

53103: Conflict in Latin America: A Century of Turmoil

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SoSe24

Current Version of the syllabus: 14/02/24

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Class Hours: Tuesdays, 14.15-15.45

Room TBA

Course Description

Most Latin American countries pursued populist economic strategies and suffered repeated, and sometimes prolonged and violent, military rule during much of the twentieth century. This course offers an in-depth exploration of the political, social, and economic conflicts that have shaped Latin America over the past century. It navigates the complex landscape of Latin American politics, starting with foundational issues such as the legacies of colonialism and the intricacies of political instability, moving through the tumultuous periods of military coups, economic upheavals, and U.S. interventionism. The curriculum is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to conflict and instability, including the impact of economic policies, democratic transitions, neoliberal reforms, and the persistent challenges of corruption, security issues, and democratic backsliding.

Beyond historical and political analysis, the course delves into contemporary issues facing the region, including indigenous and environmental conflicts, gender-based violence, and the rise of populism. Through the readings, students will engage with case studies that bring to life the ongoing struggles for rights, representation, and justice. The course aims to equip students with critical analytical skills and a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of conflict and resilience in Latin America while fostering a deep appreciation of the region's complexity and the enduring quest for social and political transformation.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to build analytical tools for the research of collective action and social movements within the context of Latin America's historical and contemporary conflicts. By the end of this course, students are expected to:

- Grasp the integral role of Latin America's democratization processes and political dynamics.
- Acquire methodological skills for designing and conducting impactful research on political conflict, utilizing various conceptual and theoretical frameworks.
- Understand and apply diverse analytical perspectives to dissect sociopolitical conflicts, enhancing their ability to analyze former and current events.
- Develop the competency to engage in scholarly research, culminating in the ability to articulate well-founded arguments and insights in written form.

This synthesis aims to encapsulate the essence of the course objectives while maintaining the focus on the analytical, methodological, and research-oriented goals aligned with the study of conflict in Latin America.

Course Structure

This course involves the active participation of the students. This implies reading the assigned mandatory text before each class and actively participating in discussions. The teacher in this case functions as a facilitator of knowledge and methodologies, therefore, learning depends on the work and involvement developed by students during the semester, both individually and collectively.

Mandatory submissions to pass the course

To get the 5 credits that this course grants, students must choose *just one* of the following options:

Option 1 – Country-case reports: Students selecting this option are required to submit three country-case reports throughout the course. Each report should be a concise 3-page analysis (excluding references) of a specific conflict within a Latin American country. The conflict can be directly related to the topics covered in the week's assigned literature or an independent case of the student's choosing. The objective is to critically examine a political crisis, an instance of political violence, or a sociopolitical conflict of interest, integrating insights from the weekly readings to deepen understanding of the issue.

For these reports, each student must:

- Register on Moodle for the weeks they would like to submit reports. Four slots will be available for each week, starting from Week 2. Each student must be registered for at least three weeks since they will have to submit three reports throughout the semester.
- Submit on Moodle the report by Monday at 14.00hrs (i.e. the day before class) for the week in which they registered.
- The report must contain: a summary of the case/country selected, and an analysis of the case based on the literature provided for that week (both mandatory and complementary). Reference to other literature, books, and media is encouraged.

- Given that the majority of the complementary texts for each week focus on one case or country, students can choose the same country/case from one of the complementary papers if they want to, and explain the case more in-depth.
- The first 15 minutes of class will be dedicated to discussing these reports; therefore, attendance of the students who wrote reports for each week is expected.

Option 2 – Research Note: A research note aims to explore a significant issue related to the political, social, and economic conflicts in Latin America, as covered in this course. This exploration should delve into the causes, consequences, and current implications of the issue, integrating the theoretical perspectives and historical contexts discussed in class.

The instructions of the research note are the following:

- Individual assignment.
- Word count: 5,000 words not including references or appendices.
- Format: Word or PDF.
- Submission via Moodle before Week 11 (Sunday, June 23, 23.59hrs.)
- Structure: The reports should contain the following sections: Introduction, Case Study, Findings, and Conclusion.

