

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
SYLLABUS (7 JULY 2006)
**IR/PO 367 & IR/PO 367HP: INTRODUCTION TO LATIN
AMERICAN POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**
FALL 2006
MWF 11-11:50
Room: GCB 205 (Guitar Building)
Honors Seminar (IR/PO 367HP): W 12-12:50, Room 312b, 232 BSR

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Course Rationale, Goals, and Organization

This course provides both a broad overview of the politics of Latin America (i.e., Spanish, Portuguese, and French America) and a more in-depth study of seven countries in the region (Mexico, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Cuba). Latin America is a part of the world in which most countries have been independent republics for close to two centuries after a colonial experience that lasted for almost three centuries before that. In spite of a shared cultural, economic, social, and political heritage, it is also a region of extraordinary geographical, ethnic, linguistic, and class diversity as well. As the late political scientist Kalman Silvert noted, “The only generalization that you can make about Latin America is that you can’t make one!”

But that doesn’t keep us from trying! Amidst such diversity, what common political patterns can we find among the countries? How can we begin to explain both the similarities and the differences? In what ways do the experiences of specific countries add to our understanding of the long but often turbulent politics of Latin America? And can we come up with explanations for the region’s contemporary politics of unprecedented democracy with an equally unprecedented array of problems? We will try to answer such questions over the course of our semester together.

The organization of the course is as follows:

1. We start off with a brief overview of the contemporary political panorama of the region. The most dramatic development in the modern political history of Latin America is the emergence of sustained electoral democracy over the past twenty years in almost every country. We need to try to understand why this could come about so quickly after decades of authoritarianism, instability, and failed efforts in most nations to find sustainable democratic solutions.

2. Then, to give you a window onto Latin American realities through the lived experiences of three of its citizens, you will read either a personal testimony (Jacobo Timerman or Carolina María De Jesús) or a novel (Mario Vargas Llosa), and will prepare a short paper reflecting on what such experiences tell you about Latin American political realities. A few of you will be selected to share your reflections with the class.

3. Then, after discussing the colonial legacy and its significance for post-independence politics in the region and taking a map quiz so that you know the names and locations of the countries and capitals, we review the sweep of Latin American political history. This sweep of history can be described, following political scientist Samuel Huntington's characterization, as successive "waves" of authoritarianism and democracy.

a. The first wave, from independence in the first decades of the 19th century until the 1870s, was authoritarian, as the political elites of these new states struggled to find a workable formula for governance. Caudillo (i.e., strong man) rule was one governing modality that was adopted; political instability in the context of civil wars was another.

b. Then, from the 1870s through the 1920s, more and more countries worked out limited (i.e., few eligible to vote), liberal (i.e., procedures characterized by individualism, equality, small state separated from the Church, and free trade), democracy in Latin America. Over these years, this democratic alternative became routinized in the majority of countries of the region, with ample reason to conclude that it would continue indefinitely.

c. However, almost all of these early democracies collapsed around 1930 in the face of world depression. A second wave of authoritarianism swept over the region as political elites turned to the military for veto coups

and experimented with political alternatives (e.g., corporatism and socialism) to help stem the sudden upsurge of citizen unrest as elected governments lost legitimacy. Some countries returned to earlier caudillo forms, while others experienced periods of political instability.

d. This wave ebbed slowly from the mid-1940s until the early 1960s and was replaced by a second wave of democracy with the progressive restoration of elections in more and more Latin American countries, often an expanded New Deal democracy with a greater role for the state, the middle class, and the emerging working class.

e. However, a third wave of authoritarianism began to spread over the region in the 1960s. In many cases, this wave involved the armed forces coming to power through coups that established a new type of authoritarian regime, long-term, institutionalized military rule, sometimes progressive and sometimes reactionary, depending on affected countries' internal circumstances. At the height of this third authoritarian wave, in 1976-1977, only three Latin American countries remained with civilian governments competitively and fairly elected – Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela. Mexico retained civilian elected rule, but in a one-party-dominant system.

f. Yet between 1978 and 1991, a third wave of democracy produced full formal electoral democracies almost everywhere in Latin America. While suffering multiple problems (e.g., corruption, crime, party disintegration, debt, and economic inequality) and occasional setbacks (e.g., in Haiti, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina, and Bolivia), democratic forms have nevertheless been able to sustain themselves and to promote in many countries the principle of military subordination to civil authority.

4. After completing this broad historical overview of the political dynamics of Latin America since independence and taking an exam covering the material covered in the course to this point, we spend the next several weeks examining the specific patterns in individual countries in the region (Mexico, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Cuba).

a. How are they similar? How do they differ? How can we explain their diverse and distinct political patterns within as well as in comparison with their neighbors? Such characteristics as levels of colonial penetration, economic dependency, social mobilization, U.S. policy, and political leadership may help us in our efforts to answer these questions.

b. In this segment of the course, each of you will work with several colleagues to gain a deeper knowledge of one of the countries, and you will write a research paper on some key aspect of that country's politics.

5. After a brief exploration of Inter-American relations, we conclude with a discussion of the most likely future political scenarios for Latin America.

a. Are most countries likely to develop full-bodied, consolidated democracies or will they tend to slip back into yet another wave of authoritarianism and/or instability?

b. What are the positive signs and what signals give grounds disquiet and concern?

When you complete this course, you should have a good grasp of the historical dynamics of Latin American politics, their essential contemporary characteristics, and the major explanations for the distinctive patterns of politics in the region and in several representative countries.

