Latin American Politics: Democratic Development and Decay (Pol 144)  
Fall 2019

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Course Overview
This course will analyze how domestic movements and elites, as well as international events, have influenced and continue to influence democratic development in Latin America. We will discuss how political institutions were built and how they have shaped the different varieties of democracies found across the region. Most Latin American countries have undergone a relatively recent democratic transition from authoritarian rule. Some, however, have had a troubled experience with democracy. To understand the development and deepening of democracy in the region, this course will focus on the role of political institutions, economic development, the military, and US-Latin American relations. While this list does not come close to exhausting the possible contributions to Latin American democratic development, it is meant to offer a foundation for further study of the region.

This course contributes to the International Global Studies curriculum. It complies with the *Difference and Justice in the World* education requirement and it is also designed as a *Writing Intensive* course. The course is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of Latin American politics and economics, while the last three examine Latin America by region, beginning with North, Central America, and the Caribbean, and continuing with a look at the Andes, and ending with the Southern Cone. Nearly all of these sessions use the experience of a single country (e.g. Venezuela) or sub-region (e.g. Central America) as a tool to explore a broader theoretical topic, such as the role of colonialism, the emergence of political parties, or the effects of U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Learning Goals
This is a writing intensive course and has three specific learning goals: i) Evaluate the theoretical literature on democratic development in Latin America; ii) Survey the varying political settings and systems across the region; and iii) Assess the strength of democratic norms and institutions across the region. Additionally, this course is designed to encourage and enable students: (a) to think critically about arguments, based on the evaluation of evidence; (b) to articulate reasoned arguments clearly, both orally and in written form; (c) to become familiar with a variety of research methods ["case study" readings, "historical/analytical narrative" readings, and readings based on quantitative statistical analysis]; (d) to use the concepts and methods of political science in research and analysis [term paper].

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1 For more information regarding how this course complies with the *General Education Requirements (GER)* please see the section of Additional Considerations at the end of the syllabus.
Reading Requirements
There is one required book for this class, available for purchase at the bookstore and reserved at the library. In addition to the required text, several book chapters and articles will be assigned. We will use a portion of each class for discussion, so it is essential to keep up with the reading assignments. All readings will be available on LATTE. For additional references and sources, you can contact me or Aimee Slater (aslater@brandeis.edu), reference librarian for the Politics Department.


Expected Workload
In addition to three hours of class time per week, success in this 4-credit course is estimated to require students to spend, on average over the course of the semester, a minimum of 9-10 hours of study time per week in preparation for class readings and completion of assignments.

Evaluation
Grading will be divided among: Class Attendance and Participation (20%), Current Events Report (10%), Research Paper (50%) and a Final Presentation (20%).

I. Class attendance and participation (20%): Students are expected to actively contribute to the discussion each and every week. This necessitates a careful reading of the material prior to the class. In preparing for class, students should think carefully about both the substantive and methodological aspects of each reading and compared with each other.

To facilitate the discussion, students are required to post on LATTE an Analytical response before class. Students must complete the assigned readings in advance of each class and prepare a short “analytical response” to at least one of the readings assigned every week (each student will be assigned by the instructor a specific day). You are expected to write a short response (one or two paragraphs, definitely not more than one page) to the following question: What did you find most challenging, confusing or noteworthy about the reading(s)?

II. Current events report (10%): Students are required to write a one-page current events report on a relevant and recent political issue involving U.S-Latin American relations. Each current events report should include a recapitulation of a recent news event, as well as a brief analysis tying the news story to a political

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2 She has created a guide for students to access databases and literature about different issues in Latin America: https://guides.library.brandeis.edu/Pol144A

3 I expect thoughtful, and well-structured written responses (Note: If you want to refer to a specific part of the reading, please cite and include the page number in your response). Your responses, for instance, can focus on the nature and/or quality of the argument presented in the reading, including the evidence supporting the argument. Students are encouraged to reflect on each reading in the context of prior readings and discussions, and on the relative merit of varying arguments. Your response can include a though related to all the readings assigned for the day.

