

Introduction to Latin American Politics and Societies
POL 305F
Mondays 4-6 pm
Fall 2021

Instructor:
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Overview

This historical survey seeks to provide students with the context necessary to understand developments in contemporary Latin American politics. The class develops thematically and chronologically, exposing students to a range of issues and debates from North American and Latin American academic and activist circles. Substantive issues will include the changing face of state sovereignty, human rights and social movements, the legacies of (neo)colonialism, neoliberalism, and ‘21st century socialism.’

Learning Objectives

The specific learning objectives of this course will be:

1. To read, understand, and compare a number of interdisciplinary approaches to Latin American politics;
2. To develop a critical appreciation of recent trends in Latin America, as well as their historical roots;
3. To introduce students to contemporary and canonical social theory concepts specific to Latin American politics;
4. To improve and refine writing skills through the composition of research and response papers;

Course Requirements

Students are expected to have finished the day’s assigned readings before lecture, and are encouraged to bring questions and concerns to class. **Lectures will compliment but not necessarily replicate or summarize assigned readings.** I am, however, always willing to answer questions on specific readings or concepts in class or office hours – in fact, I encourage

it. Our aim is to develop not only a critical repertoire on the key debates surrounding Latin American Politics, but to also hone our own abilities as writers, colleagues, and global citizens.

Assessment in this course will be determined by your performance on the following:

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Discussion Papers	50% 5 papers, 10% each	On-going *one must be completed and turned in no later than our 25 October meeting.
Film Response Paper	20%	On-Going *No later than 8 December
Case Study (Group Project)	Part One: 10% Part Two: 20% Total: 30%	1 November 6 December

Discussion Papers – Responses to “Discuss” prompts listed with each week’s meeting in the syllabus (below). Your papers should be ~1 page in length or about 250 words, double spaced. Papers should respond to the question and draw from course materials to support your positions, assertions, and analyses. Please see the grading rubric below for guidance on how response papers will be assessed.

You are required to respond to prompts from no less than 4 distinct weeks of the course.

Please note, it is nearly impossible to write any paper, no matter how short, without a significant amount of prewriting and revision. There will be many potential arguments to each prompt. Your task is to find the best argument you can make and to make care that your prose is the servant of your ideas – not vice versa. Discussion papers will be due via Quercus *before* the start of the classes to which they correspond.

Film Paper: There are two required and one optional film in this course. After watching the film, please write a 1-2 page (~about 500 word paper that relates the films to the themes and content of the course. The best papers will provide brief synopses of the film, scene within the film, or sequence of events in question without spending too much time summarizes on screen happenings. They will also engage with and criticize and/or extend concepts from course readings to further a clear, concise, and textually-defended argument.

Case Study On October 4 you will be divided into working groups that will investigate and compose informational briefs on assigned topics using concepts from class readings and your own original research. You will receive your topics and more detailed instructions with group assignments.

The Case Study project is comprised of two parts. Part one is primarily descriptive. In ~1 page (~250 words, double spaced), you will introduce your issue, its history or context, and the key stakeholders involved in or affected by it.

Part two will build on part one, and will highlight actions surrounding the assigned issue while employing concepts from the course and pointing toward potential outcomes. This paper should be ~1-2 pages in length (~500 words, double spaced).

Citations For all written work in this course, please use the Chicago Manual of Style's in-text author-date format as you cite your sources. You should also include a Works Cited list at the end of your work. The Works Cited section will not count in length/word count restrictions.

For a guide to the Chicago Manual of Style, please see:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Late Policy We are still very much in a pandemic. My hope is to be as flexible as is reasonable while also respecting the working conditions of the course's teaching assistant. In general, it is always best to request accommodations or extensions as well in advance of due dates as possible.

Paperless Classroom

All assignments for this course are to be submitted via Quercus.

Grading Rubric:

A: Excellent work, with clear, challenging, original ideas supported by sufficient, appropriate, logically interpreted evidence. The essay should engage the reader in the inquiry, convincingly answer opposing views, be well organized, and free of significant flaws. An 'A' paper should be not just good but outstanding in ideas and presentation.

B: Good to very good work, with a clear thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate evidence, organized and interpreted logically. The 'B' paper may have some outstanding qualities but be marked by significant flaws which keep it from being an 'A'; or it may be all-around good work, free of major problems but lacking the deeper insight necessary for excellence.