Grading

1. **Attendance: 10%** Will be taken randomly during the semester.
2. **Participation: 10%** Based on the quality of comments, questions, and presentations during the semester.
3. **Short Paper** (2-3 pages) on a testimony or the novel: **10%** NOT a summary of the reading, but reflections on its meaning for Latin American politics. **Due 15 Sep**
4. **Map Quiz: 5%** Location of Latin American and Caribbean countries and capitals. In class **20 Sep**
5. **In-Class Exam: 15%** On readings and lectures 8 Sep-2 Oct, during **4 Oct** class – a combination of identifications and an essay.
6. **Research Paper** (about 10 text pages): **20%** Analysis and discussion of an important political issue or concern affecting one of the countries covered in depth during the course, due at the last class covering the country on which you choose to write. Detailed instructions for writing the paper will be provided. A revise and resubmit option is available, but only for fully completed papers that follow the guidelines provided.
7. **Final Exam: 30%** Essays covering all course material between 6 Oct and 11 Dec. **18 Dec, 9-11 A.M.**

N.B. The grading elements for the Honors Program students are different in some respects and are listed on the Honors Course syllabus.

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Deans' Office has requested that you be informed of the following:

1. The last day you may drop the course without a W grade is F Oct 6.
2. The last day you may drop the course with a W grade is F Oct 27.
3. You are responsible for knowing the provisions of the CAS Academic Conduct Code. Copies are available in CAS 105.
4. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Deans' Office.

Required Readings

(Available for purchase at the Boston University Barnes & Noble Bookstore, except for the *Latin America Weekly Report*)

Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 6th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001). For students whose last names begin with the letters A through F.

Carolina María De Jesús, *Child of the Dark*, Signet Classic (New York: Penguin Group, 2003). For students G through R.

Mario Vargas Llosa, *Death in the Andes* (New York: Penguin Group). For students S through Z.

Latin American Weekly Report (LAWR), for current developments. Not available at the bookstore. You will receive a special 13-week student subscription of LAWR on-line for \$26 (\$2/week, less than one-fourth the normal price) by signing up during the first week of class. Access code and password provided individually upon payment (collected in class).

Classes, Topics, and Reading Assignments

W 6 Sep Introduction

- F 8 Sep Contemporary Latin America: Themes and Context
Skidmore & Smith (S&S) 1-12
- M 11 Sep Contemporary Latin America: Issues and Challenges
S&S 58-68
- W 13 Sep Windows onto Latin American Realities through Lived Experiences I
Timerman, de Jesús, or Vargas Llosa
- F 15 Sep Windows onto Latin American Realities II
Paper Presentations
SHORT PAPER (2-3 pages) DUE
- M 18 Sep Latin American Politics: The Colonial Legacy
S&S 13-36
- W 20 Sep Historical Context: Authoritarianism's 1st Wave (1810s-1870s)
S&S 36-41
MAP QUIZ
- F 22 Sep Historical Context: Democracy's 1st Wave (1870s-1920s)
S&S 42-51
- M 25 Sep Historical Context: Authoritarianism's 2nd Wave (1930s-1950s)
S&S 51-54
- W 27 Sep Historical Context: Democracy's 2nd Wave (1940s-1960s)
S&S 54-55
- F 29 Sep Historical Context: Authoritarianism's 3rd Wave (1960s-1980s)
S&S 55-58
- M 2 Oct Historical Context: Democracy's 3rd Wave (1980s-)
S&S 58-67
- W 4 Oct **IN-CLASS EXAM**
- F 6 Oct Country Cases: Introduction
S&S 67-68
- M 9 Oct Columbus Day Holiday – No Class
- T 10 Oct Core Countries: Mexico – Politics in Historical Context
(M classes) S&S 254-295
- W 11 Oct Mexico – Video: “NAFTA & the New Economic Frontier: Life along the U.S.-Mexican Border” (23 min.)
- F 13 Oct Mexico – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

MEXICO RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

M 16 Oct Core Countries: Peru – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 181-220

W 18 Oct Peru – Video: “Peru’s 2000 Elections” (23 min.)

F 20 Oct Peru – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

PERU RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

M 23 Oct Peripheral Countries: Chile – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 109-138

W 25 Oct Chile – Video: “Defeat of a Dictator” (34 min.)

F 27 Oct Chile – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

CHILE RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

M 30 Oct Peripheral Countries: Argentina – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 69-108

W 1 Nov Argentina – Video: “Growth or Disappearance” (55 min.)

F 3 Nov Argentina – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

ARGENTINA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

M 6 Nov A Unique Case: Brazil – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 139-180

W 8 Nov Brazil – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

BRAZIL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

F 10 Nov Veterans’ Day Holiday – No Class

M 13 Nov A Complicated Case: Colombia – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 221-253

W 15 Nov Colombia – Video: “Colombia’s Guerrilla War” (53 min.)

F 17 Nov Colombia – Contemporary Politics
LAWR

COLOMBIA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

M 20 Nov A Revolutionary Case: Cuba – Politics in Historical Context
S&S 296-327

W-F 22-24 Nov Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class

M 27 Nov Cuba – Video: “Fidel Castro: Maximum Leader” (53 min.)

W 29 Nov Cuba – Contemporary Politics

LAWR

CUBA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

F 1 Dec The Cases Reviewed and Compared: What Have We Learned?

M 4 Dec Inter-American Relations I

S&S 396-439

W 6 Dec Inter-American Relations II

F 8 Dec The Impact of the United States on Latin American Politics

M 11 Dec Conclusions: Latin America's Political Future

S&S 440-455

18 Dec, 9-11 A.M. **FINAL EXAM**