

PSC 355P -- POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA
Tuesday & Thursday 2-3:15 p.m.
204 Graham Building

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Fall 2009
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Introduction:

This course is an introduction to the government and politics of Latin America. It begins with an overview of the history, geography, and political economy of the region before examining why democratic government has had a tenuous existence in the region. It discusses the nature of presidentialism, both to assess its role in fomenting political instability and to understand the operation of contemporary political systems. This course involves lectures, discussions, videos, and readings about Latin America as a whole as well as more in depth examinations of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Course Requirements:

The class requires students, first, to take three exams (each of which is worth 15 percent of the class grade). Second, each student will write a research paper (30 percent of the course grade), which is due on the last day of class. Third, students will also keep a (word processed) journal of news events worth 25 percent of the class grade, which is due on November 17. The appendices contain more information (and requirements) on these assignments.

Books for Purchase:

Duncan Green, *Faces of Latin America*, 3rd edition (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2006).

Ernesto Stein and Mariano Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America: How Politics Shapes Policies* (Cambridge, Mass: DRCLAS, Harvard University and IADB, 2008).

Julia Preston and Sam Dillon, *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

Course Policies:

This course will combine lectures with class discussion. Students who miss classes, do not do the readings, and do not review their notes from previous classes will do poorly on assignments. For every day a written assignment is past due, it will drop a letter grade. Documented excuses will only be accepted from students requiring emergency medical attention.

Please respect the following rules in class:

- Turn off your cell phones, both in the class and when you visit me during office hours;
- Use laptops only for note-taking;
- Be punctual and do not leave a class before it is over;
- Listen attentively while others speak in class;
- Give me at least a couple of days to respond to emails.

University policy requires that you obtain certification from the Office of Disability Services (EUC, Suite 215; 334-5440) if you have a disability that merits accommodation.

Course Topics and Reading Assignments:

I. INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY AND POLITICS

- A. Geography and History: An Overview (25 & 27 August)
Green, *Faces of Latin America*, chaps. 1-2
- B. A Social and Economic Portrait (1, 3 & 8 September)
Green, *Faces of Latin America*, chaps. 3-4
- C. Politics, Democracy, and Presidentialism in Latin America (10 & 15 September)
Spiller, Stein, and Tommasi, "Political Institutions, Policymaking, and Policy: An Introduction" and Scartascini, "Who's Who in the PMP: An Overview of Actors, Incentives, and the Roles They Play," in Stein and Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America*.

II. DICTATORSHIP AND DEMOCRATIZATION

- A. Authoritarianism in Mexico (17 September)
Preston and Dillon, *Opening of Mexico*, chaps. 2 & 16.
- B. Citizen Protest in Mexico (22 September)
Preston and Dillon, *Opening of Mexico*, chaps. 3, 4, & 5.
- C. Economic Reform and Political Change in Mexico (24 September)
Preston and Dillon, *Opening of Mexico*, chaps. 6-9
- D. Pivotal Elections and Democratization in Mexico (29 September)
Preston and Dillon, *Opening of Mexico*, chaps. 1 & 17.
- E. Policymaking in Mexico (1 October)
Lehoucq, et al., "Policymaking in Mexico Under One-Party Hegemony and Divided Government," in Stein and Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America*.

Exam – 6 October

III. POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

- A. Argentina (8, 15, & 20 October)
Spiller and Tommasi, "Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes, and Policy Outcomes in Argentina," in Stein and Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America*.
- B. Bolivia (22, 27, & 29 October)
Lehoucq, "The Rise and Fall of Bolivia's Neoliberal Democratic Experiment," *Journal of Democracy* (October 2008).

Exam – 3 November

IV. DEMOCRACIES IN LATIN AMERICA

- A. Chile (5, 10, & 12 November)
Aninat, et al., "Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes, and Policy Outcomes in Chile," in Stein and Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America*.
- B. Venezuela (17, 19, & 24 November)
Monaldi, et al., "Political Institutions and Policymaking in Venezuela," in Stein and Tommasi, eds., *Policymaking in Latin America*.

V. DEMOCRACY AND POLICYMAKING: FINAL REFLECTIONS (1 & 3 December)

Reading TBA

Appendix 1 – Newspaper journal

The journal will consist of analytical discussions of articles from *The Economist* (<http://www.economist.com/world/la/>), *The Miami Herald's* Latin American homepage (<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/americas/>), or *The New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/americas/>) or some combination of these newspapers. For 2 days of each week during the semester (or a total of 25 entries spread throughout the semester), the student will record the author, title, and date of at least one article on Latin American politics, economics, social issues, or US relations with the countries of the region. Discussions should consist of no more than two or three typed paragraphs (or not exceed a one-half of a single-spaced, typed page).