C: Satisfactory work, but not yet good. The 'C' paper meets the basic requirements of a thesis supported by interpretation of specific evidence, but it needs work in thinking and/or presentation. There may be a lack of clarity, the evidence may not always be sufficient and appropriate, or the interpretation may have logical flaws. The essay may have organizational or mechanical problems that keep it from being good. The 'C' paper may be good in some respects but poor in others, or it may simply be adequate but not noteworthy overall.

D: Barely passing work that shows effort but is so marred by serious problems that it cannot be considered a satisfactory paper. Papers without a readily identifiable thesis are liable to be graded 'D'.

No Pass: Failing work—for example, a hasty, sloppy paper that shows little or no thought, effort, or familiarity with the text.

Please Note: Poor mechanics detract from your grades, but good mechanics by themselves do not make a good paper. Sloppy grammar, punctuation, and spelling tax the goodwill of your reader, which all effective writing is careful to respect. These problems won't be overlooked, since they affect the communication of thought— but thoughtful work is the most important.

A Note on Decorum, Etiquette, and Ethics

As an instructor, I want nothing more than to encourage lively debate charged by principled and studied disagreement. These sorts of conflictual encounters are where we often find ourselves learning the most. It is imperative that the classroom, lecture hall, or zoom screen are safe spaces where everyone feels comfortable and inspired to participate. I have a strict zero tolerance policy for discriminatory behaviour of any sort. Derogatory comments aimed at one's gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability are as repugnant as they are unhelpful and have no place in the classroom.

Students are strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their essays and assignments before handing them in to the instructor. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned and the grades posted to ROSI.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto, <http://writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>.

Information about the English Language Learning program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. Students looking to build on their language strengths might also consider other opportunities, such as:

- the Communication Cafe, which meets weekly at four different times and locations for the first five weeks of each term for practice with oral skills like class discussion and presentations
- Reading eWriting, an online program that helps students engage course readings more effectively. You can also find further instructional advice files for students and for classroom instruction on this site.

For more information, please contact me either via email or directly, or feel free to contact the ELL Coordinator Leora Freedman at leora.freedman@utoronto.ca

Email Policy

For the purposes of this course, the primary use of email will be to share information such as announcements of events of note or news stories relevant to the course material and to schedule meetings for more individualized questions. Email is a poor medium for discussing or clarifying substantive matters that come up in lectures or reading. Face to face interactions are much better for this sort of work, even through a screen. Please ask these sorts of questions in class or during office hours.

I do my best to respond in a timely fashion (usually within 48 hours) to all student emails. Please do not expect an immediate response, especially on evenings and weekends. Please be sure that any questions you have are not already answered in the syllabus. I reserve the right to neither respond to nor acknowledge questions that can be answered in the syllabus.

Required Readings

Daniel Hellinger (2015) *The Comparative Politics of Latin America: Democracy at Last?* Routledge. Available online at the University of Toronto Library:

https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106888466906196

All other readings can be located either via the link in the syllabus or through the University of Toronto Libraries' Website: <https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/>

Current Events and Further Reading

Coverage of Latin American Political, Economic, and Social happenings in the US and Canada are often poor at best, and usually absent from the news cycle entirely. I encourage students to do their best to keep abreast of regional happenings by following local newspapers, language skills permitting, or by periodically checking in with the work of think tanks, development agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations, and scholarly associations. For example:

Links including everything from online newspapers to government ministries is The Latin America Network Information Center. <http://lanic.utexas.edu>

The Washington Office on Latin America is a policy lobbying organization focusing on issues of human rights, security and justice. <http://www.wola.org>

NACLA Report offers analysis of Latin American conditions from a critical perspective. <http://www.nacla.org>

Good analysis on regional trends in crime and public insecurity. <http://www.insightcrime.org>

Inter-American Dialogue (analysis of political and economic trends) <http://thedialogue.org>

The United States Institute of Peace (conflict resolution, includes database of peace accord documents) <http://www.usip.org>

Among Latin American based research centers, for wide-ranging and timely scholarship see FLACSO (with sites in several LA countries) <http://www.flacso.org>

Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean is a United Nations agency dedicated to studying and promoting development in the region. <https://www.cepal.org/en>

Schedule of Readings and Themes

1.

September 13 – First Things First

Hayden King on Land Acknowledgements:

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/redrawing-the-lines-1.4973363/i-regret-it-hayden-king-on-writing-ryerson-university-s-territorial-acknowledgement-1.4973371>

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Introduction: Latin American Studies and the Comparative Study of Democracy, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*.