Analytical responses will be graded on a pass/fail basis (e.g., if you were responsible of turning in 14 responses during the term and only turned in 7 that received a pass grade, you will only receive half of the points). Note: I expect thoughtful responses (e.g., “I did not find anything interesting in the reading(s)” is not a thoughtful response). These are to be turned in the night before each class (8 PM deadline). When necessary, I will provide feedback on an individual basis in order for you to improve the content and structure of your responses.
science topic from the course. Alternatively, students can attend a Latin American- or Latino-related event during the semester and turn in a one-page activity report tying the event to a topic from the course. This could include attending a cultural activity, reading a piece of Latin American literature, or even watching a Latin American movie (previously authorized by the instructor). Further information concerning qualifying events will be provided in class. There are no make-ups for missed reports. All reports should be turned in during class and uploaded using LATTE on Thursday, September 26.

III. Research paper (50%): Students are required to write a research paper in four different deliverables (12.5% each). The total length of the paper should be between 12 to 15 pages and a list of references (Times New Roman, double-spaced). All four deliverables should be turned in through LATTE and in hard copy in class. The paper should be based on one of the course topics, countries, or themes, subject to my approval. It should be structured as a social science research paper in the following way: 1) a research question and a description of the problematic (research puzzle/why does it matter?); 2) an annotated bibliography and a brief synthesis of the literature; 3) the development of your own theory, including its relationship to existing wisdom, and the description of the methodology being used, and 4) an analysis of your theory using data or a detailed case study, a summary of your findings and their implications, and your concluding remarks. Students should avoid writing an op-ed (thought paper) or summary of the assigned readings.

I will interact with you on an individual basis in each of these stages in order to help you develop a research question and structure your paper. We will also spend time in class talking about how to structure a research manuscript and key mistakes to avoid. The final research paper is due in class (printed and on LATTE) on Monday, December 9.

IV. Presentation (20%): Students are required to present original research through an individual presentation related to their research paper. Individual presentations should be 8-10 minutes and allow for a 2-4-minute Q&A session. Each student will present their preliminary research findings in class using slides beginning on Monday, November 25. I have reserved several sessions at the end of the semester for presentations. I have also reserved one day of class to discuss oral presentation techniques. Dates of individual presentations to be determined by in-class lottery. Your presentation slides are due the night before the day you will be presenting (deadline 8:00 PM). Attendance and attention to the presentations of peers is required, and a sign of mutual respect. There will be no excused absences from presentation sessions.

Grading Scale
A+ 100 – 97 / A 96.9 – 93 / A- 92.9 – 90
B+ 89.9 – 87 / B 86.9 – 83 / B- 82.9 – 80
C+ 79.9 – 77 / C 76.9 – 73 / C- 72.9 – 70
D+ 69.9 – 67 / D 66.9 – 63 / D- 62.9 – 60
E / Below 60

Accommodation of Disabilities
If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic
accommodations, you should contact Academic Services. Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Letters must be presented in advance of any exam or test. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. Please see: <http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/faculty.html>

**Course Schedule and Assignments**

Below is a schedule of assignments for every class. All readings not from the textbook can be found on LATTE. Note that these are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. However, if there are to be any changes to the syllabus or assignments, the instructor will let you know as far in advance as possible. All readings are to be completed by the beginning of each class.

**COURSE PROGRAM**

**Week 1.**

**Wed. 08/28 and Thu. 08/29: No class.** 115th American Political Science Association’s Annual Meeting & Exhibition, August 29 – September 1, 2019, in Washington, DC

**INTRODUCTION**

**Week 2.**

**Mon. 09/02. No Class (Labor Day)**

**Wed. 09/04. Introduction to the Course**

- Introduction and Course Overview.
- Please download, print, and bring the syllabus to class.

**Thu. 09/05. How to Structure a Research Paper and Build Presentation Skills**

*Question to be addressed:* What is a research paper? How is it structured and what are the main parts? What is a research question? What is a theory? What is a research hypothesis? What is a literature review? How to structure a research presentation?

- Instructions for Written and Oral Assignments (Available on LATTE).
- Visit the Ignite Talk site [http://www.ignitetalks.io/](http://www.ignitetalks.io/) and watch the following two videos: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRa1IPkBFBg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRa1IPkBFBg) and [http://www.ignitetalks.io/videos/how-to-eat-a-banana](http://www.ignitetalks.io/videos/how-to-eat-a-banana)
Week 3.

