1. Course Description

Latin America is the region of the developing world with the greatest experience with democracy. It also has had considerable experience with populist leaders, military rulers, and a few important revolutions. And it has been the region of the world in which the influence of the United States has been greatest.

This course offers an introduction to politics in Latin America that addresses the variety of political experiences in the region, while focusing especially on struggles to attain democracy and the performance of democracy. The course starts with a broad overview of the region and then provides in-depth analyses of a set of countries. The selected countries are those that are economically dominant in the region (Brazil and Mexico) and that exemplify either certain common patterns (Argentina and Chile) or some rare but notable alternatives (Cuba). The early history of each country is briefly discussed, and then events in these countries since the 1970s are considered in detail. Where relevant, external influences and the role of the United States in particular are considered.

2. Learning Objectives

The objectives of the course are: (1) to introduce basic concepts used in the study of politics around the world (e.g. democracy, military regimes, models of economic development); (2) to introduce students to the main trends in Latin American politics and to some of the key political challenges currently faced by countries in Latin America; and (3) to learn how countries can be compared to each other.

3. Requirements

Students are expected to complete the reading assignment for each topic. Students are also responsible for mastering the additional materials that are introduced in class, in power points that will be distributed after class.

Course grades are based on the following tests: five quizzes (25% of the overall grade), an in-class mid-term exam (35%), and an in-class final exam (40%).

With regard to the quizzes, we will have six quizzes and the lowest one will be dropped. Provisional dates for the quizzes below are included in the syllabus, but these may change slightly. The exact dates will be announced in class.

The dates of the mid-term and final exams are also noted below in the syllabus.

If the schedule of a quiz or in-class exam conflicts with a religious holy day, please let me know and I will arrange for you to take it some other time.

4. Readings and Class Power Points

All the readings are accessible through the Blackboard, under “Readings.” Below you will see which reading you are responsible for reading for each meeting of the class.

The power points of each class will be uploaded to the Blackboard after each class; you will find them under “Power Points.”
Topic Outline and Reading Assignments

Meeting # 1 (8/21). Introduction

I. Issues and Trends in Latin America

Meeting # 2.i (8/28). The Pre-History and Origins of Countries


Meeting # 2.ii (8/28). Political Regimes and Democracy


Meeting # 3 (9/4). Labor Day: No class

Meeting # 4.i (9/11). Models of Economic Development


Meeting # 4.ii (9/11). The Role of the United States


• Quiz # 1 (9/11)

II. The Southern Cone

Meetings # 5.i & 5.ii (9/18). Argentina I: From Elite Rule to Mass Politics (Early Democracy and Populism)


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Meeting # 6.i (9/25). Argentina II: Harsh Military Authoritarianism and Transition to Democracy


Meeting # 6.ii (9/25). Argentina III: Unstable Democracy


• Quiz # 2 (9/25)

Meetings # 7.i & 7.ii (10/2). Chile I: From Elite Rule to Mass Politics (Early Democracy and Socialism)


Meeting # 8.i (10/9). Chile II: Harsh Military Authoritarianism and Transition to Democracy


Meeting # 8.ii (10/9). Chile III: Stable Democracy


Meeting # 9 (10/16). Mid-Term and Quiz # 3 (on Chile)
III. The Two Regional Powers

Meeting # 10.i & 10.ii (10/23). Brazil I: From Elite Rule to Mass Politics (Late Democracy and Populism)


Meeting # 11.i (10/30). Brazil II: Military Electoral Authoritarianism and Transition to Democracy


Meeting # 11.ii (10/30). Brazil III: Democracy with Flaws


• Quiz # 4 (10/30)

Meeting # 12.i (11/6). Mexico I: From Elite Rule to Mass Politics (Revolution)


Meetings # 12.ii (11/6). Mexico II: Civilian Electoral Authoritarianism


Meetings # 13.i (11/13). Mexico II: From Civilian Electoral Authoritarianism to Democracy


Meeting # 13.ii (11/13). Mexico III: Violent Democracy


• Quiz # 5 (11/13)

IV. Socialism in the Caribbean

Meeting # 14.i (11/20). Cuba I: Late Independence and U.S. Influence


Meetings # 14.ii (11/20). Cuba II: Toward Revolution and Cold War Socialism (The 1960s)


Meetings # 15.i & 15.ii (11/27). Cuba III: Cold War Socialism and the End of the Castro Era


*** Final Exam and Quiz # 6 (on Cuba):
Monday, December 11, 4:30-6:30 p.m. (same classroom) ***
Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us.
This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.