

**Politics of Latin America (PSCI 239)**  
**Fall 2017**  
**M-W 9:15-10:30 AM | Powdermaker 121**

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Office Hours:  
M-W 1-3 PM, or by appointment.  
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**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the politics of Latin America. We begin by confronting the current issues in Latin American politics: public protests, corruption, public (in)security, and democratic deficit, and contrast that to the recent narrative of advances in socio-economic inclusion. We then examine the historical, socioeconomic and institutional roots of the issues faced in the struggle for economic development and political stability. In doing so, we will examine key concepts and theories in comparative politics and political economy, including the relationship between the state and the economy and between development and democracy. Finally, we circle back to the struggles of redemocratization, institutional and policy reform. In doing so, we will become acquainted with general regional trend as well as countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, among others. This course neither assumes nor requires any prior knowledge of the region, comparative politics, or languages.

**Course Objectives**

- 1) By the end of the semester, students should be able to critically assess current politics in Latin America and identify some of their historical, institutional, political, and economic determinants.
- 2) Students will be exposed to key theories and concepts that have guided the struggle for democracy and development in the region, and evaluate individual countries' record in these pursuits.
- 3) Students will explore the rich variation in political institutions and outcomes across the region.
- 4) Students will learn to read academic publications, such as books and peer-reviewed articles. Students will also learn to assess arguments and evaluate use of evidence.
- 5) Students will learn to communicate their thoughts clearly and coherently in writing.

**Course Requirements**

Written Assignments (3)	65%	(Highest score: 25%, Others: 20%)
Take-Home Final Exam	20%	
Attendance and Participation	10%	
Map Quiz	5%	

- Students will submit 3 written assignments (4-5pp) over the course of the semester. Assignment prompts will be distributed at the conclusion of each section of the syllabus. Papers must be uploaded to Blackboard by the deadline to avoid a late penalty.
- A take-home final exam with a cumulative question will be handed out on the last day of class.
- Attendance is mandatory, and you are expected to participate.

## Readings

There are no books to purchase for this class. Course readings are available in the course's Blackboard website. All students are required to obtain access to Blackboard and check it regularly for announcements. You can login to Blackboard through the CUNY main page: <http://www.cuny.edu>.

Students are expected to complete readings before the scheduled class and to come prepared to participate actively in class discussion. Be prepared to summarize the main points in the readings to your peers. Of course, it is ok if you do not understand something; in those cases, bring good questions.

## Missed Exams and Late Assignments

Students may use up to two days grace period for any one paper, no questions asked. If by the end of the two-day period, you have not turned in your paper, you must meet with me in person to set a plan for completing the assignment. Work must be made-up within two weeks to be considered. Quizzes cannot be made up.

## Grading and Appeals

There is no grading curve in this class. Consequently, it is possible that every single student could earn an A+. I value transparency in grading, and am cognizant of the possibility of mistakes. I will gladly discuss grading with students, but will do so only in person, during office hours or by appointment.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should register with and provide documentation to the Office of Special Services, located in 111 Frese Hall by the first week of class. OSS will provide you with a letter for you to bring to me indicating the necessary accommodations.

## Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, purchasing papers, and/or cheating in exams, will be sanctioned according the [CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy](#). If you use any major idea or more than three words in a row, you should cite the source. If you need help with your writing, visit <http://writingatqueens.org/>.

## Electronic Devices

Recent studies find that the use of laptops and tablets in classroom settings reduces the ability of the users and fellow classmates to effectively learn, as evidenced by lower examination grades.<sup>1</sup> That said, you have the right to use these devices to take notes and/or access readings. Students found to be using their laptop or tablet for any other reason will be deducted 10% of their participation grade for the semester. Furthermore, if you are using a laptop or tablet, I will call on you first during class discussions. Cell phone use (either voice or text) during class is, of course, strictly prohibited. The same applies to headphones.

## One Last Caveat

I consider this syllabus to be a contract between you and me that lays out expectations for both of us. I will do my best to keep changes to a minimum. I do, however, withhold the right to make changes throughout the course of the semester to adapt it to our needs. Whenever possible, I will include the class in the decision. In doubt, I will always err on the side of *lightening* the load to students.

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<sup>1</sup> See Sana et al. "[Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers.](#)" *Computers and Education* Vol. 62 (2013): 24-31.

## General Advice

Succeeding in this course is a direct product of your own effort. Here are some general tips:

- *Do the reading.* Lectures are not a substitute for the readings. Readings provide depth and nuance to the topics we study and are chance for you to actively participate in your own learning.
- *Read critically:* Focus on the big picture to glean the main arguments in the texts. Think about the logic of the arguments and draw linkages and contrasts among the texts. This is a course about *comparative* politics, so think comparatively.
- *Come to class.* Lectures will break down and highlight the main take-home points in the readings. At the same time, lectures go beyond the readings and help you make broader connections.
- *Participate.* Don't be passive receivers of information. Be active in your own education. Feel free to interrupt me with questions or comments. Don't let me move on to another topic if you are not ready.
- *Be respectful.* Especially to each other, but also to me. This includes keeping a civil tone during class discussions and listening attentively when your peers speak.
- *Enjoy yourself.* College is fun. Remember to stop and smell the roses.

