Politics and Society in Latin America and the Caribbean

Benjamin Goldfrank

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DIPL 6803: Politics and Society in Latin America and the Caribbean
School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Spring 2021
Thursdays, 5 – 7:30 p.m., via Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83535577463

Professor: Benjamin Goldfrank
Student Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00–5:30, or by appointment; sign up here: tinyurl.com/y4gptfxn
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Course Summary:
This seminar provides an overview of major approaches to the study of Latin American politics and society. It emphasizes both a historical perspective and an analysis of current trends and issues. Using various analytical lenses, the course focuses on the different kinds of political regimes and the patterns of political change that have characterized Latin American countries in the past century. We will take up several specific questions: Why have some countries in Latin America enjoyed more stable political systems than others? Why have some countries faced severe threats from guerrilla movements and even major social revolutions, while others succumbed to military coups? What explains the strengthening and then weakening of democracy in the region over time? In answering these questions, the course provides a survey of the region’s political and social development with particular emphasis on four countries – Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela – and on the specific issues and countries that students choose.

Requirements and Grading:
1. Class Participation (20 percent of course grade): Students are expected to attend all class sessions, read all assigned materials prior to class, attend at least one student hours meeting, take part actively in class and group discussions, and contribute to group responses. The quality of the discussion will largely depend on student preparation.
2. Map Quiz (5 percent): how this will be done via Zoom TBD.
3. Mid-Term Exam Essays (15 percent each): Two take-home exam essays for which questions will be provided in advance; 5 pages each.
4. Presentation (15 percent): Present final paper argument in class during weeks 12-14.
5. Final Paper (30 percent): Research or policy paper on a topic of your choice (please consult with me during student hours), 10 pages.

Evaluation of assignments will be based on students’ ability to convey their understanding and critical analysis of the course material.

Important Notes:
Academic Integrity
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the administration, and may result in a lowered or failing grade for the course and up to possible dismissal from the School of Diplomacy. See university and school standards for academic conduct here: http://www.shu.edu/offices/student-life/community-standards/community-standards.cfm http://www.shu.edu/academics/diplomacy/academic-conduct.cfm.
Resources for academic integrity are on the course Blackboard page.
((From another era, but keeping for future use when things get better: Use of electronic devices for non-class purposes is not appropriate during class time. It distracts other students and the professor and will result in a lowered grade.))

**Citation Style**

Papers should utilize one of the Chicago Manual of Style citation formats: Author-Date (highly preferable) or Notes and Bibliography. The guidelines for these formats are on the course Blackboard page.

**Late or Incomplete Assignments**

Students who anticipate not being able to complete an assignment on time should inform me as soon as possible. Absent communication, failure to complete an assignment on its due date will result in a grade penalty by one-third letter grade per day (i.e., an A assignment turned in one day late is an A-, two days late a B+, etc.) except in cases of medical/family emergency or COVID-related issues. See COVID Ground Rules.

**COVID Ground Rules**

We’re (still) in a global pandemic. These are scary times. If you tell me you are struggling or anxious, I will understand. No judgment. If you have to miss a class, need extra help, or more time on an assignment, please let me know and I will work with you. You do not owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical) or living circumstances. If I can’t help you, I may know someone who can. There are lots of campus resources (both virtual and in-person) available; please use them. More than ever, communication is key this semester, so I have extended student hours. I will try my best and I hope you will be able to try your best as well. I will cut you some slack, provided you communicate with me. And I expect you to cut me some slack, too.