Mon. 09/09. Democratic Development and Decay from a Comparative Perspective

Question to be addressed: What are the roots of democracy in America? How where institutions established in the United States? How are they different from European States? How do they compare to nascent Latin American democracies?

- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. How democracies die. Crown. Read Introduction (pp.1-10) and Chapter 9, Saving Democracy (pp.204-231).

Wed. 09/11. Why Study Latin America? What is “Latin America”? Latin America Today

- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, Modern Latin America. Ch. 1, “Why Latin America?”

SECTION I: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EVOLUTION

Thu. 09/12. A Blueprint for Failure? The Colonial State


Week 4.

Mon. 09/16. Patterns of Economic Development


Wed. 09/18. Inequality and Policy Innovation

Thu 09/19 and Mon 09/23. Patterns of Political Development and Democratic Consolidation

- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, Modern Latin America. Ch. 13, “Dynamics of Political Transformation.”

Week 5.

Wed. 09/25. Populism


Thu. 09/26 The Military and Politics

**Due Thu 09/26. Current events report**


Week 6.

Mon. 09/30. No Class (Rosh Hashanah)

Wed. 10/02. Institutions: Executive-Legislative Relations and the Judicial Branch


Recommended:


SECTION II: NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA, AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thu. 10/03 and Mon 10/07. Mexico: Revolution, Rise and Fall of the PRI

***Due on Thu 10/03. First Deliverable (Research Question)**

Week 7.

Wed. 10/09. No Class (Yom Kippur)

Thu. 10/10 and Tue 10/15 (Brandeis Monday). Narco-Violence and Elections in Mexico

- Trejo, Guillermo and Sandra Ley. 2017. “Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence.” *Comparative Political Studies.*

Week 8.

Wed. 10/16. Central America: U.S. Interventionism, Civil War, and Democratization

- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*. Ch. 4, “Central America and the Caribbean: Within the U.S. Orbit.”
- Butler, Maj Gen Smedley. 1935. “War is a Racket.” (speech)

Thu. 10/17. Cuba: Socialism, the Cold War, and US Policy

  [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/cuba/2014-12-21/cuban-comrades](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/cuba/2014-12-21/cuban-comrades)

Week 9.

Mon. 10/21. No Class (Shmini Atzeret)

Wed. 10/23. Building Presentation Skills


SECTION III: THE ANDES

Thu. 10/24. Colombia: Guerillas, Narco-trafficking, and Demobilization


Recommended:

- Levin, Jamie. 2016. “For Colombia’s peace process, disarmament was a sticking point. Here’s why.” *The Washington Post*


**Week 10.**

**Mon. 10/28 and Wed 10/30. Venezuela: Explaining Chavismo**

***Due Mon 10/28. Second Deliverable (Literature Review)***


**Recommended:**


**Thu. 10/31. Peru: Terrorism and Neopopulism (Fujimorismo)**

- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*. Ch. 6, “The Andes: Soldiers, Indians, and Oligarchs” (pp.146-170).

**Recommended:**


**Week 11.**

**Mon. 11/04. Bolivia: Indigenous Politics and the Pink Tide**


**Recommended:**

**SECTION IV: THE SOUTHERN CONE**

**Wed. 11/06. Ecuador: Land of Populists**

**Thu. 11/07 and Mon 11/11. Argentina: Development Reversal**
- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*. Ch. 9, “Argentina: Progress and Stalemate.”

**Recommended:**

**Week 12.**

**Wed. 11/13 and Thu 11/14. Chile: Regime Legacy**

**Research Design**
- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*. Ch. 10, “Chile: Repression and Democracy.”
- DeYoung, Karen, David Montgomery, Missy Ryan, Ishaan Tharoor, and Jia Lynn Yang. 2016. “This was not an accident. This was a bomb.” *The Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2016/09/20/this-was-not-an-accident-this-was-a-bomb/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2016/09/20/this-was-not-an-accident-this-was-a-bomb/)

**Week 13.**

**Mon. 11/18 and Wed. 11/20. Brazil: Great Expectations**
- Skidmore, Smith, and Green, *Modern Latin America*. Ch. 11, “Brazil: The Awakening Giant”
Thu. 11/21. Closing thoughts

Week 14. Student Presentations

Mon. 11/25. Student Presentations

Wed. 11/27. No Class (Thanksgiving holiday)