Important: Students who need a grade for this course (e.g. Erasmus or exchange students) are required to submit a research note. That means that the final grade will correspond to the grade of the research note—grading of country-case reports will not be possible.

Diversity Statement

Social sciences and research in general thrives on the diversity of ideas and opinions, so I try to represent this diversity in our course as well. In the choice of course readings, we strive to cover authors with a diversity of backgrounds as far as possible. During class sessions, I seek to create a trusting and inclusive atmosphere that allows students of all orientations and backgrounds to be comfortable and openly engage in discussions.

Housekeeping Rules

Some general information regarding overall requirements and rules during class:

- Anything that is communicated in person during class will be considered an official communication (this relates to the following point).
- I will not reply to emails with organizational questions (deadlines, readings, requirements, etc.) that I have already answered during class or that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Schedule and weekly contents

Students are expected to do at least the mandatory reading for each week. During the week of their country/case report, is expected that students read the complementary readings, so they can write a substantive report. Additional literature to be included in the reports is encouraged as well.

The book chapters will be available in PDF on Moodle. For articles in academic journals, the links are provided in both the syllabus and on Moodle, so they can be downloaded directly by the students. For some weeks, specific complementary readings are also available in PDF on Moodle, (e.g. articles that are behind a paywall). In any case, I strongly recommend that you use the university's **VPN** to access and download the articles.

Week 01, 16/04: Introduction: Politics and Conflict in Latin America

Mandatory reading: Munck, G. & Luna, J. P. 2022. Introduction. In *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*.

Complementary readings:

- Midlarsky, M. & Tanter, R. 1967. Toward a Theory of Political Instability in Latin America. *Journal of Peace Research*, 4(3), pp. 209–227. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/422667>
- Tzul Tzul, A. M., Cosgrove, S. 2021. Latin America: Introducing the Region. Available online [here](#).

Week 02, 23/04: Legacies of Colonialism

Mandatory Reading: Coatsworth, J. 2008. Inequality, Institutions, and Economic Growth in Latin America. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 40(3), pp. 545–569. <https://doi:10.1017/S0022216X08004689>

Complementary readings:

- Loveman, M. 2014. Introduction: Ethnoracial Classification and the State. In *National Colors: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America*. Oxford University Press.
- Stern, S. J. 1996. The Tricks of Time: Colonial Legacies and Historical Sensibilities in Latin America. *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*. 57(3), pp. 371–392.

Week 03, 30/04: Economic Policy and Political Instability

Mandatory Reading: O'Donnell, G. 1973. Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Political Systems in Contemporary South America. In *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*, pp. 85-102,

Complementary readings:

- Johnson, L. 1967. Problems of Import Substitution: The Chilean Automobile Industry. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 15(2), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1152368>.
- Kingstone, P. 2011. Import-substitution industrialization and the great transformation in Latin America." In *The Political Economy of Latin America*. Available online [here](#).

Week 04, 07/05: The Breakdown of Democracy and Military Interventions

Mandatory reading: Houchang, E. & Linz, J. 1998. A Theory of Sultanism II. In *Sultanistic Regimes*, JHU Press.

Complementary readings:

- Constable, P. & Valenzuela. 1991. Preface and Chapter 1. In *A Nation of Enemies: Chile under Pinochet*, pp. 9-39.
- Fernández, J. A. 1974. The Crisis of Authority in Argentina. *Current History*, 66(389), pp. 15–18. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45312982>
- Stepan, A. 2015. In *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil*, Princeton University Press.. pp. 123-212, on class website

Week 05, 14/05: U.S. Interventionism

Mandatory reading: Grandin. G. 2021. Chapter 2. The Most Important Place in the World: Toward a New Imperialism. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, The United States, and The Making of an Imperial Republic*. Picador USA.

Complementary readings:

- Needler, M. C. 1966. Political Development and Military Intervention in Latin America. *American Political Science Review*, 60(03), 616–626. <https://doi:10.2307/1952974>.
- Schenoni, L. & Mainwaring, S. 2018. US hegemony and regime change in Latin America. *Democratization*, 26(2), pp. 269–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1516754>.
- Weyland, K. 2018. Limits of US Influence: The Promotion of Regime Change in Latin America. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 10(3), pp. 135–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X1801000305>.

