

# Latin American Politics

## Politics 247, Fall 2021

9:45-11:15 am  
Tuesday & Thursday  
*EarlyFl 114*

Professor Zoila Ponce de Leon  
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### Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the study of Latin American politics. It is aimed at students with no prior knowledge of the area or the study of comparative politics, but a desire to understand how Latin American governments are organized and the major problems faced by these societies.

This makes it important to go beyond the stereotypes that have traditionally shaped the perceptions of the region's history, culture, and economic, political, and social structures. There is an enormous diversity within the region in terms of histories of colonization, ethnic composition, levels of economic development and human welfare, and systems of government. This course will provide an overview of this diversity and a deeper examination of several cases, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

### Course Objectives

- Demonstrate understanding of the most important political, socioeconomic, and cultural trends in historic and contemporary Latin America.
- Develop a strong understanding of key concepts and theoretical approaches used to study Latin American politics.
- Critically examine the course material presented, including academic readings, news articles, and lectures. Critical thought does not necessarily imply criticism, but a careful and creative consideration of the subject matter and a display of awareness of multiple viewpoints.
- Learn to employ the comparative method, analyzing several country cases in greater detail and identifying commonalities and contrasts across cases.
- Improve writing skills and creative thinking through the research paper assignment, advancing logical arguments supported with evidence.
- Develop public speaking skills through class presentations, communicating thoughts clearly and concisely.

## Course Requirements

The course will meet twice a week in plenary session. The requirements for the course are first and foremost regular class attendance, reading of the assigned materials, and active participation in class discussions.

**Attendance** is mandatory. Classes missed immediately before and after holidays are particularly noticed. I expect everyone to **arrive on time**. Late arrivals are disruptive and distracting. I appreciate your cooperation.

Please attend office hours or contact me by e-mail if you have questions or concerns. If you have any kind of problem with the course or with life, please **communicate** with me. Let me know if my office hours are not at a convenient time for you and we will set an appointment. Do not let missed classes and assignments get out of hand. I am willing to work with you to help you succeed, but I cannot do so retroactively at the end of the semester.

Students are expected to come to each session **ready for a lively discussion** that will help us all better understand historic and contemporary trends in Latin America.

The following are some guidelines to help you get started:

- **Speak up!** Ask the second you have a question or a comment. It is very possible that others may have the same queries you do.
- **Respect** one another. Differences of opinion are likely and desirable. **Listen** to other students' questions, express your disagreements with respect and value your colleagues' opinions as if they were your own.
- **No cellphones in class.**
- **Stick to pen and paper** to take notes. In exceptional cases, laptops may be employed only for valid educational reasons related to the course. Violations may affect a student's grade and preclude further use of the laptop in class.

## Course Evaluation

Participation	25%
Midterm Exam	15%
Research Paper	30%
Final Project	10%
Final Exam	20%

## Grade Assessment

**Re-grading:** **I do not discuss grades via email.** Please take 24 hours to review the initial feedback. Then, bring to my office a written note explaining the error that you think I have made.

Grades reflect the following assessment of your work in this course:

*A: Excellent performance* (90-100). Exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytic understanding of the subject.

*B: Good performance* (80-89). Mastering the material, understanding the subject well, and showing some originality of thought and/or considerable effort

*C: Fair performance (70-79).* Acceptable understanding of the material, but not succeeding in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.

*D: Poor performance (60-69).* Some understanding of the material but exhibiting significant deficiency in comprehension and/or effort.

*F: Fail (59 and below).* Failing to complete assignments or to comprehend the basics of the material.

Minus grades at each increment are below 63, 73, 83, and 93, and plus grades above 67.9, 77.9, and 87.9. I do not round up .5 grades. In other words, 87.5 is not a B+ and 89.5 is not an A-.

If you have concerns about your grade in the course, please come talk to me as soon as possible about strategies to improve your performance.

### **Participation**

Participation is key for this course. Forget about the percentage of your overall grade it counts towards, the actual value of participation is much greater than this because it will help you to do better on all the assignments and exams in this course. Class meetings will combine short lectures and group discussion. **Students are expected to read the assigned materials prior to each class** and **participate actively** during class meetings.