Week 15. Student Presentations

Mon. 12/02. Student Presentations
Wed. 12/04. Student Presentations
Thu. 12/05. Student Presentations

Week 16. Student Presentations

Mon. 12/09. Student Presentations

***Due Mon 12/09. Fourth Deliverable (Final Paper)

Final Presentation 12/12-12/19 (3-hours): (TBD, Time reserved for final presentations if necessary)

Additional Considerations

Writing Intensive Course
This course is designed in such a way it complies with the writing intensive General Educational Requirements. During the term, students are expected to write 18-20 pages (4,500-5,000 words), which includes 2-3 pages of analytical responses throughout the term, a one-page current events report, as well as a 12-15-page research paper. Writing quality is a significant factor in the course grade. Please note that 80% of the grade is based on written assignments (20% on analytical responses, 10% on a current events report, and 50% on the research paper). During the course, students are expected to directly interact with the instructor in order to allow revisions and feedback. Students will receive in-class instruction on how to carry out the writing assignments (e.g., structuring their research papers) and on how to present their work. A description of Brandeis General Educational Requirements is available here: https://www.brandeis.edu/registrar/bulletin/provisional/req-ugrd-beginning-fall-2019/distribution.html

Difference and Justice in the World Educational Requirement (DJW)
This course complies with the Difference and Justice in the World (DJW) Educational Requirement. It is designed to enable an understanding of the world with a focus on intersections of class, race, ethnicity, geography, language, gender, culture and history across Latin America. It encourages students to develop analytical skills and explore societies, cultures, and experiences beyond those of the Western tradition. This course
acquaints students with world views, historical narratives, as well as with political and social institutions within Latin America. By comparing and analyzing the evolving nature of political, cultural, social, and economic institutions across the region, students broaden their understanding of institutions, values, human achievements, and potentialities beyond the Western heritage. Through the different course assignments (i.e., analytical responses, research paper, and final presentation), students are required to demonstrate critical thinking about how changing political institutions have affected difference and justice systems across Latin America.

**Behavioral Expectations**
Students are expected to be respectful of others at all time. Beyond the grading component, this course is interactive, and students are required to actively participate in a meaningful and respectful way. The use of cell phones, tablets and laptop computers is not allowed during class sessions, unless otherwise designated. Violators will face grade penalties decided by the instructor and if you use your phone in class (e.g., texting), you will be asked to leave. If you wish to leave your phone on, in “silent” mode, because of an ongoing emergency situation to which you may need to respond, please speak to me at the start of class to let me know.

**Academic Integrity**
Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity.

Students are expected to exhibit the highest integrity in all of their activities concerning this course. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating of any type, will not be tolerated and will be cause for the initiation of an honor proceeding. Students should be careful to attribute material properly whenever there is any doubt.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else’s words, ideas or work – whether accidentally or deliberately – as your own, without acknowledgment of sources. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is an honor violation, and all plagiarists will be treated as honor offenders, in addition to receiving a grade of zero for the plagiarized work. Plagiarism may include:

- Copying written work from another source, published or unpublished, without proper acknowledgment of the original;
- Buying papers online or from a paper mill;
- Resubmitting or double submitting work to two different classes;
- Using gouge or company files;
- Submitting someone else’s work as your own.

The above list should not be treated as exhaustive. Students are responsible for knowing and understanding what constitutes plagiarism. If in doubt, document your sources, or see me to ask further questions.

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4 The following is a statement of university policy: Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. All written work for this course must include appropriate citation of the sources used. See section 56c ("Avoid Plagiarism") of the Concise English Handbook for guidance. The university policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as part of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of suspected dishonesty will, without exception, be forwarded to the Office of Student Affairs for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the university.
Course Attendance
All students are required to attend every class. This includes all student presentation sessions. If you miss two consecutive class sessions (one week worth of class time) without prior dispensation, you can expect your term grade to be lowered by a full letter grade (i.e., a “B” will become a “C”). Student athletes, debaters, performers, and others with conflicting extra-curricular obligations must seek dispensation from me in advance and are responsible for making up the work missed (including responses to assigned readings).

Late Policy/Make-Ups
All assignments and/or exams are to be taken at the scheduled time. The only exception to this is for an academy-approved absence with proper documentation. Failure to show up to an exam or turn in an assignment at the scheduled day and time will result in a grade of zero (0).