Course Rationale, Goals, and Organization

This course offers an introduction to Latin American politics and international relations. We will proceed from an overview of the region as a whole to detailed studies of specific countries and issues in U.S.-Latin American relations. In the spirit of interdisciplinary scholarship, we will draw on a variety of methods and sources to seek answers to a number of overarching questions:

How has Latin America’s past shaped its present and future? What common political patterns can we identify across the region? Why do specific countries follow or deviate from those patterns? It what ways has the United States interacted with Latin America over the decades, both to the benefit and detriment of its neighbors?

Our goal in this course is twofold:

1) You will gain knowledge about the historical dynamics and contemporary characteristics of Latin American politics and international relations

2) You will develop reading, writing, and communication skills that will serve you in your college career and beyond

The organization of the course, which does not assume any prior knowledge of Latin America or of U.S. policy, is as follows:

1. We begin with a chronological overview of Latin American history, with an eye toward gaining the knowledge of the past necessary to understand the present. We will identify and attempt to explain common patterns and processes in regional politics and international relations.

2. Then, in order to present a contrast to our previous analysis from an academic, outside perspective, you will read either a personal testimony or a novel (choose ONE from the list of six below) and will prepare a three-page paper reflecting on something you learned about Latin
American politics from the reading. I will ask a few of you to comment on your reflections with the rest of the class.

3. Next, we will spend several weeks focusing on six countries in the region: Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba. We will compare their histories to the general patterns that we observed earlier in the semester, delving into greater detail about their politics, economics, and relations with the United States. In this segment of the course, each of you will chose one of the six countries to research and meet with several other members of the class in groups based on the country. Each of you will prepare a research paper (10 pages) in which you discuss the single greatest challenge that country faces, provide evidence for this assessment, and offer recommendations for meeting that challenge. The paper will be due on the last day your country is discussed in class (with the exception of the Mexico papers, since that is the first country we will discuss). Each country group will select one of your members to give a brief summary to the rest of the class that day of some of the papers’ most important points and conclusions.

4. We then turn to an overview of U.S.-Latin American relations, analyzing the main patterns of these relations over time and the degree to which the United States has influenced its neighbors and vice-versa. You will once again form smaller groups to discuss an issue in U.S.-Latin American relations that you would like to explore more deeply (for example, intervention, immigration, trade, national security, drugs and drug trafficking). Each group will select one of its members to comment to the rest of the class on what the group has found to be the most important elements of the issue.

Grading

1. Mid-Term Exam: (20%) Short essay questions covering historical background F 26 Sep
2. Reflection Paper: (10%) (3 pages) on a testimony or novel Due F 3 Oct
3. Research Paper (30%) (10 pages, not counting separate cover page and bibliography) Choose one country to study. What is the single greatest challenge that country currently faces? Why? How did that challenge develop? What should that country do to meet or resolve the challenge? Mexico (due F 10 Oct), Peru (F 17 Oct), Guatemala (F 24 Oct), Argentina (F 31 Oct), Brazil (F 7 Nov), Cuba (F 14 Nov)
4. Final Exam: (20%) Short essay questions covering countries and U.S.-Latin American relations M 15 Dec
5. Participation: (20%) The quality of your involvement in:
   a. student groups (novel or testimony, country, and U.S. policy issues)
   b. class presentation when selected by your group
   c. class discussions
   d. You are also encouraged to attend Latin American Studies Program events
All assignments should be double-spaced in Times New Roman size 12 font with a one-inch margin on all sides. Use Chicago Style footnote citations for primary and secondary sources (for guidelines on proper citation format, see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). There will be a penalty of 10% for each day that an assignment is late. You will only be allowed to turn in an assignment late without penalty if you have a documented emergency.

**Expectations:**

1. Participation. I expect you to do the readings, bring the readings to class, and participate in discussions.

2. Attention. I expect you to close your laptops and put them away during lectures and presentations. Take notes by hand.

3. Communication.
   a. If you have a question, don’t hesitate to raise your hand and ask or contact me privately. If you have a problem or an emergency arises, let me know and I will be very willing to work with you.
   b. If you need an accommodation for any type of physical or learning disability, medical needs, or any other reason, you should meet with the student disability services office and then meet with me privately to discuss the modifications necessary to ensure your full participation in the course.
   c. When emailing me, address your emails to “Professor Keller” or “Dr. Keller.”

4. Proper Academic Conduct. It is your responsibility to know and understand the provisions of the College of Arts and Science’s Academic Conduct Code, available at: http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/. I will refer cases of suspected academic misconduct to the Dean’s Office.

**Required Readings**


2) *Latin American News Digest* (latinamericannewsdigest.com) Covers current developments in Latin American countries and is available in an online 6-month subscription for $18. We will discuss current events at the beginning of class every Monday.

3) **One** of the following six novels or testimonies (*your choice*):
  An indigenous woman recounts her family’s experiences in twentieth-century Guatemala

  A Mexican novelist’s view of his country’s 1910 Revolution

  Life in a Brazilian shanty town (*favela*) in the 1950s through the eyes of a resident

  An Argentine journalist narrates his ordeal during his country’s repressive military dictatorship (1976-83)

  A Peruvian novelist depicts the intertwining of myth and reality in a sierra mining town during the Shining Path’s “people’s war”

  A Dominican-American novelist tells the story of a young misfit Dominican growing up in New Jersey in the 1980s

5) **In addition**, there will be some documents, articles, and book chapters assigned for specific classes (noted with a *). These may be found on the Blackboard web site under **Content**. Our Blackboard site will also contain important information about assignments and exams under **Announcements**; other course-related material, such as the syllabus, is under **Information**.

