Introduction to Latin American Politics and Societies
POL 305F

Blissell 313
MW 9-11 am
Summer Session I 2024

Instructor: Donald Kingsbury, PhD
Office: TBA
Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30-1:00

Teaching Assistant TBA

Overview

This intensive historical survey introduces students to 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Essays</td>
<td>10 pts each</td>
<td>15 May 29 May 12 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>35 pts</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35 pts</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Short Essays** Three times this semester you will be tasked with writing a short (2 page) response to a prompt provided by the professor. These essays are meant to focus your engagement with the text and extend your insights to other potential areas of interest and concern. As exercises in concision and precision, these papers should be direct and to the point, starting with an underlined thesis statement that directly addresses the prompt. The rest of the essay should then follow the lead of the thesis, developing its arguments in clearly written and conceptualized paragraphs.

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.

**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](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html)

**Late Policy** While it is my intention to be as understanding as possible, given the condensed time period of summer session courses late work hinders your progress even more than usual. As such, barring previously identified extenuating circumstances, papers will be deducted 5% for each day late, effective immediately after the initial due date.
**Midterm** Based on the readings, lectures, and other materials from the first half of the course. The midterm will be made up of identification and short answer questions. A study guide will be circulated the week before the exam.

**Final** Based on the readings, lectures, and other materials from the second half of the course. The final will be made up of identification and short answer questions. A study guide will be circulated the week before the exam.

**Note on Attendance**
While we will not be taking attendance in lectures, please note that important announcements and adjustments to the course schedule will be announced in class and might not be replicated in other venues.

**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.

**Late Policy**
Given the highly accelerated nature of summer session, all work turned in late will be deducted 5% per day, starting at 10:10 am on the original due date.

**Reassessment Policy**
Students wishing to request a reassessment of their mark should note that reopening an assignment can result in three final outcomes: the original mark may be affirmed, the mark may be amended to a higher score, or upon closer scrutiny, a lower score than originally earned may be deemed appropriate. The policy for contesting a mark is as follows:

- *Wait 24 hours*: requests for reassessment sent within 24 hours of a given paper’s return will be ignored;
- *Record your rationale in writing*: students should compose a detailed ~1 page memo explaining why they believe their mark merits reassessment. This request should refer to criteria in the original assignment and be specific in their appeal.
- *Submit this request to the teaching assistant* (if applicable): the TA can then decide to either reopen the assignment and adjust it to a higher or lower mark, or affirm their original decision. At this point a meeting may be requested (but is not mandatory) by either the student or the TA.
- *Appeal*: In cases that the student is still unsatisfied with their mark they may choose to submit all of the above materials to the professor for a final decision.
- *Statute of limitations*: requests for reassessment should be submitted within one week of the assignment’s return. All parties are encouraged to work throughout the process in a timely, respectful, and collegial manner.

**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](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

University Guidelines on Illness and Absence:

The Verification of Illness (also known as a “doctor’s note”) is not required.

Students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work should report their absence through the online absence declaration. The declaration is available to students through ACORN under the Profile and Settings menu. For updates, please reference the University policy for absence declaration.

Students should also advise their instructor of their absence. Instructors will not be automatically alerted when a student declares an absence. It is a student’s responsibility to let instructors know that they have used the Absence Declaration and to discuss any needed consideration, where appropriate.

Email Policy

NB: Please use my utoronto.ca email address rather than quercus for correspondence.

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. 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 than 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 Library 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


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. May 6 – First Things First: Introduction to the Region, Course, and Themes

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:


Backgrounder:

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

2. May 8 – Conceptualizing Democracy & Citizenship

Read:


Camila Vergara (2021) “Burying Pinochet” Sidecar
https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/burying-pinochet

Listen:

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 American 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. May 13 – Colonization and After: Latin America in the World

*Please note, we will not have the opportunity to discuss También la Lluvia in class. Make sure to watch it before we meet.

Read:


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. May 15 – Development and Populism
***Paper One Due on Quercus BEFORE beginning of class.
Read:


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

Suggested:


(Available online at U of T library)


Available at: [http://www.rosalux.org.ec/pdfs/BeyondDevelopment.pdf#page=16](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. Latin American states have often been described as particularly prone to populist disruptions. Why is this? Is this an accurate, fair, or incomplete assessment?
4. Is populism good or bad for democracy? Discuss examples to defend your point.
5. Development is often characterized and criticized for its “growthism” and Eurocentrism. What are these concerns, and are they merited?

May 20 – Public Holiday, No Class

May 22 – Revolution(s) I: Chile

**Please note: if there is sufficient interest we can organize a screening of the film on the big screen at Robarts’ Media Commons during our normal class meeting time. If people would rather watch from their own homes during that time, that works as well.**

Watch:
La Batalla de Chile, Part II: El Golpe de Estado (Patricio Guzmán, 1976)
https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106994031506196

6.
May 27 – Revolution(s) II: Insurrections, Rebellions, and Regime Change

Read:

Discuss:

1. How does revolutionary and democratic politics differ? To what extent is this relationship determined by context?
2. What were the key immediate, medium, and longer term consequences of the Cuban Revolution? Of revolutionary politics in Peru?

7.
May 29 – Militaries and Counter/Insurgencies
***Paper Two Due on Quercus BEFORE beginning of class.

Read:

Listen:
Greg Grandin, author of Empire’s Workshop, on The Dig Podcast

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?

8.
June 3 – 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:


Listen:

Forrest Hylton on 2021 Protests in Colombia

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?

9.
June 5 – Neoliberalism and After

Read:


NB: pages 174-189 only.


Recommended:

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?

10. **June 10 – Extractivism and Progressive Extractivism**

**Read:**


**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?

11. **June 12 – Canada in Latin America**

***Paper Three Due on Quercus BEFORE beginning of class.***

**Read:**


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


**Listen:**


**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. June 17 – Optional Make-Up Class

Final Exam to be held online during exam period