

# **Introduction to Latin American Politics**

## **POLS 2570**

Spring 2017  
Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:15  
McGannon Hall #211

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Office hours- Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-2:00, or by appointment.

### **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 analytical 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 sent to students via email. The required textbook for the course is:

Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost. 2015. *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game, 5<sup>th</sup> edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Feinberg, Richard. 2016. *Open for Business: Building the New Cuban Economy*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

## **Course requirements and grading:**

### *Mid-term exam: 30% of final grade*

This exam will be given in class on March 7<sup>th</sup> and will consist of short answer and essay questions.

### *Final exam or research project: 30% of final grade*

The final exam will be comprehensive (but focusing mainly on material covered after the midterm) and similar in format to the mid-term exam. It will be given during the assigned final exam period for our class (May 16<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm). Alternatively students can select a research paper in lieu of the final exam. Research papers should be approximately 15-20 pages in length and are due at the time of the final exam.

\*Students planning to complete a research paper should consult with me to have their topic approved before March 28<sup>th</sup>.

\*NOTE TO HONORS STUDENTS: You must complete BOTH the final exam AND the research paper.

### *Two analytical essays: 20% (10% each)*

Each student will submit TWO analytical essays over the course of the semester. Each essay should be approximately 2 to 3 pages in length. These essays give you the opportunity to explore in greater depth a particular theme that we discuss in class. Essays 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and the second will be due on or before April 25<sup>th</sup>.

### *Map quiz: 10% of final grade*

Geography is important. You will have a hard time understanding Peruvian or Argentine politics if you cannot locate those countries on a map. We will have a short quiz on the map of Latin America (identifying countries and capitals) in class on January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### *Class participation: 10% of final grade*

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).

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.

**Students with disabilities:**

Students with disabilities that may impact their classroom performance should contact the Disabilities Coordinator, 977-8885, DuBourg, Room 36. I am happy to make accommodations for students with disabilities, consistent with all laws and University policies.

### **Academic integrity:**

I expect all students to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations will be reported and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. I encourage you to view official University policy on matters of academic integrity at: <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

### **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*  
*Latin American Politics and Society*  
*Latin American Research Review*  
*NACLA Report on the Americas*

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. 17- Introduction and syllabus

19- The roots of Latin America's political traditions (Part 1)

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 1-2

24- The roots of Latin America's political traditions (Part 2)

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 3-4

26- Guatemala: Contemporary legacies of colonialism

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 20

31- Religion, family, and gender in Latin American political culture

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 5-6

\*\*MAP QUIZ AT BEGINNING OF CLASS- PLEASE BE ON TIME!\*\*

Feb. 2- Political economy

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 7

7- Populism in Latin American political culture

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 8

\*De la Torre, Carlos. 2015. "Populist Playbook: The Slow Death of Democracy in Correa's Ecuador," *World Politics Review*.

9- Political institutions: Democracy and/or authoritarianism

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 9

14- Argentina: Politics with weak institutions

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 13

\*Lupu, Noam. 2016. "The End of the Kirchner Era," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 35-49.

16- Civil society: From revolution to social movements

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 10

21- Bolivia: Revolutionary social movements and political power

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 18

23- Colombia: Revolutionary movements, drugs, and democracy

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 16

28- Colombia: Building peace and defending democracy

\***Reading TBA**

Mar. 2- Guest lecture by Dr. Sandra Borda (Universidad de Bogotá)

7- MIDTERM EXAM

9- NO CLASS

\*\*\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\*\*\*

21- Political economy of natural resources

\*Flores-Macías, Gustavo. 2010. "Statist v. Pro-Market: Explaining Leftist Governments' Economic Policies in Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 413-433.

\*Mazucca, Sebastián. 2013. "Natural Resources Boom and Institutional Curses in the New Political Economy of Latin America," in Domínguez, Jorge and Michael Shifter, eds. *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 102-128.

23- Chile: Managing the resource curse:

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 15

\*Frankel, Jeffrey. 2012. "Chile's Countercyclical Triumph," *Foreign Policy*, 27 June 2012.

28- Cuba: From Revolution to retrenchment

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 19 (skim)

\**Open for Business*, Ch. 1-2 (pp. 1-44)

30- Cuba: The politics of policy reform

\**Open for Business*, Ch. 3-4 (pp. 45-97)

Apr. 4- Cuba: The emerging political and economic environment

\**Open for Business*, Ch. 5-6 (pp. 98-171)

6- Cuba: Generational change and new opportunities

\**Open for Business*, Ch. 7-8 (pp. 172-222)

\*Leogrande, William. 2015. "Cuba's Perilous Political Transition to the Post-Castro Era," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 377-405.

11- Venezuela: Oil and authoritarian populism

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 17

\***Reading TBA**

18- Peru: The politics of fragile success

\*Guzmán, Abimael. 1980. "We Are the Initiators," in *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 311-315.

\*Fujimori, Alberto. 1993. "A Momentous Decision," in *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 438-445.

\*Vergara, Alberto and Aaron Watanabe. 2016. "Peru Since Fujimori," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 148-157.

20- Brazil: A rising power or another missed opportunity?

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 14

**\*Reading TBA**

25- Mexico and the US: Imperfect neighbors

\*Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 12

\*Flores-Macías, Gustavo. 2016. "Mexico's Stalled Reforms," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 66-78.

**FINAL EXAM (or research paper due):** May 16<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm-1:50pm