Twenty First Century Latin American Politics

Political Science 360
Friday 10-12p
Sidney Smith Hall, Room 1074

University of Toronto
2016

Donald V Kingsbury, PhD
Office Hours: W 2-4 Sid Smith 3058
(and by appointment)
donald.kingsbury@utoronto.ca

Course Overview

Following the election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1998, Latin America was characterized as experiencing a “Pink Tide” of left of centre governments. In this ‘left turn,’ a majority of states have set out on a post-Neoliberal path, emphasizing economic redistribution and paths of development independent of the so-called ‘Washington Consensus.’ However, despite a high degree of regional solidarity, there remain significant differences across the states of the ‘Pink Tide,’ and by 2016, the ‘Tide’ seems to have turned to the right. This advanced undergraduate and graduate level course introduces students to the cultural politics, themes, and internal differences among Latin American Left governments and Social Movements. Our approach in the course will address themes through pan-regional hopes and challenges in the pursuit of social justice, and case studies – offering students in-depth investigations into individual country cases. Key questions addressed include: the status of the nation-state after globalization and neoliberal structural adjustment; resource extraction and sustainable development; regional integration; social movements, with particular emphasis on women’s, indigenous, and environmental movements; and the role of China in the new Latin America.

Assessment

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Keywords (2, 15% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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*Class Participation* – A course is only as strong as its participants. Participation includes asking questions of the professor and colleagues, bringing news stories to our attention, and making appointments to meet with the professor either individually or in small groups to discuss the topics of the course.
Keywords – Three times during the semester you will be asked to write a two to three paragraph entry on a key concept or event from a list provided by the professor (via blackboard). Your entry should define, contextualize, and explain the significance of your keyword in clear and concise language. You will be expected to cite your sources.

Please note, it is nearly impossible to write a strong keyword without a significant amount of prewriting and revision. Space is limited, so make sure you revise and polish your work in order to convey your idea as effectively as possible. Keywords are due in paper at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. Emailed submissions will only be accepted under extremely extenuated circumstances.

Final Paper Proposal – In preparation for your final research paper, you are required to submit a graded paper proposal, 1-2 pages in length. Your proposal should identify a research question as well as provide a brief discussion of the significance of the topic. Your paper should explore a problem or history introduced in the course.

Strong proposals will also identify potential scholarly resources for your paper. I am more than happy to discuss topics and writing strategies in greater detail in office hours.

Final Paper – The final 15-20 page research paper is due on 6 December via email to the instructor. Time and location TBA.

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.

**Late Policy:** Barring personal injury or family tragedy, late submission of written work is *strongly discouraged*. Marks on any late assignments will be reduced by 10 (on a 100 point grading scale) points per day past the due date.

**Help with Writing**

All undergraduate students taking summer courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science are eligible to use any of the five college writing centres that remain open in the summer: Innis College, New College, University College, Victoria College and Woodsworth College Writing Centres. Students may book up to TWO appointments per week. For information about writing centre appointments in the summer session, visit [http://writing.utoronto.ca/news](http://writing.utoronto.ca/news). To learn more about how writing centres work, visit [http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/learning](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/learning).

More than 60 Advice files on all aspects of academic writing are available from [www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice). Printable PDF versions are listed at [www.writing.utoronto.ca/about-this-site/pdf-links](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/about-this-site/pdf-links).

Please also familiarize yourself with the helpful guide "How Not to Plagiarize" and other advice on documentation format and methods of integrating sources. These pages are all listed at [www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources).

**Accessibility Services**

Please let me (and AccServ) know early if you require any accommodations this semester. I am happy to be flexible.

**Books for Purchase**

The course has only one required text, available for purchase at the U of T bookstore (214 College St, 416-640-7900). Other readings will either be made available on Blackboard or can be found via links to their original online sources as noted in the syllabus.

A note on background information and familiarity with the subject matter

Ideally students will arrive prepared with a degree of background in Latin American politics and history. However, readings and lectures are intended to be accessible to newcomers and specialists alike. Advanced knowledge of Latin American history is a much-encouraged plus, but not a prerequisite for enrollment. As always, the best way to get around any problems that might arise due to gaps in the knowledge we come to the course with is to ask questions, to ask them often, and to ask them without fear.

Students less familiar might consider referencing general histories of Latin America such as:


The professor is also more than happy to point students toward sources according to their own particular interests.

*Análisis de Coyuntura* and the Importance of Outside Sources

This is a course on contemporary Latin America at a time when ‘facts on the ground’ are rapidly being rewritten. While the primary focus of the course will be the themes and readings for each meeting, we will always allow time at the beginning of class to discuss, debate, and inform each other about current events in the Latin America. The aim of this sort of *análisis de coyuntura* (conjunctural analysis) is to draw our collective attention to the causes and consequences of the moments we are studying beyond the confines of the syllabus.

Latin American affairs are notoriously misrepresented – or ignored – in the North Atlantic Press. I wholeheartedly encourage you to add non-North American sources of information to your daily news and analysis repertoires. If you are fortunate enough to read languages other than English, all the better! Staying informed is one of our key responsibilities as global citizens.

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


Resource for political movements and activism in Latin America, from the perspective of movement participants. http://upsidedownworld.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

Also offering excellent analysis of regional trends is the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, FOCAL. http://www.focal.ca

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

Please feel free (and encouraged!) to share any other sources of news and analysis you encounter.
Schedule of Readings and Discussion Topics

15 Sept – Intro to Course

22 Sept – The Contemporary Scene


Strongly Suggested:


Suggested and Supplemental:


29 Sept – Neoliberalism, Neostructuralism, and Resistance


Suggested and Supplemental:

Sara Motta (2013) “‘We are the ones we’ve been waiting for’: The Feminization of Resistance in Venezuela” Latin American Perspectives 191(40): 35-54.
Daniel Ozarow (2014) “When All They Thought was Solid Melted into Air: Resisting Pauperization in Argentina during the 2002 Crisis” Latin American Research Review (49)1: 178-202.


6 Oct – From Polyarchy to Popular Democracy…and Back?


13 Oct – First Keyword Assignment Due at Beginning of Class

13 Oct – Environmental Crises, Challenges, and Movements


20 Oct – China and Latin America: New Frontiers or New Dependencies?


27 Oct – Final Paper Proposal Due at Beginning of Class

27 Oct – Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution


Donald Kingsbury (Forthcoming) “From Populism to Protagonism (and back?) in Bolivarian Venezuela: Rethinking Ernesto Laclau’s On Populist Reason” Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies.

Suggested and Supplemental


3 Nov – Brazil: Internal Contradictions of a Regional Superpower

Conn Halinan (2016) “A Very Brazilian Coup” Counterpunch Available at: http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/06/03/a-very-brazilian-coup/

Glenn Greenwald (2016) “Credibility of Brazil’s Interim President Collapses as he Receives 8-year Ban on Running for Office” The Intercept Available at: https://theintercept.com/2016/06/03/credibility-of-brazils-interim-president-collapses-receives-8-year-ban-on-running/


Suggested:


10 Nov – Ecuador: Extractivismo para superar el extractivismo?


http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/buen-vivir-philosophy-south-america-eduardo-gudynas


Suggested and Supplemental:


17 Nov – Final Keyword Assignment Due at Beginning of Class

17 Nov – Countercurrents: Mexico and Central America


24 Nov – Opening Cuba


Suggested and Supplemental:


1 Dec – Class Wrap-Up and Summary

6 Dec – Final Paper Due