Week 06, 21/05: Democratic Transitions and and Neoliberal Reforms

Mandatory reading: Geddes, B. 1999. What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2, pp. 115–144. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115>.

Complementary readings:

- Hunter, W. 1995. Politicians against Soldiers: Contesting the Military in Postauthoritarian Brazil. *Comparative Politics*, 27(4), pp. 425–443. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422228>
- Pion-Berlin, D. & Arceneaux, C. 1998 Tipping the Civil-Military Balance: Institutions and Human Rights Policy in Democratic Argentina and Chile. *Comparative Political Studies*, 31(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/001041409803100500>.
- Loveman, M. 1998. High-Risk Collective Action: Defending Human Rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104(2), pp. 477–525. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210045>.

Week 07, 28/05: Political Consequences of Economic Liberalization

Hochstetler, K. 2006. Rethinking Presidentialism: Challenges and Presidential Falls in South America. *Comparative Politics*, 38(4), pp. 401–418. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20434009>.

Complementary readings:

- Arce, M. & Bellinger, P. T. 2007. Low-Intensity Democracy Revisited: The Effects of Economic Liberalization on Political Activity in Latin America. *World Politics*, 60(1), pp. 97–121. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.0.0003>.
- Colburn, F.D. 2009. Latin America: Captive to Commodities. *Dissent*, 56(1), pp. 29–32. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/256419/pdf>.
- Wise, C. 2003. Introduction: Latin American Politics in the Era of Market Reform. In *Post-Stabilization Politics in Latin America: Competition, Transition, Collapse*. Bookings Institution Press.

Week 08, 04/06: Corruption and Democratic (In)Stability

Mandatory Reading: Valenzuela, A. 2004. Latin American Presidencies Interrupted. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(4), pp. 5–19. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/174014>

Complementary readings:

- Mainwaring, S. 2006. The Crisis of Representation in the Andes. *Journal of Democracy*, 17(3), pp. 13–27. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/200110>.
- Seligson, M. 2002. The Impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy: A Comparative Study of Four Latin American Countries. *Journal of Politics*, 64(1), pp. 408–433. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2691854>
- García Holgado, B. & Mainwaring, S. Why Democracy Survives Presidential Encroachments: Argentina Since 1983. *Comparative Politics*, 55(4), pp. 525–548. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041523X16729343375086>.

Week 09, 11/06: Security Issues

Mandatory reading: Carreras, M. 2013. The impact of criminal violence on regime legitimacy in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 48(3), pp. 85–107. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43670095>.

Complementary readings:

- Carreras, M. & Visconti, G. 2022. Who Pays for Crime? Criminal Violence, Right-Wing Incumbents, and Electoral Accountability in Latin America. *Electoral Studies*, 79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2022.102522>.
- Cruz, J. M. & Durán-Martínez, A. 2016. Hiding violence to deal with the state: Criminal pacts in El Salvador and Medellín. *Journal of Peace Research*, 53(2), pp. 197–210. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43920009>.
- Trejo, G. & Ley, S. 2018. Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(7), pp. 900–937. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017720703>.

Week 10, 18/06: 21st Century Democratic Backsliding and Neo-Populism

Mandatory Reading: Weyland, K. 2013. Latin America's Authoritarian Drift: The Threat from the Populist Left. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(3), pp. 18–32. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/512750>.

Complementary readings:

- Thaler, K. M. & Masinger, E. Nicaragua: Doubling Down on Dictatorship. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(2). <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/852750>.
- The return of populism. *The Economist*, April 12 2006. Available on Moodle.
- Encarnación, O. 2016. American Caudillo: Trump and the Latin-Americanization of U.S. Politics. *Foreign Affairs*. Available on Moodle.
- Meléndez-Sánchez, M. Latin America Erupts: Millennial Authoritarianism in El Salvador. *Journal of Democracy*, 32(3), 19–32. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/797783>
- Layton, M. & Smith, A. E. 2021. Demographic polarization and the rise of the far right: Brazil's 2018 presidential election. *Research & Politics*, 8(2), pp. 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168021990204>.
- Grigera, J. 2017. Populism in Latin America: Old and new populisms in Argentina and Brazil. *International Political Science Review*, 38(4), pp. 441–455. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26940303>.
- Corrales, J.. 2020. Authoritarian Survival: Why Maduro Hasn't Fallen. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(3), pp. 39–53.