## Course Schedule:

### 1. Contemporary Latin America

Aug 28 (Mon) Course Introduction

Aug 30 (Wed) Why Are Latin Americans Protesting?

Siavelis, Peter M. "[Chile's Student Protests: The Original Sin of Educational Policy.](#)" *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*. Fall 2012.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo, and Ana Claudia Teixeira. 2013. "[Pardon the Inconvenience, We Are Changing the Country.](#)" *Boston Review*, June 26.

Glickhouse, Rachel. 2014. "[Why Brazil's Protests Didn't Translate into Change at the Ballot Box.](#)" *Quartz*, October 9.

Neuman, William. 2014. "[In Venezuela, Protest Ranks Grow Broader.](#)" *The New York Times*, February 24.

Sep 04 (Mon) --No Class--

Sep 6 (Wed) Crisis in Brazil: Impeachments and Institutional Instability

Londoño, Ernesto. 2017. "[Brazilian Lawmakers Reject Bribery Prosecution of President Michel Temer.](#)" *The New York Times*, August 2.

Healy, Meg and Luisa Leme. 2017. "[Update: Brazil's Congress Eyes Reforms ahead of the 2018 Elections.](#)" AS/COA.org, August 17.

Pérez-Liñán, Aníbal and John Polga-Hecimovich. 2016. "[Explaining Military Coups and Impeachments in Latin America.](#)" *Democratization*, 24(5): 839-858.

Sep 11 (Mon) Is It Corruption?

Morris, Stephen D., and Charles H. Blake, Eds. 2012. *Corruption and Politics in Latin America: National and Regional Dynamics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. Ch. 1, pp. 1-27.

Winter, Brian. 2016. "[The Amazing Case that Proved Latin America's Crackdown on Corruption Is For Real.](#)" *Americas Quarterly*, 10 (1).

Hochstetler, Kathryn. 2017. "[Odebrecht in the Amazon: comparing responses to corruption in Latin America.](#)" LSE Latin American and Caribbean blog, May 18.

Sep 13 (Wed) Is It the (Global) Economy?

Campello, Daniela and Cesar Zucco Jr. 2015. "Presidential Success and the World Economy." *Journal of Politics*, 78(2): 589-602.

Talvi, Ernesto. 2016. "[Understanding Latin America's New Political Paradigm.](#)" *ProjectSyndicate.org*.

Sep 18 (Mon) Crisis in Venezuela — Skype session with Prof. Javier Corrales (Amherst College)

Corrales, Javier. 2015. "[Don't Blame It On Oil.](#)" *Foreign Policy*, May 7.

Casey, Nicholas and Patricia Torres. 2016. "[Venezuela Drifts Into New Territory: Hunger, Blackouts and Government Shutdown.](#)" *The New York Times*, May 28.

Sonneland, Holly K. 2017. "[Update: What to Know about Venezuela's Escalating Turmoil.](#)" AS/COA.org, August 2.

Sep 20 (Wed) --No Class--

Sep 25 (Mon) Clientelism

Auyero, Javier. 2000. "The Logic of Clientelism in Argentina: an Ethnographic Account." *Latin American Research Review* (35(3): 55-81.

Sep 27 (Wed) Public Security

Bergman, Marcelo, and Laurence Whitehead, Eds. 2009. *Criminality, Public Security, and the Challenges to Democracy in Latin America*. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press. pp.1-22.

Cruz, José Miguel. 2011. "Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State." *Latin American Politics and Society*, 53(4): 1-33.

Muggah, Robert and Nathalie Alvarado. 2016. "[Latin America Could Cut Its Murder Rate By 50 Percent. Here's How.](#)" *Americas Quarterly*, October 4.

**2. Flashback: From Oligarchy to Mass Politics to Authoritarianism**

Oct 02 (Mon) Colonial History

Skidmore, Thomas E., Peter H. Smith, and James N. Green. 2010. *Modern Latin America, Seventh Edition*. Ch.2, "The Colonial Foundations."

Oct 4 (Wed) From Oligarchy to Populist Democracy

Hellinger, pp.140-153, 159-164.

Edwards, Sebastian. 2010. *Left Behind: Latin America and the False Promise of Populism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 167-170.

- Oct 9 (Mon) --No Class--
- Oct 11 (Wed) Revolutions in Mexico and Cuba  
Hellinger, Ch. 11
- Oct 16 (Mon) Institutionalized Corporatism in Mexico  
Stevens, Evelyn P. 1977. Mexico's PRI: The Institutionalization of Corporatism? In James M. Malloy, Ed, *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. pp. 227-258.
- Oct 18 (Wed) Democratic Breakdown  
Hellinger, Ch. 7
- Oct 23 (Mon) Military in Politics  
Collier, David. 1979. "Overview of the Bureaucratic Authoritarian Model." In David Collier, Ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 19-32  
Smith, Peter H. 2012. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective, Second Edition*. Ch.3.
- Oct 25 (Wed) Transitions to Democracy  
Hellinger, Ch. 9

