PO 561 / IR 502: Latin American Political Parties

Boston University, Spring 2016

Last revised: January 20, 2016

Professor: Taylor C. Boas
Email: tboas@bu.edu
Office location: 232 Bay State Rd., rm. 311B
Office phone: 617-353-4214
Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 3–4:30

Class location: KCB 104
Class time: Monday/Wednesday 11–12:30

1 Course Description

Political scientist E.E. Schattschneider once argued that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.” How does this claim apply to Latin America? This course will examine Latin American democracy through the lens of parties and party systems, looking at both historical origins and recent transformations. The first part of the course examines how the political incorporation of organized labor in the early twentieth century served as a “critical juncture” that set Latin American party systems on different paths of development. We will look at the emergence of hegemonic parties, populist parties, and working class parties, and how they shaped party system dynamics in their respective countries. The second part of the course asks whether market reforms of the 1970s and 1980s constitute a new critical juncture for Latin American party systems, altering the patterns that prevailed for most of the twentieth century. We will look at the transformation of labor-based parties, the reinvigoration of right-wing parties, the collapse of some countries’ party systems, the emergence of ethnic parties in the Andes, the persistence of patterns such as clientelism, and the recent success of leftist parties and politicians in Latin America. The empirical focus is on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, with some additional material drawn from Bolivia and Ecuador.

I assume that undergraduate students enrolled in this course have taken previous courses in comparative politics or Latin American studies. I have assigned approximately 100 pages of reading per week, and some of it is challenging; students should be prepared to spend the necessary time
doing course readings, taking notes, and preparing outlines outside of class.

Graduate students in political science or related fields will hopefully find this course to provide good preparation for their comprehensive exams and dissertation or thesis research. I have designed the course requirements for graduate students with these objectives in mind.

The goal for the course is that it be run as a seminar, meaning that students should be regularly contributing to class discussion. In order to participate, you need to have done the week’s readings before class and come prepared with questions or comments.

2 Requirements

Grade Breakdown: Undergraduate Students

Attendance and participation: 10%
Reading reactions: 10%
In-class midterm exam: 25%
Final exam: 25%
Final paper: 30%

Grade Breakdown: Graduate Students

Attendance and participation: 10%
Reading reactions: 10%
Final exam: 35%
Final paper: 45%

Required Readings

There are two required books for this course, both of which we will use after Spring Break:


All other required readings are available electronically as Mugar Library E-reserves. The easiest way to access these is via an electronic copy of this syllabus (on Blackboard, or athttp://people.bu.edu/tboas/LAparties_syllabus.pdf). Click on the hyperlinks in the reading list below (you will need to enter your BU ID and password).
The following books are recommended for purchase. We are reading several chapters from each; they will be available on e-reserves, but you might want to get the book instead. You might find other chapters useful for your research papers. The Mainwaring and Scully volume has gone out of print, but used copies are available online, and you can also get it as a Google e-book for a reasonable price.


**Reading Reactions**

To encourage students to engage with the readings prior to class, there are two types of “reading reaction” assignments.

Question/Comments: Prior to every class (except for the days you are doing a response paper—see below), each student should post to the Blackboard Discussion Board one comment or question about that day’s reading—something you found interesting, something that was puzzling or confusing, etc. Your question/comment does not need to be long (a couple sentences is fine) or particularly profound. I just want to get a sense of your reactions to the reading in advance, and potentially generate some online discussion. Please submit these by 10 a.m. the day of class.

Short response papers: Twice during the semester, rather than a short comment/question on that day’s readings, you will write a short response paper. These papers should be around 3 pages, double-spaced. You should focus on the readings assigned for the day but should also feel free to relate them to other readings we’ve already covered, especially those that are part of the same block (see the list of readings at the end of the syllabus; each block is numbered sequentially and includes two class days). You should email me the paper the night before the corresponding class. The response papers can summarize the readings, critique them, compare and contrast them, discuss questions that you thought were unclear, etc.

Questions/comments will not be graded and returned, but I keep track of whether you are doing them. Response papers will be graded on a check, check-plus, check-minus basis.

**Midterm Exam (undergraduates)**

The midterm exam will cover material from the first half of the course. It will be closed-book and held in class.

**Final Paper**
The final paper, due on the last day of class, will examine a topic of the student’s choosing related to parties or party systems in Latin America. It may draw upon course readings but must also involve substantial outside research (that is, no more than one-third of the sources may be course readings). The paper topic must be approved in advance; the due date for the proposed paper topic is listed below, in the schedule of course readings. Undergraduate papers should be 15–20 double-spaced pages in length.

Graduate student papers should follow the above guidelines, but should be 25–30 double-spaced pages in length. In addition to writing papers that present an original argument based on empirical research, graduate students have the option of writing a research proposal, with an eye toward their own dissertation or thesis research.

Final Exam

A final exam will be held during the scheduled exam period. For undergraduates, the exam will be of a similar format to the midterm and will focus on material from the second half of the course, though material from the first half is relevant in terms of background and framing. For graduate students, the exam will cover all course material equally. The format of graduate exams is intended to simulate the Ph.D. qualifying exam, albeit shorter overall.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to do their own work and to accurately and honestly give credit for information, ideas, and words obtained elsewhere. Plagiarism will be dealt with strictly according to the Academic Conduct Code; please review the website for examples of what counts as plagiarism so you know how to avoid it. If you have questions or concerns about how to properly cite outside sources, please let me know and I will be happy to assist.

The Internet makes it quite easy, and tempting, to cheat by copying and pasting material that you found online, or by buying a paper that someone else wrote. But it also makes it much easier to get caught. I have caught plagiarizers in the past and am always on the lookout. Don’t do it. You will make the semester much better for both of us.

3 Schedule and Required Readings

Note: Each entry contains a hyperlink to the electronic reading, where available.

Jan. 20. Introduction

[http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/](http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/)
3.1 Part I. Historical Origins

3.1.1 Overview and definitions of parties and party systems

Jan. 25:


Jan. 27:


3.1.2 Labor incorporation as a critical juncture

Feb. 1:


Feb. 3:


3.1.3 Hegemonic parties and party systems: Mexico and Venezuela

Feb. 8:


Feb. 10:
3.1.4 Personality-centered populist parties: Peru and Argentina

Feb. 16:


Feb. 17:


3.1.5 Working-class parties and polarization: Chile

Feb. 22:


Feb. 24: MIDTERM EXAM (undergraduates); covers Part I.
3.2 Part II. Modern-Day Transformations

3.2.1 Market reform: A new critical juncture?

Feb. 29:


March 2:


March 4: Proposed research paper topic due (by email).

3.2.2 Transforming labor-based parties: Chile, Argentina, and Brazil

March 14:


March 16:


3.2.3 Reinvigorating right-wing parties: Chile and Mexico

March 21:


March 23:


3.2.4 Party system collapse: Venezuela and Peru

March 28:


March 30:


3.2.5 Ethnic parties: Bolivia and Ecuador

April 4:


April 6:


3.2.6 Persistent patterns: Mexico and Brazil

April 11:


April 13:


3.2.7 New Left, new Right? Argentina and Venezuela

April 20:


April 25:


3.2.8 Conclusion: A new critical juncture?

April 27:


April 29. Final papers due to instructor by email

3.3 Wednesday, May 4, 12:30–2:30 p.m.: Final exam