

Contemporary Latin American Politics
POL 325
Winter 2024

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Office Hours:
Th 12:30-2:30 (and by appointment)
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Course Description

The twenty first century in Latin American Politics has been characterized by shifts from left to right governments, unexpected openings in entrenched regimes, endings to decades' long conflicts, and beginnings of new ones. The region has also been characterized by renewed mobilizations against persistent inequalities and an increasing attention to the promises and challenges of development. 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: understanding the meaning of left and right political formations in the twenty-first century; development, sustainable development, and the critique of development; and the relationship between states and social movements in Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, and Cuba in the aftermaths of the so-called Washington Consensus of the 1990s and early century 'Left Turn.'

Course Learning Objectives

The specific learning objectives of this course will be:

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

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 assigned readings. 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 researchers, writers, and colleagues.

Assessment

Marks for this course will be determined via a combination of response papers, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Exams will be conducted via quercus.

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Weight
Response paper 1	<i>Before</i> 5 February	10 pts
Response paper 2	<i>Before</i> 18 March	10 pts
Midterm Exam	February 12	40 pts
Final Exam	TBA	40 pts

Response Papers (1-2 pages, double spaced, 12-point font) critical engagements with one or more of the assigned readings from a specific class meeting, to be submitted to quercus no later than the start of lecture (ie., no later than 10:59 am) for the selected week. Response papers should only offer minimal summary but should instead discuss the implications, errors and oversights, or further applications of a given article’s arguments.

Please note that the Faculty of Arts and Sciences requires students receive marks a percentage of their marks prior to the drop date. As such, the first response paper must be handed in prior to our meeting on 5 February.

Responses papers can earn:

No Credit (0 points): Papers do not engage with an assigned reading (ie., no citations), are based on hearsay or unsubstantiated opinion, or are otherwise unsatisfactory (hard to read, logically flawed)

Half Credit (5 points): Papers engage with an assigned reading, but in a superficial fashion. These papers may engage with the general idea of a selected text, but fail to adequately cite ideas or lack direct discussion of concepts, historical events, or stakeholders.

Credit (10 points): Papers engage with, cite from, and discuss a selected week’s readings in a direct, clear, and compelling manner.

On your responses, please be sure to indicate which week’s readings you are addressing. Failure to do so will result in partial credit.

Please note, as there are nine opportunities to submit these response papers, no requests for extension will be granted.

Midterm Exam 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 Exam 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.

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 matters. Email is a poor medium for discussing or clarifying substantive questions that come up in lectures or reading. Face to face (even if on-screen) interactions are much better for this sort of work. Please ask substantive 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 will neither respond to nor acknowledge questions that can be answered in the syllabus.

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:

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://thediologue.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>

Course Schedule

Note: As this is a course on *contemporary* Latin American Politics, we will likely be interrupted by current events. Please feel invited to come to class ready to discuss pressing issues as they arise. We will adjust our schedules for lecture and discussion accordingly.

Unless otherwise noted all readings are accessible online via the U of T Library system <https://onereach.library.utoronto.ca/>

Part I. Concepts and Questions

1. January 8

Introduction to the Course, Syllabus, and Themes

2. January 15

Development and its Alternatives

Cristóbal Kay (2018) Modernization and Dependency Theory. From *The Routledge Handbook of Latin American Development* Julie Cupples, Marcel Palomino-Schalscha, and Manuel Prieto, eds. New York: Routledge, pp 15-28.

*the full handbook is available online via the library website

Laura Zapata-Cantu and Fernando González (2021) Challenges for Innovation and Sustainable Development in Latin America: The Significance of Institutions and Human Capital. *Sustainability* 14 <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13074077>

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>

*Please Note: The entire collection is definitely worth checking out.

Reference:

World Bank Group (2021) *Recovering Growth: Rebuilding Dynamic Post-Covid-19 Economies Amid Fiscal Constraints*. Washington DC.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36331/9781464818066.pdf>

Julian Yates and Karen Bakker (2014) “Debating the ‘Post-Neoliberal Turn’ in Latin America.” *Human Geography* 38(1): 62-90.

3. January 22

Governance and Protest in the Twenty First Century

Rosalía Cortés (2009) Social Policy in Latin America in the Post-neoliberal Era. In: Jean Grugel and Pía Riggirozzi (eds) *Governance after Neoliberalism in Latin America*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Marie-Christine Doran (2017) The Hidden Face of Violence in Latin America: Assessing the Criminalization of Protest in Comparative Perspective. *Latin American Perspectives* 44(216): 183-2016.

Adriana Piatti-Crocker (2021) Diffusion of #NiUnaMenos in Latin America: Social Protests Amid a Pandemic. *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 22(12) (in press).

*****In class research and writing workshop (focus on crafting research questions and theses).**

4. January 29

The Changing Left-Right Divide and the Durability of Elite Power

Thomas Chiasson-LaBel and Manel Larrabure (2019) Elite and Popular Responses to a Left in Crisis. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 108: 87-107.

*Please Note: This is an introduction to a journal special issue. All of the articles are worth your time, if you have it.

