

# **Introduction to Latin American Politics**

## **POLS 2570**

Spring 2021  
Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45  
Morrissey #0400

Professor- J.D. Bowen  
Office- McGannon #140  
Email- [jbowen5@slu.edu](mailto:jbowen5@slu.edu)  
Phone- 314.977.4239

Zoom link for online class: <https://slu.zoom.us/j/96138418222>

\*Security code: 716001

Office hours- Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am-12:00pm via Zoom.

\*I am available by appointment at other times. The easiest way to make an appointment is via email.

Zoom link for office hours: <https://slu.zoom.us/j/99167471505>

\*Security code: 902369

### **Course Description and Objectives:**

Welcome! This course is designed to introduce students the political systems of Latin America. We will focus both on theoretical explanations for general political and economic phenomenon such as economic growth, democratization (and the breakdown of democracy), social movements and revolutions, and US involvement in Latin America as well as on specific case studies that highlight the diverse experiences of different Latin American countries.

My goals for the course are the following:

- 1) Students will develop a sophisticated understanding of the historical roots of contemporary Latin American politics.
- 2) Students will master the major theoretical perspectives used to explain political and economic outcomes in Latin America.
- 3) Students will acquire specific knowledge about different countries and political systems.
- 4) Students will hone their critical reasoning skills through careful reading and discussion of competing arguments.
- 5) Students will develop their abilities to write short, focused essays.
- 6) Students will leave the course with the ability to make informed and reasoned judgements about a wide variety of issues facing contemporary Latin America.

Welcome!

## **Required texts:**

All required texts are available for purchase at the Saint Louis University Bookstore in the Busch Student Center. Readings that are NOT in the required books will be posted to Blackboard. The required textbook for the course is:

Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. 2020. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

## **Course requirements and grading:**

### *Mid-term exam: 25 points*

This exam will be given during regular class time on March 18<sup>th</sup> and will consist of essay questions.

### *Final exam or research project: 25 points*

This exam will be given on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 8am and will consist of essay questions.

### *Two papers: 20 points each (40 points total)*

Each student will submit two short papers over the course of the semester. Each paper should be 3 to 4 pages in length. These papers give you the opportunity to explore in greater depth a particular theme that we discuss in class. Papers should involve additional research (at least 2 *non-internet* sources in addition to any readings from class). The first essay will be due on or before March 16<sup>nd</sup> and the second will be due on or before May 6<sup>th</sup>. Students have 5 options to choose from in deciding what type of paper they will write, and students may *not* write more than one paper from the same category:

1. Policy paper- Identify a specific problem in a country of interest and identify realistic solutions (or partial solutions) to the problem, taking into account the relevant political and economic constraints the country faces.
2. Historical analysis- Identify an important event or historical process in Latin American politics and explain *why* it happened.
3. Book review- Work with the professor to identify a recent piece of scholarship on a topic you're interested in. Briefly summarize the book and identify its major contribution to debates about Latin American politics as well as its primary shortcomings.
4. Leadership profile- Identify an important political figure in a country of your choosing. Explain why this person has made the choices they've made, taking into account the incentives and constraints they face.
5. Research proposal- Based on relevant literature, design a research project that explores an important question in the study of Latin American politics. This option is most appropriate for Political Science majors who have completed (or are currently taking) POLS 2000.

**\*NOTE TO HONORS STUDENTS: You will complete THREE of these papers, rather than two. The additional paper will be worth 20 points, so your final grade will be out of a possible 120 points rather than 100.**

*Class participation: 10 points*

Your attendance and active participation are vital to the success of this course. Different students participate in different ways. At a minimum, students should come to class on time having read and thought about the assigned readings for that class. I expect that all students will make a contribution to class discussions through comments, questions, criticisms, and analysis of the assigned readings. In assigning grades, quality of participation will take precedence over quantity of participation (hence, students who participate frequently but without giving much thought to their comments/questions are not at an advantage compared to the student who offers occasional but insightful analysis and questions).

\*Half of your participation will be based on individual meetings with the professor to be held by March 5<sup>th</sup>. Students are responsible for contacting the professor to schedule these meetings. The primary purpose of these meetings is to discuss the paper options and topics that each student will pursue.