**Classes, Topics, and Reading Assignments (subject to change with advance notice)**

**Wed, Sept 3:**
Introduction
Course overview, details, expectations
Fri, Sept 5:  
**Historical Overview: The Colonial Legacy**  
Chasteen, 1-84

Mon, Sept 8:  
**Historical Overview: Independence**  
Chasteen, 87-110

Wed, Sept 10:  
**Historical Overview: Postcolonial Blues and Progress**  
Chasteen, 117-176

Fri, Sept 12:  
**Historical Overview: Neocolonialism**  
Chasteen, 181-215

Mon, Sept 15:  
**Historical Overview: Nationalism**  
Chasteen, 217-251

Wed, Sept 17:  
**Historical Overview: Revolution**  
Chasteen, 253-283

Fri, Sept 19:  
**Historical Overview: Reaction**  
Chasteen, 285-316

Mon, Sept 22:  
**Historical Overview: Neoliberalism**  
Chasteen, 319-340

Wed, Sept 24:  
**Illiberal Democracy**  

Fri, Sept 26:  
**Review for Mid-Term Exam**

Mon, Sept 29:  
**MID-TERM EXAM**

Wed, Oct 1:  
**Country Cases: Introduction**  
Country group meetings: Deadline to pick a country to research  
Discussion of expectations for research and reflection papers

Fri, Oct 3:  
**Mexico – Politics in Historical Context**

Mon, Oct 6:  
**Novels & Testimonies, Continued**  
Individual novel or testimony group meetings to discuss what you have read  
**REFLECTION PAPERS DUE**

Wed, Oct 8:  
**Mexico – 20th Century Political Dynamics**
*Daniel Cosío Villegas, “Mexico’s Crisis” in Stanley R. Ross, ed.,

**Fri, Oct 10:**
Mexico – Contemporary Developments & Challenges  
Presentation by student selected from Mexico group  
Class discussion of Mexico’s challenges

**Mon, Oct 13:**
NO CLASS—MEET ON TUESDAY INSTEAD

**TUESDAY, Oct 14:**
Peru – Politics in Historical Context  
**MEXICO RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Wed, Oct 15:**
Peru – 20th Century Political Dynamics  

**Fri, Oct 17:**
Peru – Contemporary Developments & Challenges  
Presentation by student selected from Peru group  
Class discussion of Peru’s challenges  
**PERU RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Mon, Oct 20:**
Guatemala – Politics in Historical Context

**Wed, Oct 22:**
Guatemala – 20th Century Political Dynamics  

**Fri, Oct 24:**
Guatemala – Contemporary Developments & Challenges  
Presentation by student selected from Guatemala group  
Class discussion of Guatemala’s challenges  
**GUATEMALA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Mon, Oct 27:**
Argentina – Politics in Historical Context

**Wed, Oct 29:**
Argentina – 20th Century Political Dynamics

**Fri, Oct 31:**  
**Argentina – Contemporary Developments & Challenges**  
Presentation by student selected from Argentina group  
Class discussion of Argentina’s challenges  
**ARGENTINA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Mon, Nov 3:**  
**Brazil – Politics in Historical Context**

**Wed, Nov 5:**  
**Brazil – 20th Century Political Dynamics**  

**Fri, Nov 7:**  
**Brazil – Contemporary Developments & Challenges**  
Presentation by student selected from Brazil group  
Class discussion of Brazil’s challenges  
**BRAZIL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Mon, Nov 10:**  
**Cuba – Politics in Historical Context**

**Wed, Nov 12:**  
**Cuba – 20th Century Political Dynamics**  

**Fri, Nov 14:**  
**Cuba – Contemporary Developments & Challenges**  
Presentation by student selected from Cuba group  
Class discussion of Cuba’s challenges  
**CUBA RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Mon, Nov 17:**  
**U.S. Relations with Latin America: Introduction & Issues**  
Students select issues in U.S. policy and meet in issue groups to begin discussions

**Wed, Nov 19:**  
**U.S.-Latin American Relations: 1823-1933**  
* “The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine” in Holden and Zolov, 96-98

* Vanden & Prevost, 285-295
* “The Good Neighbor Policy” in Holden and Zolov, 133-134
* “The Alliance for Progress” in Holden and Zolov, 221-223

* Vanden & Prevost, 295-298
* “The Summit of the Americas” in Holden and Zolov, 351-354
* “The Drug War: ‘Plan Colombia’” in Holden and Zolov, 378-382

Wed, Nov 26: Thanksgiving Break

Fri, Nov 28: Thanksgiving Break

Mon, Dec 1: U.S.-Latin American Relations: 2000-Present
* Vanden & Prevost, 298-302
* “Unauthorized Immigration to the United States” in Holden and Zolov, 390-392


Fri, Dec 5: Issues in U.S.-L.A. Relations, I: Student Presentations
A representative selected by each issue group comments on the key points of the group’s discussions

Mon, Dec 8: Issues in U.S.-L.A. Relations, II: Student Presentations
Issue group representative comments, continued

Wed, Dec 10: Conclusions: What Have We Learned about Latin American Politics and International Relations?

Mon, Dec 15: FINAL EXAM 12-2PM