Student entries should be reflective. They should identify what the reader learned and how it relates to class themes. Simply summarizing events and trends the article describes is unacceptable.

Avoid passing easy judgments on individuals or groups in other countries. It is not a good idea to suggest that President x of country y is poorly informed or has malevolent intentions. Nor is it advisable to say that the political system of country x is a failure because its leaders cannot get their act together. Use the assignment to learn about the internal politics of other countries and to relate them to central class issues.

Appendix 2 – Research Paper Assignment

Please write a paper that is at least 8 pages long and does not exceed 10 double-spaced, typewritten pages (12-pt font with at least 1.5 margins including a bibliography) that explains the development and political challenges that a Latin American country faces. Among other things, this assignment requires that you define and measure development, identify the interests of key political actors, and explain how the country's political system helps or hinders reformist efforts. Keep definitions of development to a minimum; it is much better to settle on conventional concepts and apply them to make an argument about the challenges a country has. A useful guide for essay writing is the appendix of Stephan Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). This book is on reserve in the library.

In writing your essay, please cite *at least 5 books or articles not* on the list of required readings. Recommended journals include the: *American Journal of Political Science*, the *American Political Science Review*, the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Bulletin of Latin American Studies*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *Electoral Studies*, *Government and Opposition*, the *Journal of Democracy*, the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *Journal of the Politics of Latin America*, *Journal of Politics*, *Latin American Perspectives*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, the *Latin American Research Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and *Political Research Quarterly*. It would also be a good idea to search for articles with an electronic search engine.

Please use the citation format of the *American Political Science Review*. You will lose points if your citations are incorrect. Relevant due dates for this assignment are:

- An outline with a tentative bibliography – 17 September.
- A 50-word abstract of your paper (on a sheet of paper with your name and email) – 5 November;
- Comments on a peer's abstract – 9 November. Send me the abstract and your comments on it electronically by noon of this day. Please put the course number in the subject line of the email message. In the body of the text, start off with a statement like: "Comments by James Critic on Mariana Superstar's abstract." Do not send attachments.

The paper is due on the last day of class. Please review the syllabus for course policy on tardy assignments.

Appendix 3 – Notes on Writing English and for Using the Writing Center

Effective English writing is brief and austere. Several rules worth following include:

1. Always put subjects before verbs and their objects. Do not say: “The presidency was won by the PAN.” It is better to say that, “The PAN won the presidency.”
2. Use strong verbs and avoid adverbs and adjectives. Never use two to make a point. It is much better to say that: “Economic crisis transformed political preferences,” than to say “political preferences about parties were fueled by a dramatic and major economic crisis.” The first is much better (and shorter).
3. Never use the passive voice. Always identify your subject. Never say: “Logit analysis was used in this paper.” It is better to say, “The paper (or “I,” or “my analysis,” etc.) uses logit models.”
4. Avoid past tenses, if you can. The present tense and the active voice make for better papers.

A great and short primer about writing English is William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*. *The Economist* magazine is also marvelous for its use of the English language. Gary Cox and Robert Bates are two political scientists who write exceedingly well.

Visit the Writing Center often as part of a more general strategy to improve your writing. Conversations with students and with the Center’s Director suggest that a useful visit starts with a concrete request. It is not a good idea to tell a Writing Center consultant that a professor made me come here. A good paper starts with a proactive stance, one where the writer is looking for help to address one or more issues relevant for her paper assignment. Questions worth raising with the Writing Center or anyone else whose advice you seek include:

1. Is my argument persuasive? Do I have convincing reasons in support of my conclusion?
2. What are my claims? Do I have evidence for my claims?
3. Have I organized my paper effectively?
4. Have I filled my paper with unnecessary facts?
5. Have I asked the tutor or a friend for her overall impressions on my work?

It is best not to ask a tutor or friend to spell- and grammar-check your writing. Only raise these issues if you are not sure how to apply the rules for writing good English. Instead, use your visits to the Writing Center to obtain answers to questions like the aforementioned. Finally, write a summary of your session with the Writing Center consultant. Identify the central points of your conversation and review these notes as you draft your paper.