**CAPS**

As part of our commitment to the health and well-being of all students, Seton Hall University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers initial assessments, counseling, crisis intervention, consultation, and referral services to the SHU community. The CAPS office is located on the second floor of Mooney Hall, room 27. Appointments can be made in-person or by calling 973-761-9500 during regular business hours, Tuesday-Friday, 8:45 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. In case of a psychological emergency, call CAPS (973-761-9500) at any time to speak to a crisis counselor. For more information, please visit: [https://www.shu.edu/counseling-psychologicalservices/index.cfm](https://www.shu.edu/counseling-psychologicalservices/index.cfm)

**Disability Services Statement**

It is the policy and practice of Seton Hall University to promote inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law against Discrimination. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office for Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67 at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003 or by e-mail at DSS@shu.edu.
Required Readings:
All course readings are on Blackboard; required denoted with ●; recommended denoted with *

Major Approaches to the Study of Latin American Politics
Week 1 – Thu., Jan. 28: Introduction
***No readings this week – Start Week 2’s readings. If you are completely new to Latin American politics or want a refresher, the following article is recommended:

Week 2 – Thu., Feb. 4: Modernization, Culture, & Dependency

Week 3 – Thu., Feb. 11: Structure, Agency, Institutions, & Critical Junctures  Map Quiz
Stability and Instability of Political Regimes

Week 4 – Thu., Feb. 18: Brazil and Chile


Week 5 – Thu., Feb. 25: Mexico and Venezuela Mid-Term Essay 1 Questions Passed Out


Week 6 – Thu., Mar. 4: Guerilla Movements & Revolutions Mid-Term Essay 1 Due


***From here forward, syllabus is provisional – slight changes to readings weeks 7-11 are possible and readings for weeks 12-14 will be student-driven***

Transitions to Democracy and New Issues
Week 7 – Thu., March 11: Democratization Challenges
**Movie recommendations about Chile: “Machuca” (2004; about life during the dictatorship) and “No” (2012: about the plebiscite in 1988)

Contemporary National Politics
Week 8 – Thu., March 18: Mexico
Week 9 – Thu., March 25: Brazil  **Mid-Term Essay 2 Questions Passed Out**

***No Class Thursday, April 1; University Closed***

Week 10 – Thu., April 8: Venezuela  **Mid-Term Essay 2 Due**

Week 11 – Thu., April 15: Chile
Weeks 12-14 topics and readings based on consultation with students:
Week 12 – Thu., April 22: Student Presentations and Discussion
Week 13 – Thu., April 29: Student Presentations and Discussion
Week 14 – Thu., May 6: Student Presentations and Discussion

Thursday, May 13: Final Paper Due by 5 p.m.
An electronic copy should be uploaded to Blackboard; if you can, a hard copy placed in or sent to my mailbox would be incredibly kind.

More Important Notes:

Further Resources
Websites:
http://lanic.utexas.edu/ (General site with hundreds of links)
http://www.latinobarometro.org/ (Survey research)
http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/ (Elections, constitutions, bibliographies)
http://library.shu.edu/latam (Seton Hall Library Resource Guide)
http://latinamericadailybriefing.blogspot.com (Daily News Round-Up in Latin America)
https://caribbeannewsupdates.blogspot.com/ (Weekly Caribbean News Round-Up)

Primary Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester, students should have acquired knowledge and understanding of: key concepts, models, theories, and debates involved in the study of contemporary international relations and diplomacy; the interaction between politics and economics in the international system; a particular region of the world (Latin America and the Caribbean); and prevailing global issues. Students should have developed the skills to: analyze complex situations and synthesize information; and communicate effectively in oral and written forms. Students should be able to deploy a global perspective to: recognize and understand differences among a diversity of cultures and viewpoints; and interact effectively with people of other cultures, backgrounds, and viewpoints.

Policy on Incompletes
Incompletes will be given only in exceptional cases for emergencies. Students wishing to request a grade of Incomplete must provide documentation to support the request accompanied by a Course Adjustment Form (available from the Diplomacy Main Office) to the professor before the date of the final examination. If the incomplete request is approved, the professor reserves the right to specify the new submission date for all missing coursework. Students who fail to submit the missing coursework within this time period will receive a failing grade for all missing coursework and a final grade based on all coursework assigned. Any Incomplete not resolved within one calendar year of receiving the Incomplete or by the time of graduation (whichever comes first) automatically becomes an “FI” (which is equivalent to an F). It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they have completed all course requirements within the timeframe allotted. Please be aware that Incompletes on your transcript will impact academic standing.