

The Politics of Latin America

Social Studies Elective Seminar

Mr. Bosc

cbosc@sstx.org

G-chat at Gmail: cortbosc@gmail.com

This course is an introductory study in the politics of Latin America. It assumes no prior knowledge of the region, nor does it require any knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese. It does expect an open mind about how politics works, since much of the course will not be familiar to those of you whose experiences and knowledge of politics are based on the United States.

The course is first and foremost a college prep. The topic, structure, and assignments of the course are roughly into-college level. The focus of assignments will attempt to improve both your writing and public speaking. As with any topics course I expect lots of in class discussion and even a little argumentation.

We begin with some introductory materials dealing first with the geography and history of the region, and then with some key economic characteristics. We will then move on to the more defining elements of Latin American politics, its political actors, institutions, and culture. The course will end with a brief discussion on the state of US-Latin American relations.

This class is an overview course, and cannot cover every topic of interest or of relevance to the region. In addition, the course does not pretend to investigate any single nation in depth. The course does move quickly over the fall, however, and while the quantity of reading is not great I will expect you to know the materials thoroughly. Therefore, it is an excellent idea to keep up with the readings.

There will be three unit tests that will be composed of a few short answer questions and an essay. There will also be one final country project that will count as a final exam.

Materials Needed:

1. 2 Notebooks (I would suggest a spiral for notes to be included in a 3-ring binder)
2. Textbook: Americas: The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean. Winn, Peter.
3. Access to the Internet.

What I expect from you:

- A. Your respect, not just because I have been educated in the subject matter, but also because I am giving you my time in order to help you become a better student.
- B. Thoughtful and original discussion. Not everyday and certainly not for every question I ask but please make an effort to see beyond the readings.
- C. Come prepared. The singular biggest of my pet peeves is when students and colleagues don't have what they need to in order to be involved. Basically, if you fail in C than A and B are already lost.

What you can expect from me:

- A. My respect, for both your intellect and your potential
- B. Extra help, both group help before each test, and individual help, in conferences.
- C. Tests and quizzes graded within 4 school days.

Summary of Assignments:

OVERALL, 80% OF YOUR GRADE WILL COME FROM TESTS WHILE 20% WILL COME FROM DAILY GRADES.

I. Tests

Each test will be approximately 20% short answer and 80% essay (except for Unit 1 Test which will have a small map section). The essays will all be three-four paragraphs in length and should be a continuation of your training in writing advanced thesis driven essays.

II. Quizzes

I will periodically give pop quizzes in order to check and see if you have done the assigned readings. They will all be OPEN NOTE but you may not use your textbook. If I see that the class is consistently prepared to participate in classroom discussion then we may agree to forego quizzes all together.

III. Weekly Responses

By Sunday @ 12am each week you must post a response online (Moodle). The response is to the week's readings and class discussion. It can include critical comments, questions, or predictions, just remember to address the topics discussed in class or in the readings. Good responses will make connections between readings and larger themes in Latin American politics. Responses will not be graded, only checked. They need not be more than a paragraph (5 sentences) and each one submitted will be a 100-quiz grade. If you post a response every week I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

IV. Country Profile Project

This project will take the place of a final exam. It is worth 20% of your final term grade and will be completed throughout the course of the term. On the final exam day each student will give a 15-minute presentation on his or her country. You will need an extra 1-2" 3-ring binder to hold all of your country specific notes. Please be as creative as possible. This is your chance to show much (or how little) creativity you have.

Assignment #1 (pp. 1-2) – Basic Country Info (You are not allowed to use the CIA World Factbook).

Please include but not limit yourself to:

- Capital -Languages -Population
- Major Cities -Exports -Imports
- Major Economic Trading Partners

Assignment #2 (pp. 3-5) – Maps – I need you to have the political and topographical maps included but you should also include one other map that address your topic in detail. For example, if you were doing your paper on indigenous communities in Mexico a map of where those communities have a presence in the country would be relevant.

Assignment #3 (pp. 6-7) – Brief Historical Overview (Be sure to address colonization, Independence and Revolution, if any)

Assignment #4 (pp. 8-9) – Overview of Political Institutions

Please include but not limit yourself to:

- Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems
- Single Member Districts vs. Proportional Representation
- Political Parties and Actors
- Voting Patterns.

Assignment #4 (pp. 10-14/15) – Thesis driven analysis of Contemporary or Past Issue. You must refer to class discussions on Revolutions, social movements, the economy, political culture, US/LA relations, etc . . .)

