



USC University of Southern California

International Relations 365: Politics and Democracy in Latin America

Spring 2025

When: M & W 5:00-6:20 p.m.
Where: DMC 152
Office Hours: M 3:00-4:20 p.m.
or by appointment

Professor Gerardo Munck
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Grader: Trang Minh Vu
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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to Latin American politics by considering three sets of issues. First, it addresses the state of democracy in the 21st century, highlighting achievements and problems. Second, it focuses on two challenges that contemporary democracies have faced with some success: the political inclusion of historically disadvantaged populations and transitional justice. Third, it turns to two problems that contemporary democracies have largely failed to solve: high-level corruption and the violence that has swept through many countries since around 2000. The course covers Latin America as a whole and depicts regional patterns. It also focuses on specific countries, which are discussed in detail.

Learning Objectives

The objectives of the course are: (1) to elucidate basic concepts used in the study of politics and to clarify their normative content; (2) to learn how to interpret quantitative data; (3) to gain a sense of the achievements of, and lingering problems faced by, Latin American countries; (4) to understand the causes of major political developments in Latin America; and (5) to learn how to think prospectively and propose informed solutions to Latin America's problems.

Requirements, Grading Breakdown, and Grading Scale

Students are expected to complete the required readings for each meeting. Students are also responsible for mastering the additional materials that are introduced in class.

Course grades are based on the following tests: four *quizzes* (15% of the overall grade), two short papers (10%), a first in-class quiz-based *mid-term exam* (15%), a second in-class essay-type *mid-term exam* (30%), and an in-class essay-type *final exam* (30%).

Assignment	% of Grade
4 Quizzes	15
2 Short (300-400 word) papers	10
Mid-term Exam I (quiz based)	15
Mid-term Exam II (essay type)	30
Final Exam (essay type)	30
Total	100

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

With regard to the short papers, pick two chapters from the textbook that are not discussed in the class and provide an 300-400 word answer to one of the questions at the end of the chapter. You are not allowed to use any AI software in the preparation of these papers. The first short paper is due on February 26; the second on April 23.

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.

Grading Scale			
Number	Letter Grade	Number	Letter Grade
93	A	77	C+
90	A-	73	C
87	B+	70	C-
83	B	67	D+
80	B-	63	D

Readings and Class Power Points

The textbook for the course is: Munck, Gerardo L., and Juan Pablo Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

The additional readings are accessible through USC's Brightspace, under Contents/Readings. Below you will see which readings you are responsible for covering for each meeting of the class. The specific page numbers you need to read are clearly indicated.

The power points of each class will be uploaded to Brightspace after each class; you will find them under Contents/Power Points.

Course Outline, Required Readings, and Assignments

Meeting # 1 (1/13): Introduction

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*, Introduction: "Latin American Politics and Society."

Part I. Democracy

Meeting # 2 (1/15): Democracy: A Historical Perspective

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 3. "Political Regimes and Democracy."

Meeting # 3 (1/20): Martin Luther King's Birthday: No class

Meeting # 4 (1/22): Democracy and the Quality of Democracy in the 21st Century I

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 5: "Democracy and the Quality of Democracy." [Read pages 165-82.]

Meeting # 5 (1/27): Democracy and the Quality of Democracy in the 21st Century II

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 5: "Democracy and the Quality of Democracy." [Read pages 182-97.]

Meeting # 6 (1/29): The International Defense of Democracy

Heine and Weiffen, "The OAS Democratic Paradigm in Action: Democratic Crises of the Twenty-first Century," pp. 74-104, in Heine and Weiffen, *21st Century Democracy Promotion in the Americas: Standing up for the Polity* (2015).

• Quiz # 1 (1/29)

Meeting # 7 (2/3): The Case of Venezuela

Muno and Kestler, "The Quest for Democracy: Venezuela in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries," pp. 37-61, in Latouche, Muno, and Gericke (eds.), *Venezuela - Dimensions of the Crisis* (2023).

OAS, "Report of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy of the OAS on the presidential elections in Venezuela for Secretary General Luis Almagro," July 30, 2024.

Meeting # 8 (2/5): The Cases of El Salvador and Guatemala

Wolf, "El Salvador Under Nayib Bukele: The Turn to Electoral Authoritarianism." *Revista de ciencia política* 44(2): 295-321.