Participation performance is not based on the number of times you speak up during class but on the **quality** of your input. By no means, this should be understood as having to “be right” every time. Any comment or question that contributes to our analysis of course content and discussion is highly regarded. Questions are an excellent way to participate. They show your interest in the course and your ability for critical thought.

To achieve an **A** for participation, your engagement in class discussions must be exceptional, fully contributing to a consistent lively conversation. You must be active in both small group discussions and class-wide discussions and do so on a regular basis.

We will integrate current events. Making a habit of the daily act of reading news from the region can be very helpful.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, I will send links to short news article to read before class.

### **Exams**

The **midterm** exam will be a self-timed written exam, consisting mainly of short-answer questions. You will have 60 minutes to complete it. No books, notes, or sources may be used. The exam will be posted on Canvas on Thursday, **October 21<sup>st</sup>** at 1 pm and due by 9 am on Saturday, **October 23<sup>rd</sup>**. Extensions for the exam will only be offered in cases of emergencies and must be arranged at least **a week prior** to the exam date. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

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<sup>1</sup> I regularly check [BBC Latin America](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/topics/c7zp57yyz25t). Make sure to follow the Latin America section in your news outlet of preference. If you read Spanish, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/topics/c7zp57yyz25t>

The **final** exam will be a self-timed written exam and consist of multiple choice, short-answer, and essay questions. It will take place during finals week (December 11-17) and will be posted on Canvas.

### **Research Paper**

Each student must write an 8-page research paper due on Friday, **November 19<sup>th</sup>** via Canvas. The papers must be double-spaced and 12-point font. You will need to consult a minimum of 5 scholarly sources other than the materials presented in class. I encourage you to seek the help of the [Writing Center](#) and use the [Library Research Help Chat](#).

The paper will be on a topic of your choice. I will post a list of suggested paper topics and instructions on Canvas. If you have an idea for a topic that would interest you more, **you must clear this topic with me** before you start working on it. You may elaborate a single-country case study, a comparison of two countries, or a comparison of a country at two periods in time. The paper should not be a literature review or summary of the readings.

You will be evaluated based on the clarity of your question, the organization and clarity of your **argument**, the supporting evidence that you provide, and the quality of your writing. I will penalize **late papers** with one letter grade per day late.

An **abstract** (one or two paragraphs stating the research question you will pursue and how you will do it), an **outline** of the paper, and a preliminary bibliography will be due on Friday, **November 5<sup>th</sup>** via Canvas.

### **Final Project**

On Friday, **December 3<sup>rd</sup>**, you will upload your final project. Your project must share the findings of your research in an alternative form (i.e., video, cartoon, poem, podcast, etc.).

You will be required to comment (on Canvas) on at least one other project. You should assess your peer's job on their clarity, novelty, and ability to convey their findings. If you fail to provide this feedback by the deadline, your own project grade will drop by one letter grade.

### **Honor Code**

For all course work, the [Honor System](#) applies. You need to familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism to make sure that you avoid it. From the Catalog: *"Plagiarism describes the use of another's words or ideas without proper acknowledgment. The students of Washington and Lee University have considered plagiarism a violation of the Honor System; therefore, all forms of plagiarism including Internet plagiarism are taken very seriously."*

Ask me if you have any questions. Leyburn Library has helpful advice on [avoiding plagiarism](#).

### **Important dates**

October 21-23	Midterm Exam
November 5	Paper Abstract & Outline
November 19	Final Paper
December 3	Final Project
December 11-17	Final Exam

## Disability Accommodations

Washington and Lee University makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of the Dean of the College. Students requesting accommodations for this course should present an official accommodation letter within the first two weeks of the term and schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and to follow up about accommodation arrangements.

## Diversity Statement

Washington and Lee affirms that diverse perspectives and backgrounds enhance our community. We are committed to the recruitment, enrichment, and retention of students, faculty, and staff who embody many experiences, cultures, points of view, interests, and identities. As engaged citizens in a global and diverse society, we seek to advance a positive learning and working environment for all through open and substantive dialogue. Please read the [Politics Department Statement on Diversity and Inclusion](#).