- Levitsky, S. & Loxton, J. 2013. Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes. *Democratization*, 20(1), pp. 107–136, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.738864>.

Week 11, 25/06: Case Studies - Indigenous Self-Determination and Territorial Issues

Mandatory Reading: Martí i Puig, S. M. 2010. The Emergence of Indigenous Movements in Latin America and Their Impact on the Latin American Political Scene: Interpretive Tools at the Local and Global Levels. *Latin American Perspectives*, 37(6), pp. 74–92. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25750421>.

Complementary readings:

- Eaton, K. 2011. Conservative Autonomy Movements: Territorial Dimensions of Ideological Conflict in Bolivia and Ecuador. *Comparative Politics*, 43(3), pp. 291–310. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23040647>.
- Rodriguez, P. Chilean Protestors are waving the Mapuche flag. What's the Mapuche flag, and who's hoisting it? *Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 2019. Available online [here](#).
- Hooker, J. 2005. Indigenous Inclusion/Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship in Latin America. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 37(2), pp. 285–310. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3875687>.
- Goñi, U. 2021. Time to challenge Argentina's white European self-image, black history experts say. *The Guardian*. Available online [here](#).
- Inclán, M. & Almeida, P. 2013. Indigenous Peoples and Revolutionary Movements in Mesoamerica. In *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous People's Politics*.

Week 12, 02/07: Case Studies - Violence and Gender

Mandatory Reading: Dietrich Ortega, L. M. 2012. Gendered Patterns of Mobilization and Recruitment for Political Violence, Experiences from Three Latin American Countries. In *Understanding Collective Political Violence*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Complementary readings:

- Desposato, S. & Norrander, B. The Gender Gap in Latin America: Contextual and Individual Influences on Gender and Political Participation. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(1), pp. 141–162. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000458>.
- Daby, M. & Moseley, M. W. 2021. Feminist Mobilization and the Abortion Debate in Latin America: Lessons from Argentina. *Politics & Gender*, 18(2), pp. 359–393. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X20000197>.

Week 13, 09/07: Case Studies - Environmental Conflicts

Mandatory Reading: Roberts, J. T. & Thanos, N. D. 2003. Chapter 1. The Scene, Its Problem and Roots. In *Trouble in Paradise: Globalization and Environmental Crises in Latin America*.

Complementary readings:

- Keck, M. 1995. Social Equity and Environmental Politics in Brazil: Lessons from the Rubber Tappers of Acre. *Comparative Politics*, 27(4), pp- 409–424. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422227>.
- Svampa, M. 2019. Dimensions of Neo-extractivism. In *Neo-extractivism in Latin America Socio-environmental Conflicts, the Territorial Turn, and New Political Narratives*. Cambridge University Press

Week 14, 16/07: Recent Challenges and Future Perspectives

Mandatory Reading: Grugel, J. & Riggirozzi, P. 2012. Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: Rebuilding and Reclaiming the State after Crisis. *Development and Change*, 43(1), pp. 1-21.

Complementary readings:

- Freeman, W. 2022. Is Latin America Stuck? *Foreign Affairs*. Available on Moodle.
- Harlow, S. 2011. Social Media and Social Movements: Facebook and an online Guatemalan justice movement that moved offline. *New Media and Society*, 14(2), pp. 225–243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410408>.
- Moseley, M. W. 2015. Contentious engagement: Understanding protest participation in Latin American democracies. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 7(3), pp. 3–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X150070030>
- Noriega, D. The Dark Truth About El Salvador’s Plummeting Murder Rate. *Vice News*. Available online [here](#) (audio version also available).