Schwartz, "Guatemala 2023: From Authoritarian Deepening to Democratic Resurgence." *Revista de ciencia política* 44(2): 323-45.

Documentary: *Forging a Country* (2024).

Meeting # 9 (2/10): Mid-Term I (Quiz-Type)

Part II. Democracy, Political Inclusion, and Transitional Justice

Meeting #10 (2/12): Political Inclusion and Women in Political Office

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 6: "Political Inclusion and Institutional Innovations." [Read pages 201-10.]

Meeting # 13 (2/17): Presidents' Day: No class

Meeting # 11 (2/19): Gender Quotas

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 6: "Political Inclusion and Institutional Innovations." [Read pages 210-18.]

Meeting # 12 (2/24): Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Descendants

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 6: "Political Inclusion and Institutional Innovations." [Read pages 218-32.]

Meeting # 14 (2/26): Thinking About Political Inclusion

Class discussion, on the pros and cons of different measures and efforts to foster political inclusion.

- **Quiz # 2 (2/26)**

- **Short paper # 1 due (2/26)**

Meeting # 15 (3/3): The Concept and State of Transitional Justice

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 9: "Transitional Justice." [Read pages 310-24.]

Meeting # 16 (3/5): More on the State of Transitional Justice

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 9: "Transitional Justice." [Reread pages 324-31.]

Meeting # 17 (3/10): Explaining Transitional Justice: Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 9: “Transitional Justice.” [Read pages 331-35.]

Meeting # 18 (3/12): Explaining Transitional Justice: The Case of Chile

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 9: “Transitional Justice.” [Read pages 335-37.]

Documentary: Parts of *The Pinochet Case* (2001).

*** Spring Recess: March 17-21 ***

Meeting # 19 (3/24): Explaining Transitional Justice: The Case of Argentina and General Reflections

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 9: “Transitional Justice.” [Read pages 337-45.]

Meeting # 20 (3/26): Quiz # 3 & Mid-Term II (Essay-Type)

Part III. Democracy, Corruption, and the New Violence

Meetings # 21 & 22 (3/31, 4/2): The Concept and State of High-level Corruption

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 10: “High-Level Corruption.” [Read pages 350-64.]

Documentary: Parts of *The Panama Papers* (2018).

Meeting # 23 (4/7): Explaining High-level Corruption: The Cases of Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 10: “High-Level Corruption.” [Read pages 364-76.]

Schwartz, “When Impunity Fights Back: The Legacies and Lessons of Guatemala’s CICIG.” *LASA Forum* 55, 2 (2024).

Documentary: *What Happened to Brazil?* (2019), Episode 2. *The Carwash and the Coup*.

Meeting # 24 (4/9): Explaining High-level Corruption: General Reflections

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 10: “High-Level Corruption.” [Read pages 376-82.]

• **Quiz # 4 (4/9)**

Meeting # 25 (4/14): The Concept and State of New Violence

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 11: “The New Violence.” [Read pages 386-96.]

Meeting # 26 (4/16): Explaining the New Violence: The Case of Mexico

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 11: “The New Violence.” [Read pages 396-408.]

Documentary: Parts of *Blood on the Wall* (2020).

Meeting # 27 (4/21): Explaining the New Violence: The Northern Triangle Cases and General Reflections

Munck and Luna, *Latin American Politics and Society*; Ch. 11: “The New Violence.” [Read pages 408-22.]

Kloppe-Santamaría and Cruz, “The ‘New Wars’: Security and Cooperation in Mexico and Northern Central America.” *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2023).

Documentary: *How Bukele Broke the Gangs* (2024).

Meeting # 28 (4/23): Rethinking the International War on Drugs I

Global Commission on Drug Policy, *The War on Drugs* (Geneva, Switzerland: Global Commission on Drug Policy, 2011). 19 pgs.

Documentary: Parts of *Breaking the Taboo* (2012).

- **Short paper # 2** due (4/23)

Meeting # 29 (4/28): Rethinking the International War on Drugs II

Class debate, on the pros and cons of the US’s War on Drugs.

7. Conclusions

Meeting # 30 (4/30): A Recapitulation

- **Quiz # 5** (4/30)

***** Final Exam: Wednesday, May 7, 4:30-6:30 pm *****

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

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | *Title IX* – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.