Assignment #5 – In Class Presentation

The Presentation must be:

- Multimedia (PowerPoint, video, visual arts, graphs, and of course speech can be used)
- 15 minutes long (give or take a minute or two).
- Include overview of topic/country as well as prospects on contemporary or future politics.

Syllabus

Unit 1: Introduction to Latin American Geography and History.

Lesson #1: “A View From the South:” Living in the Upside Down World.

Reading Assignments: Study PetersMap of the World (online) and Read Ch. 1 pp. 1-7, 23-32 in Winn.

Lesson #2: Why Study Latin America?

Reading Assignments: Skidmore, Thomas E. “Why Latin America” (handout given in class and also available in PDF online).

Lesson #3: The Legacy of Empire Part 1: The Conquest of the Americas.

Reading Assignments:

1. Zinn, Howard. “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress,” pp. 1-22. Galeano, Eduardo.
2. “Racism and Sexism 101,” pp. 43-49.
3. Winn, Ch. 2, pp. 39-58.

Country Profile Project (CPP) - Have your country chosen and approved by September 3, 2007.

Lesson #4: The Legacy of Empire Part II: The Colonial Foundations.

Reading Assignments:

1. Winn Ch. 2, pp. 59-78.
2. S&S, “The Colonial Foundations,” pp. 21-26.

Lesson #5: Independence and The New Republics.

Reading Assignments:

1. Winn Ch. 2, pp. 78-85.
2. V&P Chpt. 3 pp. 42-54.

Assignment #1 of CPP due on September 10, 2007.

Unit 2: The Rise of Authoritarianism and Revolution.

Lesson #6: Latin America Industrializes: E-I to ISI

Reading Assignments: Winn, Ch. 3, pp. 91-93, 100-108 and Ch. 4, pp. 126-133

Lesson #7: Peronism, Populism and Power Politics

Reading Assignments:

1. Winn Ch. 4 133-160.
2. V&P, Chpt. 8, "Democracy and Authoritarianism."

Lesson #8: The Move Towards Authoritarianism

Reading Assignments:

1. Vanden and Prevost, "Democracy and Authoritarianism: Latin American Political Culture." pp. 175-183 (Available in PDF online).
2. Winn, Ch 5 pp 165-188.

Lesson #9: "¡Hasta la victoria siempre, revolución! Revolutions in Latin America

Reading Assignments: Vanden and Prevost, Ch. 10 pp. 236-254. "Revolutions and Change in Latin America." (available online in PDF)

Unit 3: Democratization and the Neoliberal Answer to Crisis

Lesson #10: Democracy and Democratic Institutions

Reading Assignments:

1. V&P, Ch. 9 pp. 185-200 (available online).
2. V&P, Ch. 9 pp. 200-211
3. V&P, Ch. 9 pp. 211-222

Lesson #11: The Debt Crisis and a "Neoliberal" Response

Reading Assignments:

1. V&P, Ch. 7 pp. 163-173. Begin reading at heading, "Structural Adjustment and the Move to Neoliberalism." (available online)
2. Winn, pp. 188-199.
3. Winn 199-208.

Lesson #12: *Somos Indigenas*: Children of the Sun

Reading Assignments:

1. Winn, Ch. 7, pp250-269.
2. Winn, Ch. 7, pp269-284.
3. "A Political Awakening," from *The Economist*. Klein, Naomi. "The Threat of Hope in Latin America," from *The Nation*.

Lesson #13: Understanding Race in Latin America: "A Question of Color?"

Reading Assignments: Winn, Ch. 8, 291-322.

Lesson #14: The Future of US-Latin American Relations.

Reading Assignments: Grandin, Greg, "Latin America's New Consensus," from *The Nation*. "The Return of Populism," from *The Economist*.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Come On In!

Come on in!

Step into the school of the upside-down world!

Rub the magic lantern!

Lights! Sound! The illusion of life!

Offered free to one and all!

*Let it enlighten each of you and set a good example for
future generations!*

Come see the river that burns!

Lord Sun illuminating the night!

Dame Moon in the middle of the day!

Mam'selle Star tossed from the sky!

The jester on the king's throne!

Lucifer's breath clouding the universe!

The dead walking about with mirrors in their hands!

Witches! Acrobats!

Dragons and vampires!

The magic wand that turns a child into a coin!

The world lost in a throw of the dice!

Don't fall for cheap imitations!

God bless those who see it!

God forgive those who don't!

Rated R: Sensitive persons and minors not admitted.

*By Eduardo Galeano, based on eighteenth century criers'
pitch for magic lanterns*