Final letter grades will be assigned that correspond to the following numeric scale:

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-70
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

**Attendance and participation:**

I do not consider class time to be a time simply to review the assigned readings. We will cover materials during class that are not in the readings (and we will not cover every single point from the readings in class). Class attendance is, therefore, imperative. If you must miss class for an approved reason (e.g.; illness, death or medical emergency in the immediate family, University-sponsored activities), please let me know via email as soon as possible. You are responsible for all materials covered in class, whether you are physically present or not. **Make-up exams will be given only under the most extraordinary of circumstances. Late papers will be penalized 5 points per day.**

**Classroom courtesy:**

Out of respect for all of those in class, all cell phones, pagers, and any other noisemaking devices must be turned OFF during the entire class period and during exams. Laptop computers may be used in class provided they do not make noise that disturbs those around you. I reserve the right to ask you to turn off and put away your computer if it is creating a disruption.

## **Academic Integrity :**

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: [https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy\\_academic-integrity\\_6-26-2015.pdf](https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

## **Disability Accommodations:**

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact Disability Services, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at [Disability\\_services@slu.edu](mailto:Disability_services@slu.edu) or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from Disability Services and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact Disability Services. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

## **Title IX:**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator and share the basic facts of your experience.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident.

The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [anna.kratky@slu.edu](mailto:anna.kratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at [https://www.lighthouse-services.com/\\_StandardCustomURL/LHILandingPage.asp](https://www.lighthouse-services.com/_StandardCustomURL/LHILandingPage.asp). To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/here4you> and <https://www.slu.edu/general-counsel>.

IMPORTANT UPDATE: SLU's Title IX Policy (formerly called the Sexual Misconduct Policy) has been significantly revised to adhere to a new federal law governing Title IX that was released on May 6, 2020. Please take a moment to review the new policy and information on the following web address: <https://www.slu.edu/here4you>. Please contact Anna Kratky, the Title IX Coordinator, with any questions or concerns.

### **Mandatory Statement on Face Masks (Spring 2021):**

The University's [\*Interim Policy on Face Masks\*](#) governs all students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors in all University-owned, leased, or operated facilities. All persons physically present in any such University facility associated with this course shall comply fully with this policy at all times. Masks must be worn before entry to all such University facilities (as well as outdoors on all University property when six feet of distance is unpredictable or cannot be maintained).

Saint Louis University is committed to maintaining an inclusive and accessible environment. Individuals who are unable to wear a face mask due to medical reasons should contact the Office of Disability Services or Human Resources to initiate the accommodation process identified in the University's [\*ADA Policy\*](#). Inquires or concerns may also be directed to the [\*Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity\*](#). Notification to instructors of SLU-approved ADA accommodations should be made in writing prior to the first class session in any term (or as soon thereafter as possible).

As the instructor of this course, I shall comply fully with SLU's policy and all related ADA regulations.

Students who attempt to enter a classroom without wearing masks will be asked by the instructor to wear masks prior to entry. Students who remove their masks at any time during a class session will be asked by the instructor to resume wearing their masks.

***Note: Accordingly, no consumption of any food will be allowed in class.***

Students who do not comply with a request by a SLU instructor to wear a mask in accordance with the University's *Interim Policy on Face Masks* may be subject to

disciplinary actions per the rules, regulations, and policies of Saint Louis University, including but not limited to the *Student Handbook*. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including any of the following:

- dismissal from the course(s)
- removal from campus housing (if applicable)
- dismissal from the University

To immediately protect the health and well-being of all students, instructors, and staff, instructors reserve the right to cancel or terminate any class session at which any student fails to comply with faculty or staff request to wear a mask in accordance with University policy.

Students are strongly encouraged to identify to their instructor any student or instructor not in compliance. Non-compliance may be anonymously reported via the SLU Integrity Hotline at 1-877-525-5669 (or confidentially via the Integrity Hotline's website at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>).

#### **Attendance:**

The health and well-being of SLU's students, staff, and faculty are critical concerns. Accordingly, the following University policy statements on in-person class attendance are designed to preserve and advance the collective health and well-being of our institutional constituencies.