Background:

United Nations Development Program (2021) Trapped: High Inequality and Low Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Overview available at:

https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human_development/regional-human-development-report-2021.html

2.

September 20 – Conceptualizing Democracy & Citizenship

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 1: Conceptions of Democracy, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*.

Camila Vergara (2021) “Burying Pinochet” *Sidecar*

<https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/burying-pinochet>

Listen:

WOLA Podcast (2019) ‘The System’ versus Guatemalan Democracy

<https://www.wola.org/analysis/the-system-versus-guatemalan-democracy/>

Discuss:

1. Why is it important, or useful, to focus on democracy as a theme for studying comparative politics?
2. Do democracy and market-based economies compliment one another? Why or why not? How do markets reinforce or undermine notions of citizenship?

3. Are there other, potentially more useful, categories we can or should use to grasp the experience of politics in Latin America?
4. How do recent events in Guatemala and Chile highlight the promise and limits of democracy and citizenship in Latin America today?

Suggest a question! What did this week's readings make you think about? What would you like to discuss the class about democracy and citizenship in Latin America?

3.

September 27 – Colonization and After: Latin America in the World

Read:

William M. Denevan (1992) "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82(3): 369-385.

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 3: Democratic and Autocratic Threads before Columbus and in Colonial America, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*.

Watch:

También la Lluvia/Even the Rain (Icíar Bollaín, 2010)

Available from U of T Library at:

<https://play.library.utoronto.ca/watch/f767d22dc7db884b948b18e8a72ae5f8>

Discuss:

1. How/does the 'The Pristine Myth' shape popular understandings of Latin America since colonization? Explore some of the consequences.
2. How has Latin America's position in the world shifted since the end of the colonial era? How are these changes reflected in the film *Even the Rain*?
3. Discuss some of the enduring legacies of colonization in Latin America. Have there been attempts to address these legacies? If so, have they been successful? Why or why not?
4. How does Latin America's postcolonial reality differ from Canada's? Why?

Is there something else we should be talking about? Suggest it!

4.

October 4 – Development and Dependent Development

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 6: Development and Dependency: Theory and Practice in Latin America, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*.

NB: pages 174-189 are recommended but not required

Shirin M. Rai (2018) Gender and Development, in *Handbook on the International Political Economy of Gender*, Juanita Elias and Adrienne Roberts, eds. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers, pp. 142-158.

(Available online at U of T library)

Eduardo Gudynas (2013) Debates on Development and its Alternatives in Latin America: A Brief Heterodox Guide, in *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*, M. Lang and D. Mokrani, eds. Quito: Fundación Rosa Luxemburg, pp.15-39

Available at: <http://www.rosalux.org.ec/pdfs/BeyondDevelopment.pdf#page=16>
(The entire collection is definitely worth checking out)

Discuss:

1. What are the key assumptions and assertions of Modernization Theory, Dependency Theory, and Institutionalism? How do they differ? How are they similar?
2. How (is) development gendered?
3. Development is often characterized and criticized for its “growthism” and Eurocentrism. What are these concerns, and are they merited?

****11 October: Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class****

5.

October 18 – The State, Populism, and Presidential Systems

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 5: Populism, Development, and Democracy in the Twentieth Century, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*

Donald Kingsbury, Teresa Kramarz, and Kyle Jacques (2019) “Populism or Petrostate?: The Afterlives of Ecuador’s Yasuní-ITT Initiative” *Society and Natural Resources* 32(5): 530-547.

Discuss:

1. Latin American states have often been described as particularly prone to populist disruptions. Why is this? Is this an accurate, fair, or incomplete assessment?
2. Is populism good or bad for democracy? Discuss examples to defend your point.

Any other questions?

6.

October 25 – Militaries, Counter/Insurgencies, and Regional Politics

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 7: Democratic Breakdown and Military Rule, in
Comparative Politics of Latin America

Listen:

Greg Grandin, author of *Empire's Workshop*, on The Dig Podcast
<https://www.thedigradio.com/podcast/empires-workshop-with-greg-grandin/>

Discuss:

1. To what extent were the counterinsurgencies, military dictatorships, and human rights abuses throughout Latin America in the 1960s-1990s the result of foreign (often, United States) interference? To what extent were they domestic disputes?
2. What were the major consequences of these insurgencies and counterinsurgencies?

7.