## Policy on Prohibited Discrimination

The University prohibits and this policy addresses discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran's status, and genetic information in its educational programs and activities and with regard to employment. Additionally, the University prohibits retaliation against any individual who brings a good faith complaint under this policy or is involved in the complaint process. Students, faculty, and staff found to have violated this policy will be disciplined appropriately, up to and including termination from employment or dismissal from the University.

## Sexual Discrimination & Misconduct Policy

W&L prohibits all forms of sexual misconduct-which includes sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, domestic and dating violence, and stalking-and retaliation. This policy provides guidance to assist those who have experienced or been affected by sexual misconduct, whether as a complainant, a respondent, or a third party. It includes detailed information about what conduct is prohibited, confidential and reporting resources, and resolution procedures.

## Course Schedule & Materials

I post all the required readings on Canvas. Please note that I reserve the right to make changes to the course schedule, including assignments due dates and test dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur.

September 9: Course Overview & Introduction to Latin America

September 14: Latin America's Diversity & From Conquest to Independence I

- Vanden, Harry E. and Gary Prevost. 2018. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*, Ch1 (1-11).
- Luna, Juan Pablo and Gerardo L. Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics: The Quest for Democracy and Citizenship Rights*, Ch1 (1-19).

September 16: From Conquest to Independence II

- Luna & Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics*, Ch1 (20-38).
- Lange, Matthew et al. 2006. "Colonialism and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Spanish and British Colonies." *American Journal of Sociology* 111, No. 5. (1412-35)

September 21: Politics of Development I: Import-export growth, ISI and populism

- Luna & Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics*, Ch3 (1-33) & Ch4 (1-28)

*Recommended: Mahon Jr, James E. 1992. "Was Latin America too rich to prosper? Structural and political obstacles to export-led industrial growth." The Journal of Development Studies, 28.2: 241-63.*

September 23: Politics of Development II: Crisis and the stagnation of ISI, and B-A

- Collier, David. 1979. "Overview of the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Model," in *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

*Recommended: Collier, David. 2001. "Bureaucratic Authoritarianism," in The Oxford Companion to Politics in the World, Second Edition, Joel Krieger, ed. Oxford University Press, 93-95.*

September 28: Neoliberalism & Economic Reform

- Luna & Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics*, Ch3 (34-53).
- Weyland, Kurt. 1998. "Swallowing the Bitter Pill: Sources of Popular Support for Neoliberal Reform in Latin America." *Comparative Political Studies*. 31.5: 539-63.

September 30: Consequences of Neoliberalism

- Huber, Evelyn and Fred Solt. 2004. "Success and Failures of Neoliberalism," *Latin American Research Review*. 39.3: 150-64.
- Luna & Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics*, Ch4 (40-47)

*Recommended: Hoffman, Kelly and Miguel A. Centeno. 2003. "The Lopsided Continent: Inequality in Latin America," Annual Review of Sociology 29: 363-90.*

October 5: Democracy in Latin America

- Smith, Peter. 2012. "Cycles of Electoral Democracy" in *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*, Ch1 (19-42).
- Luna & Munck. 2021. *Introduction to Contemporary Latin American Politics*, Ch5 (1-21)

*Recommended: Mainwaring, Scott and Frances Hagopian. 2005. "The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America," in The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.*

October 7: Case Study: Argentina

- Vacs, Aldo C. 2018. "Argentina" in *Politics of Latin America*, 345-380.
- CONADEP. 1984. *Nunca Más: A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People*. Prologue.

*Recommended: Roht Arriaza, Naomi. 2014. "From Amnesty to Accountability: Transitional Justice in South America." World Politics Review (December 23), 1-6.*

October 12 & 19: Case Study: Brazil

- Chaffee, Wilber A. 2018. "Brazil" in *Politics of Latin America*, 385-409.
- Layton, Matthew L., and Amy Erica Smith. 2017. "Is it race, class, or gender? The sources of perceived discrimination in Brazil." *Latin American Politics and Society* 59(1): 52-67.
- Watch: *The Edge of Democracy*, Netflix documentary by Petra Costa.

