oral presentations in class (2): 20%

Mid-term exam: 20%

Final paper (outline + final version): 30%

**Participation (10%):**

Active participation in class is essential. The student is required to complete the readings before each class, watch any assigned videos or materials, do homework, and read his/her notes before the discussions. While this grade is the most subjective one of the class, students’ interventions are evaluated in terms of accuracy and depth of content (40%), clarity and correction of language (40%), and respectful attitude towards the class and the instructor (20%).

**\*Required readings will be available on T-Square or the professor will send them by email or hand them in class.**

\*Students will be updated on their grades on T-Square.

**Written assignments (20%):**

Students will submit two written assignments during the semester (the deadlines are in the syllabus). Grades will be based on: 1) ability to follow the instructions of the assignment and use the techniques and readings explained in class (40%); 2) clear writing and use of correct academic language (40%); 3) citations of all pertinent sources and including bibliography (20%). Late assignments will not be accepted. Not submitting an assignment will result in a grade of zero.

**Mid-term Exam (20%):**

The mid-term includes all the topics discussed in class. If a student misses the exam without previous notification and official excuse, they will receive a grade of zero.

**Oral presentations in class (20%)**

Students will prepare two oral presentations during the semester; approximately ten minutes each. The first presentation will be on assigned readings, and the date will be coordinated in class. The final presentation will be based on your final paper (week 16 of the course). Specific instructions will be offered a week in advance. A rubric for the oral presentations will be uploaded in T-Square. The rubric considers the following aspects: Introduction (10%), Body of Content (40%), Conclusions (10%), Powerpoint (10%), Delivery (30%). Each presentation is 10% of the total grade. Students should use PowerPoint or other similar visual aids in their presentations and generate interaction with the class.

**Final paper (30%):**

As a final paper, each student will research a specific aspect of the media/journalism in the Americas (i.e., media concentration in Brazil, coverage of gang violence in El Salvador, social media in Ecuador, etc.) The topic needs to be approved by the professor beforehand. The student will present an outline including the research question and main ideas (10%) and a final version of the paper (20%). In the final paper, the student should demonstrate knowledge of the social, political and cultural context of his/her case study. The paper should also exhibit familiarity with the theoretical readings. The final paper will be graded on depth of background research (30%), organization and clarity of arguments (35%), and the correct use of language (no errors of agreement) (35%). The final paper should cite at least three readings in Spanish, and should be approximately 1,300 words (5 pages, double- spaced), including one bibliography page.

**\*Students taking this class at the 6000-level will be producing a more in-depth final paper of approximately 2,500 words. The distribution of grade percentages remains the same for both graduates and undergraduates.**

**Important class guidelines:**

\* All papers in the course should be typed, double spaced, 12-point font.

\* Students should not use cell-phones or similar devices in class, except with the professor’s authorization.

**Attendance:**

Class attendance is mandatory and essential. Three absences without a formal excuse will result in a 5-point deduction of the final grade. Any additional absence will result in an additional 3-point deduction of the final grade. Students should arrive on time; two tardy arrivals will be counted as an absence from the course. If a student misses class, it is his/her responsibility to stay updated on the contents and homework of the course. Official absences are allowed following the Institute guidelines: “Students who are absent because of participation in approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. Approval of such activities will be granted by the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate, and statements of the approved absence may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar.” <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

**Suggested Readings:**

* Matos, Carolina (2012). Media and Politics in Latin America. I.B. Tauris. Publishers.
* Waisbord, Silvio (2000). Watchdog Journalism in South America
* Mastrini, Guillermo & Becerra, Martin (Eds). Periodistas y Magnates. Estructura de las industrias culturales en América Latina.

**CALENDAR OF THE COURSE**

**WEEK 1**

Introduction / Presentation

Media and Journalism in Latin America: overview

**WEEK 2**

Peru: socio-political and media context

Peru: the media during and after Fujimori

**WEEK 3**

Peru: the media during the democratic transition

Argentina: socio-political and media context

**WEEK 4**

Argentina: the media and the military dictatorship

Argentina: the media and the 2001 economic crisis

**Deadline: writing assignment 1**

**WEEK 5**

Chile: socio-political and media context

Chile: the media during and after Pinochet

**WEEK 6:**

Chile: the media during and after Pinochet

**Deadline: writing assignment 2**

**WEEK 7**

Colombia: socio-political and media context

Colombia: the media and the armed conflict

**WEEK 8**

Colombia: the media and the armed conflict

**MID-TERM EXAM**

**WEEK 9**

Mexico: socio-political and media context

Mexico: the media during and after the PRI

**WEEK 10**

Mexico: concentration of media and the case of Televisa

Mexico: violence, journalism and drug trafficking

**WEEK 11**

Venezuela: socio-political and media context

Venezuela: Chávez and the media

**Deadline: Outline of the final paper**

**WEEK 12**

Ecuador: sociopolitical and media context

Ecuador: Correa and the media

**WEEK 13**

Digital journalism in Latin America

**WEEK 14**

Consultation sessions

**WEEK 15**

FINAL PAPERS / FINAL PRESENTATIONS

*NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.*

**Academic Honesty:**

As a student at Georgia Tech, you are expected to fully understand and to carefully follow the policies and standards of academic honesty set forth in *The* *Student Handbook*, which is available from the office of the Dean of Students and online. Lack of familiarity with the university’s policy on academic honesty will not be accepted as an excuse or justification for violations. The policy set forth in the Handbook offers examples of plagiarism, cheating, and unauthorized collaborations. If you have any questions, or concerns about this policy, you should consult with your academic advisor, instructor, or department chair. Confirmed violations will result in appropriate disciplinary actions.

While several forms of academic dishonesty are possible, the most common form is plagiarism, the essence of which is representing the work of others as your own by not attributing sources of ideas and facts, failing to indicate and cite direct quotations, or falsifying citations. Any widely used style guide, such as the APA, will offer guidelines regarding attribution, quotation, and citation, and these rules should be followed completely and consistently. These rules apply equally to books, journals, newspapers, other hard copy publications, and materials obtained over the Internet.