November 1 – Social Movements and Civil Society

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 11: Social Class and Social Movements in Latin America in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*

Veronica Gago on Green Tide in AR

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/29445/a-new-type-of-politics-argentina-s-pro-choice-movement>

Recommended:

Lucinda Grinnell (2019) "Taking Stock: A Hundred Years After Women's Suffrage in Latin America. *NACLA Report on the Americas*

<https://nacla.org/news/2019/03/27/taking-stock-hundred-years-after-women%E2%80%99s-suffrage-latin-america>

Listen:

Forrest Hylton on 2021 Protests in Colombia

Behind the News (first half of show only)

https://shout.lbo-talk.org/lbo/RadioArchive/2021/21_05_13.mp3

Discuss:

1. How does inequality influence democracy?
2. Why is the informal sector so large in much of Latin America?

3. How have social movements shaped politics in the region, both in and beyond the ballot box?
4. How has urbanization shaped politics and social movements in Latin America?

8.

November 15 – Neoliberalism and After

Read:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 6: Development and Dependency: Theory and Practice in Latin America, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*.

NB: pages 174-189 only.

Sarah Radcliffe (2012) “Development for a Postneoliberal Era?: *Sumak Kawsay*, Living Well, and the Limits to Decolonization in Ecuador” *Geoforum* 43(2): 240-249.

Alexander Main and Gustavo Codas (2016) “The End of a Progressive Cycle?” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 48(4): 381-384.

Recommended:

Daniel Hellinger (2015) Chapter 15: Democracy in Times of Globalization, in *Comparative Politics of Latin America*

Petra Costa (2019) *The Edge of Democracy*
(Netflix original film, available on www.netflix.com)

Discuss:

1. What were the main impacts of market reforms and structural adjustment in Latin America?
2. How did the Pink Tide respond to neoliberalization?
3. What does *Sumak Kawsay* offer as an alternative to development? What did *Sumak Kawsay* look like in practice in Ecuador?
4. Has the Pink Tide ebbed? Why?

****8 November: Reading Week, No Class****

9.

November 22 – Extractivism and Progressive Extractivism

Read:

Murat Arsel, Barbara Hogenboom, and Lorenzo Pelligrini (2016) The Extractive Imperative in Latin America. *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3(4): 880-887.

Maristella Svampa (2015) "Commodities Consensus: Neoextractivism and Enclosure of the Commons in Latin America" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 114(1): 65-82.

Discuss:

1. What is 'the extractive imperative'? How have countries attempted to escape it? In what ways have they been successful? How have they failed? Why?
2. How does progressive extractivism differ from traditional extractivism?
3. Svampa (2015) describes the 'ecoterritorial turn' as a 'productive intersection' of resistance movements (69). Please explain this turn and this intersection. Is it something we only see in Latin America today?

10.

November 29 – Canada in Latin America

Read:

Justice and Corporate Accountability Project (2017) *Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America*. Toronto: Osgoode Hall Law School.

Available at:

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2886584

Simon Granovsky-Larsen and Larissa Santos (2020) From the War on Terror to a War on Territory: Corporate Counterinsurgency at the Escobal Mine and the Dakota Access Pipeline. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*. 46(1): 121-145.

Listen:

Latino Media Collective (2019) Canada's Role in Venezuela Crisis

<https://latinomediacollecive.com/2019/05/03/may-3rd-2019-canadas-role-in-venezuela-crisis/>

Discuss:

1. How (has?) Canada's role in the Americas shifted in the twentieth and twenty first centuries?
2. To what extent is the Canadian government, or Canadian citizens, responsible for the actions of Canadian companies abroad?

Other questions? What else should we be discussing?

11.

December 6 – Climate Crises are Political Crises

Read:

United Nations Office on Latin America and the Caribbean (2018) *Economics of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Graphic View*.
https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43889/1/S1800475_en.pdf

Kingsbury, Donald (2020) Combined and Uneven Energy Transitions: Reactive Decarbonization in Cuba and Venezuela. *The Journal of Political Ecology* 27: 558-579.

Watch:

Cecilia Aldarondo (2020) *Landfall*
<https://play.library.utoronto.ca/watch/a059482c921cdbc8ce6435333b8a9e1b>

Discuss:

1. What does it mean to suggest that the climate crisis will not be experienced the same, everywhere?
2. How are states' abilities to respond to the climate change constrained by geopolitics?
3. What are energy transitions? Can they offer chances for more just futures?

What have we missed? What else should we be talking about?

12.

December 9 – Optional make up class