*Recommended: Da Costa, Alexandre E. 2016. "Confounding anti-racism: Mixture, racial democracy, and post-racial politics in Brazil". Critical sociology, 42(4-5), 495-513.*

October 21: Midterm Review

### **Midterm Exam (Oct 21-23)**

October 26: Transitions to Democracy & Discussion of Paper Assignment

- Smith, Peter. 2012. "Transitions and Continuities" in *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*, Ch2 (43-70).

October 28: Case Study: Chile & Contentious Politics

- Silva, Eduardo. 2018. "Chile" in *Politics of Latin America*, 413-434.
- Castiglioni, Rossana. 2020. "Chile's New (Fragile) Social Truce." *Americas Quarterly*, April 8 (1-4).

*Recommended: Kornbluh, Peter. 2003. The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability. The New Press, Ch1.*

November 2: Case Study: Mexico

- Hamilton, Nora. 2018. "Mexico" in *Politics of Latin America*, 317-340.
- Langston, Joy. 2017. *Democratization and Authoritarian Party Survival: Mexico's PRI*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Ch1.

*Recommended: Flores-Macías, Gustavo. 2013. "Mexico's 2012 Elections: The Return of the PRI." Journal of Democracy, 24.1: 128-141. & Schedler, Andreas. 2000. "Mexico's Victory: The Democratic Revelation." Journal of Democracy, 11.4: 5-19.*

November 4: Political Institutions I: Presidentialism, Political Parties & Representation

- Mainwaring, Scott and Matthew Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics* 29(4): 449-469.
- Luna, Juan Pablo and Alberto Vergara. 2016. "Latin America's Problems of Success," *Journal of Democracy*, 27(3): 158-65.
- *Political Culture of Democracy in the Americas 2016/17*, LAPOP Report - Trust in Political Parties & Partisanship Sections (19-26).

### **November 5: Paper Abstract & Outline Deadline**

November 9: The Swinging Pendulum in Latin America

- Levitsky, Steven and Kenneth M. Roberts, ed. 2011. *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1-26 and 399-427.
- Applebaum, Anne. 2021. "Democracy Is Surprisingly Easy to Undermine," [The Atlantic, June 17.](#)

*Recommended: Valenzuela, Arturo and Lucía Dammert. 2006. "A 'Left Turn' in Latin America? Problems of Success in Chile." Journal of Democracy, 17.4: 65-79.*

November 11: Case Study: Venezuela

- Hellinger, Daniel. 2018. "Venezuela" in *Politics of Latin America*, 465-482.
- Morgan, Jana. 2018. "Deterioration and Polarization of Party Politics in Venezuela," in *Party Systems in Latin America*, 291-314, 324-25.

*Recommended: Roberts, K., 2012. "Populism and democracy in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez." Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy, 136-59.*

November 16: The Importance of Programmatic Parties

- Roberts, Kenneth M. 2012. "Market Reform, Programmatic (De-)Alignment, and Party System Stability in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies* 46(11):422-447.
- Kitschelt, Herbert et al. 2010. *Latin American Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Introduction (1-13).

November 18: Case Study: Peru

- Skidmore, Thomas E. et al. 2014. *Modern Latin America*, 155-166.
- Levitsky, Steven. 2018. "Peru: The Institutionalization of Politics without Parties" in *Party Systems in Latin America*, 326-341.

### **November 19: Final Paper (Canvas)**

November 30 & December 2: Latin America's Response to COVID-19

- Readings TBD

### **December 3: Final Project (Canvas)**

December 7: US-Latin American Relations

- Vanden & Prevost. 2018. *Politics of Latin America*, 292-314.
- Schenoni, Luis and Scott Mainwaring. 2018. "Democracy is in crisis in Latin America. Brazil may be the next trouble spot," *The Washington Post*, October 22 (1-3).

*Recommended: Schenoni, Luis and Scott Mainwaring. 2018. US hegemony and regime change in Latin America. Democratization, 26(2): 269-287.*

December 9: Case Study: Cuba & Final Review

- Prevost, Gary. 2018. "Cuba" in *Politics of Latin America*, 523-545.

*Recommended: Guillermoprieto, Alma. 2016. "Cuba: The Big Change," May 12. & "The End of Fidel," November 30. The New York Review of Books.*

### **Final Exam (December 11-17)**