Introduction

This course aims to provide students with a basic understanding of Latin America’s quandaries in the road towards political and economic development. In particular, we explore why Latin American societies have undergone cycles of democracy and dictatorship, why they have failed to find paths toward sustainable development, and why they have been unable to correct dramatic economic disparities. In the course of this overview, we will look at structural, cultural, and institutional theories that purport to explain Latin America’s endemic political and economic malaise. The course is divided into three parts. Part One is a historic overview of Colonial political and economic institutions, the nineteenth-century liberal order, and the political mobilization of disenfranchised sectors that accompanied industrialization during the twentieth century. Part Two provides a glimpse into the causes of democratic breakdown in the 1960s and 1970s, the policy-making record of military dictatorships, and the dual transition to democracy and markets in the 1980s. Part Three adopts an institutional view to further our knowledge of how Latin American democratic systems have worked in the recent past, starting from an analysis of the varied ways in which democratic regimes were eventually rebuilt. We will then look into the main features of presidential regimes, electoral laws, and party systems throughout the region in order to account for differences in the inner workings of Latin American democracies.

No survey of Latin America can claim to cover the ample diversity of historical experiences and contemporary political systems that coexist throughout the region. In order to impose some structure on the vast amount of information potentially available to the student of Latin American politics, we will focus mainly on the political development of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. However, we will devote time to the analysis of circumscribed historical episodes in other countries. These episodes
shed broader light upon political phenomena of paramount importance throughout the region, such as revolution, democratic breakdown, the rise of neoliberalism and the recent re-appearance of a populist left. Hence, our survey will touch upon the 1973 military coup in Chile, the success of revolutionary movements in Cuba and Nicaragua, the turmoil of widespread guerrilla activity in Colombia and Peru, and the recent re-appearance of a populist left in Venezuela and other countries.

Requirements and Grading

Please read this section carefully: Registration in this course implies that you agree with all elements of evaluation.

Two partial exams (October 3 and November 5) and one final exam (December 17, 6pm) provide the main basis for evaluation (25% each). The exams will test your recollection of historical facts, but seek mainly to assess your ability to “make sense” of Latin American politics. Consequently, you should expect to write short essays and define important concepts and ideas in these exams, aside from replying to shorter “multiple choice” items. A second important component of your grade will be a “team presentation” (2–3 persons per team, depending on class enrollment) of about 7 to 10 minutes on important debates in Latin American studies and Political Science (15%). The remainder of the grade (10%) will be based on my assessment of your participation in class, including attendance and informed participation in class discussions. Since the amount of reading for this class is not trivial and since I will on occasion ask questions in class that are related to the readings, the optimal strategy is to keep up with the reading schedule.

Testing your knowledge about any subject-matter is, at best, an exercise in futility: If you know the material well, you will ace most exams, regardless of their design; you will also flunk any exam if you have not mastered the material. In between these two extremes, exams are per force imprecise ways to gauge your knowledge and ability. I will make every effort to grade your exams fairly and in a timely manner. If you consider that I have made a gross mistake in grading any exam, you should address your concerns to me within three days of receiving your grade by e-mail. I expect you to substantiate any claim you make, to be respectful, and to avoid the frivolous pursuit of extra points. Finally, note that I adhere to the following number-to-letter grade conversion chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Grade</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-97</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who take this class under the Pass/Fail option must receive a grade of B– or better in order to obtain a Pass on their final grade. Students who take the Pass/Fail option should be aware that only courses taken for a letter grade may be used toward their major or minor. The College of Arts and Sciences will handle issues pertaining to academic integrity. The academic integrity policy is available here.

Extra Credit: There are NO EXTRA CREDIT opportunities in this course.
Readings


Washington University’s bookstore carries copies of this text. If you cannot find a copy in the bookstore, please procure one elsewhere. We will complement these books with readings available at Blackboard, Jstor, and Project MUSE.

Course Schedule

I. Introduction (Aug. 27, 29)

Hellinger, Introduction (pp. 1–10)

Hellinger, Ch. 1, “Conceptions of Democracy” (pp. 19–39)

PART ONE. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

II. Modes of Colonization (Sept. 3, 5)

Hellinger, Ch. 3, “Democratic and Autocratic Threads in Latin American History”


Team readings 1:


III. Independence and the Emergence of a Liberal Order (Sept. 10, 12, 17)

Hellinger, Ch. 4, “Political Without Economic Independence”


Team readings 2:


TEAM READINGS 3:

IV. Populism and ISI (Sept. 19, 24, 26, October 1)
Hellinger, Ch. 5, “Development and Dependency: Theory and Practice in Latin America”
Hellinger, Ch. 6, “Populism, Development, and Democracy in the Twentieth Century”

TEAM READINGS 4:

TEAM READINGS 5:
Carlos Díaz Alejandro, “Latin America in the 1930s”, in Rosemary Thorp (ed.), Latin America in the 1930s: The Role of the Periphery in World Crisis, MacMillan, 17-49, 1984

First Partial Exam (Oct. 3)

V. Revolution (Oct. 8, 10)
Hellinger, Ch. 11, “Nationalism and Revolution in Mexico and Cuba”
Hellinger, Ch. 12, “Democracy in Times of Revolution”

**Team readings 6:**


**PART TWO. BREAKDOWN OF AND Transition to DEMOCRACY**

**VI. Democratic Breakdown and Military Rule (Oct. 15, 17)**

Hellinger, Ch. 7, “Democratic Breakdown and Military Rule”


**Team readings 7:**


**VII. Transitions to Democracy (Oct. 22–24)**

Hellinger, Ch. 8, “State and Market in Latin America”

Hellinger, Ch. 9, “Transitions and “Pacted” Democracies in Brazil and the Southern Cone”


**Team readings 8:**


VIII. Neoliberalism and Policy Switches (Oct. 29, 31)

Hellinger, Ch. 10, “Transitions from Party-Dominant Regimes in Mexico and Venezuela”


TEAM READINGS 9:


TEAM READINGS 10:


Second Partial Exam (Nov. 5)

PART THREE. INSTITUTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

IX. Political Parties and Elections (Nov. 7, 12)

Hellinger, Ch. 15, “Parties and Electoral Politics”


X. Presidents and Legislators (Nov. 14)

Hellinger, Ch. 16, “Institutions, Constitutions, and Governance”


TEAM READINGS 11:


**Team readings 12:**

Scott Mainwaring, “Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 26 (2), July 1993 (*Sage-CPS*).


**Visit by Dr. Alejandro Poiré (Nov. 19)**


If you understand Spanish, you might be interested in listening to fragments of a dual interview of O’Neil and Poiré sponsored by *The Economist* at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1V54Rw-HNQ#t=18](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1V54Rw-HNQ#t=18).

**X. Presidents and Legislators (Nov. 21)**

**Team readings 13:**


**Team readings 14:**


Please fill out course evaluations at your earliest convenience.
XII. Old and New Left (Nov. 26, Dec. 3)

Hellinger, Ch. 13, “Social Class and Politics in Latin America”

Hellinger, Ch. 14, “‘New’ Social Movements, New Politics?”


**Team readings 15:**


Weyland, Madrid, Hunter, “Leftist Governments in Latin America”


XII. The War on Drugs (Dec. 5)


**Team readings 16:**