1. Students who exhibit any [potential COVID symptoms](#) (those that cannot be attributed to some other medical condition the students are known to have, such as allergies, asthma, etc.) shall absent themselves from any in-person class attendance or in-person participation in any class-related activity until they have been evaluated by a qualified medical official. Students should contact the [University Student Health Center](#) for immediate assistance.
2. Students who exhibit any [potential COVID symptoms](#) (those that cannot be attributed to some other medical condition the students are known to have, such as allergies, asthma, etc.) but who feel well enough to a) attend the course synchronously in an online class session or b) participate in asynchronous online class activities, are expected to do so. Those who do not feel well enough to do so should absent themselves accordingly.
3. Students (whether exhibiting any of potential COVID symptoms or not, and regardless of how they feel) who are under either an isolation or quarantine directive issued by a qualified health official must absent themselves from all in-person course activity per the stipulations of the isolation or quarantine directive. They are expected to participate in synchronous or asynchronous online class activities as they feel able to do so, or absent themselves accordingly.

4. Students are responsible for notifying each instructor of an absence as far in advance as possible; when advance notification is not possible, students are responsible for notifying each instructor as soon after the absence as possible.
5. As a temporary amendment to the current [University Attendance Policy](#), all absences due to illness or an isolation/quarantine directive issued by a qualified health official shall be considered “Authorized” absences (effective August 2020 through May 2021).

### **Additional resources:**

In addition to the required readings, there is a wealth of additional material that you may wish to consult throughout the semester or in the future. Below is a partial list of resources that you may find useful. All of the journals and news magazines can be accessed through the libraries e-journals website.

Academic journals dealing specifically with Latin American issues:

*Bulletin of Latin American Research*  
*Journal of Latin American Studies*  
*Journal of Politics in Latin America*  
*Latin American Politics and Society*  
*Latin American Research Review*  
*NACLA Report on the Americas*  
*Revista de Ciencia Política* (many of the articles are in English)

Websites with plentiful information on various aspects of Latin American politics, economics, culture, etc.

[www.lanic.utexas.edu](http://www.lanic.utexas.edu)  
<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/>

Links to most major Latin American newspapers (mostly in the local language of each country) can be found here:

<http://www1.lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/news/>

## Course schedule:

- Jan. 28- Introduction and syllabus
- Feb. 2- The roots of Latin America's political traditions (Part 1)  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 1-2
- 4- The roots of Latin America's political traditions (Part 2)  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 3-4
- 9- Guatemala: Contemporary legacies of colonialism  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 20
- 11- Religion, family, and gender in Latin American political culture  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 5-6
- 16- Political economy  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 7
- 18- Politics of economic crisis  
\*Ocampo, José Antonio. 2012. "The Latin American Debt Crisis in Historical Perspective."
- 23- The political economy of the Covid-19 pandemic  
\*Reading TBD
- 25- Populism in Latin American political culture  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 8
- Mar. 2- Argentina  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 13
- 4- Populism in Argentina  
\*Ayuero, Javier. 2020. "Unprotected: Why Argentina's Poor Turn to Peronism," *Current History*, February 2020, pp. 49-53.
- 9- Brazil  
\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 14  
\*Amorim Neto, Octavio and Gabriel Alvez Pimenta. 2020. "The First Year of Bolsonaro in Office: Same Old Story, Same Old Song?" *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 187-213.
- 11- **NO CLASS (March Break)**
- 16- Review for midterm  
\*First paper due

18- Midterm exam

23- Political institutions: Democracy and/or authoritarianism

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 9

25- Civil society- How citizens influence politics

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 10

30- Cuba: 60 years of revolution

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 19

Apr. 1- Bolivia: Revolutionary social movements and political power

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 18

6- Colombia: Revolutionary movements, drugs, and democracy

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 16

8- Colombia: Building peace and defending democracy

\*Rettberg, Angelika. 2020. "Colombia in 2019: The Paradox of Plenty," *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 235-258.

13- Chile: Challenges of "success"

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 15

\*Additional reading TBD.

15- Venezuela: Anatomy of a political and economic crisis

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 17

20- Venezuela: Can it get worse? How does it get better?

\*Boersner, Adriana. 2020. "Venezuela 2019: A Tale of Two Presidents," *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 539-565.

22- Nicaragua: The politics of (corruptly) muddling through

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 21

\*Additional reading TBD

27- US-Latin America relations

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 11

29- Mexico- A complex neighbor

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 12

May 4- Mexico and the struggle for meaningful independence  
\*Sánchez Talanquer, Mariano. 2020. "Mexico 2019: Personalistic Politics and Neoliberalism from the Left," *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 401-430.

6- Review for final exam  
\*Second paper due

**FINAL EXAM: May 13<sup>th</sup> at 8am - 9:50am**