Luis Bonilla (2018) *Captured Democracy: Government for the Few (Executive Summary)*. OXFAM International.
https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/captured_democracy_executive_summary.pdf

Supplemental Background:

Barry Cannon (2016) *The Right in Latin America: Elite Power, Hegemony, and the*

Struggle for the State. New York: Routledge.

Fernando Coronil (2011) "The Future in Question: History and Utopia in Latin America (1989-2010)" in *Business as Usual: The Roots of the Global Financial Crisis*. Craig Calhoun and Georgi Derluguian, eds. (New York: NYU Press). p.231-265.

II. Case Studies

5. February 5

Bolivia: Continuities and Change during the MAS Era

Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2014) The Land of Unintended Consequences. In *Evo's Bolivia: Continuity and Change*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, Ch. 2.

Gabriel Hetland (2019) Understanding Bolivia's Nightmare. *NACLA Report of the Americas* <https://nacla.org/news/2019/11/19/bolivia-morales-coup>

Alina Duarte (2020) Bolivia and Necessary Self-Critique: 'In it not enough to have the government, we have to have people's power' *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*. <https://www.coha.org/bolivia-and-necessary-self-critique-it-is-not-enough-to-have-the-government-we-have-to-have-peoples-power/>

Supplemental Background:

Miriam Tola (2018) Between Pachamama and Mother Earth: Gender, Political Ontology, and the Rights of Nature in Contemporary Bolivia. *Feminist Review* 118: 25-40.

Bret Gustafson (2020) *Bolivia in the Age of Gas*. Durham: Duke University Press.

6. February 12

Midterm Exam (conducted via quercus)

*****February 19 – Family Day, No Class**

7. February 26

Venezuela: The Long Arc of Chavismo

Marsílea Gombata and Maxwell A. Cameron (2021) Endogenous Hybridity: Regime Change in Venezuela (1998–2020). *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, DOI: [10.1080/08263663.2022.2002666](https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2022.2002666)

Steve Ellner (2018) Class Struggles in Chavista Venezuela: Pragmatic and Populist Policies in a Broader Context. *Latin American Perspectives* 46(1): 167-189.

Supplemental Background:

Behind the News (2018) Alejandro Velasco on Venezuela

<http://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Radio.html#S180503>

**part 1 of the program, though many of you will also be interested in part 2's discussion of race and the origins of Political Science as a discipline.

8. March 4

Brazil after the Workers' Party (and back)

Adam Bledsoe (2019) "Racial Antagonism and the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Election" *Journal of Latin American Geography* 18(2): 165-170.

Wendy Hunter and Timothy Power (2019) "Bolsonaro and Brazil's Illiberal Backlash" *Journal of Democracy* 30(1): 68-82.

Diana Roy (2022) Lula is Back, What does that Mean for Brazil? *Council on Foreign Affairs* December 22, 2022.

<https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/lula-back-what-does-mean-brazil>

Supplemental Background:

Dan LaBotz (2015) "Brazil: Lula, Rousseff, and the Workers Party Establishment in Power" *New Politics* 15(2): 53-60.

9. March 11

Cuba: Updating and Adapting a Socialism in the Twenty First Century

Emily Morris (2014) "Unexpected Cuba" *New Left Review* 88: 5-45.

Camila Piñeiro Harnecker (2014) "Nonstate Enterprises in Cuba: Building Socialism?" *Latin American Perspectives* 41(4): 113-128.

James Baer (2019) "Cuban Constitution of 2019" *Council on Hemispheric Affairs Blog*
<http://www.coha.org/cuban-constitution-of-2019/>

Supplemental Background:

Antoni Kapcia (2008) *Cuba in Revolution: A History since the Fifties*. London: Reaktion Books.

10. March 18

Chile: Emerging from the Shadow of Pinochet

Maria Cristina Escudero (2021) Making a Constituent Assembly Possible in Chile: The Shifting Costs of Opposing Change *Bulletin of Latin American Research* (in Press, but preprints available via U of T library website).

Camila Vergara (2021) Chilean Stalemate? *Sidecar*
<https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/chilean-stalemate>

Supplemental Background:

Clark, Timothy (2018) The Paradox of the Neoliberal Developmentalist State: Reconstructing the Capitalist Elite in Pinochet's Chile. In, *Dominant Elites in Latin America: From Neo-Liberalism to the 'Pink Tide'*, Liisa North and Timothy Clark, eds. New York: Palgrave. Pp. 23-56

11. March 25

Chile: Emerging from the Shadow of Pinochet

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Supplemental Background:

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12. April 1

The United States and the Americas: Post Imperial Challenges and Opportunities

Greg Grandin (2011) *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-17.

Ron Pineo (2013) Latin American's Backyard. Council on Hemispheric Affairs.
<https://www.coha.org/latin-americas-backyard/>

Timothy Gill (2021) Diminishing Global Power, Downgrading Human Rights: Making Sense of American Foreign Policy under Donald Trump. *Societies without Borders* 13(1).

Watch:

Inside Story America (2012) The School of the Americas: Class Over?
<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/inside-story-america/2012/9/20/the-school-of-the-americas-class-over>