### 3. State and Market Reforms Under New Democracies

- Oct 30 (Mon) Building Institutions: Electoral Rules & Political Parties  
Mainwaring, Scott. 1998. "Party Systems in the Third Wave." *Journal of Democracy*, 9(3): 67-81.  
Lloyd, Ryan and Carlos Oliveira. 2016. "[How Brazil's Electoral System Led the Country Into Political Crisis](#)." *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, May 25.
- Nov 1 (Wed) Building Institutions: The Perils of Presidentialism  
Smith, Peter H. 2012. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective, Second Edition*. Ch.5.  
O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1994. "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, 5(1): 55-69.
- Nov 6 (Mon) Neoliberal Reforms  
Kingstone, Peter. 2011. *The Political Economy of Latin America*. New York: Routledge. pp. 45-54.  
Weyland, Kurt. 1998. "Swallowing the Bitter Pill: Sources of Popular Support for Neoliberal Reform in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies*, 31-5 (October), pp. 539-568.  
(Recommended) Wang, Sam. 2016. "[Examining the Effects of Dollarization on Ecuador](#)." *COHA.org*.
- Nov 8 (Wed) The Backlash Against Neoliberalism & Rise of Identity Politics  
Huber, Evelyne and Fred Solt. 2004. "Successes and Failures of Neoliberalism." *Latin American Research Review* 39(3): 150-64.  
Yashar, Deborah. 1999. "Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and the Postliberal Challenge in Latin America." *World Politics*, 52(1): 76-104.

Nov 13 (Mon) Addressing Human Rights

Sikkink, Kathryn, and Carrie Booth Walling. 2007. "The Impact of Human Rights Trials in Latin America." *Journal of Peace Research*, 44(4): 427-445.

**4. The Turn to the Left**

Nov 15 (Wed) Left Turn & Pragmatism in Brazil

Castañeda, Jorge G, and Marco A. Morales, Eds. 2008. *Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left*. New York: Routledge. pp.3-11

Hunter, Wendy. 2010. *The Transformation of the Worker's Party in Brazil, 1989-2009*. New York: Cambridge. Ch. 6.

Nov 20 (Mon) Leftist Populism? Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia & Ecuador

Mazzuca, Sebastián L. 2013. "The Rise of Rentier Populism." *Journal of Democracy* 24(2): 108-122.

Corrales, Javier, and Michael Penfold. 2011. *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chávez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. Ch. 2 (p. 14-46).

Toro, Francisco. 2017. "[As Socialist Venezuela Collapses, Socialist Bolivia Thrives. Here's Why.](#)" *The Washington Post*, January 5.

Nov 22 (Wed) Taking Stock of the Left Turn

Lustig, Nora. 2015. "Most Unequal on Earth." *Finance and Development*, September: 16-18.

Touchton, Michael, Natasha Borges Sugiyama, and Brian Wampler. 2017. "Democracy at Work: Moving beyond elections to improve well-being." *American Political Science Review* 111(1): 68-82.

Cusak, Asa. 2017. "[What the Left Must Learn from Maduro's Failures in Venezuela.](#)" *The Guardian*, August 2.

Nov 27 (Mon) The Return of the Right

Blei, Daniela. 2016. "[Is the Latin American Left Dead?](#)" *New Republic*, April 18.

Niedzwiecki, Sara and Jennifer Pribble. 2017. "Social Policies and Center-Right Governments in Argentina and Chile." *Latin American Politics and Society* 59(3): 72-97.

Perera, Fabiana. 2017. "[In Ecuador's Extremely Tight Election, the Left Defied the Odds.](#)" *Washington Post – Monkey Cage*, April 4.

## 5. Outliers

Nov 29 (Wed) Security Politics in Colombia

Bejarano, Ana María, and Eduardo Pizarro. 2005. "From 'Restricted' to 'Besieged': The Changing Nature of the Limits to Democracy in Colombia." In Frances Hagopian and Scott P. Mainwaring, Eds, *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 8, pp. 235-260.

*The Economist*. 2016. "[Unlearning War](#)." August 25.

Piñeros, Erika. 2017. "[Not Just the FARC: Numerous Colombia Conflicts Rage On](#)." *Americas Quarterly*, August 22.

Dec 4 (Mon) Mexico After (and Back to) the PRI

Multiple Authors. 2000. "Mexico's Victory." *Journal of Democracy*, 11(4): 5-24

Flores-Macías, Gustavo. 2016. "Mexico's Stalled Reforms." *Journal of Democracy*, 27(2): 66-78.

Dec 6 (Wed) Cuba Since the Revolution

DePalma, Anthony. 2016. "[Fidel Castro, Cuban Revolutionary Who Defied U.S., Dies at 90](#)." *The New York Times*. November 26.

Corrales, Javier. 2016. "[Fidel Was Hell](#)." *Foreign Policy*, November 26.

Burnett, Victoria. 2016. "[With One Castro Gone, Questions About What the Other Castro Will Do](#)." *The New York Times*, November 2016.

Dec 11 (Mon) Circling Back Around: What Do We Know Better Now?

No Assigned Readings.

**DEC 20 (WED) TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE 2 PM**