Syllabus RPOS/ALCS 357
Latin American and Caribbean Politics
Fall 2009 Monday & Wednesday @ 2:45-4:05pm
Class Meets in the HU Bldg ~ Room 129

Instructor: Laura V. González-Murphy
Office: Humanities Basement 16
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 1:00 to 2:15 pm and by appointment
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Course Description:
Latin America is a complex region, filled with contrasts and similarities, a region with a heterogeneous population with deep-rooted traditions. The countries that comprise this region of the world share common roots in the Portuguese and Spanish Empires created in the sixteenth century and their conquest of and domination over people of Indigenous and African descent. Thus, cultural origins and language unite the region, but alongside this shared heritage they have since followed at times parallel and at times divergent paths. Nevertheless, national histories, nationalism and regionalism and, heterogeneous local experiences separate it into diverse parts. As a result, broad generalizations cannot be made across the region but comparisons can be drawn that help us better understand it. To do so this class will analyze the domestic political institutions, the forces which shape the quest for power and the processes by which public policies are determined in Latin America. Specifically we will first identify the patterns and processes shared in common by Latin American societies, then the differences between the individual historical experiences of selected countries, while ascertaining as best as possible the reasons for those differences.

This course fulfills the ‘Regions Beyond Europe’ course requirements and as such will enable students to demonstrate:

1. knowledge of the distinctive features (e.g. history, institutions, economies, societies, cultures) of one region beyond Europe or European North America
2. an understanding of the region from the perspective of its people(s)
3. an ability to analyze and contextualize cultural and historical materials relevant to the region
4. an ability to locate and identify distinctive geographical features of the region

Academic Standards and Expectations:
What I expect from you:
1. Academic Honesty. 2. Follow the exam and paper guidelines. 3. Complete all assignments on time. 4. Attend class. 5. Keep up with the readings. 6. Attend office hours. 7. Do not come to class late. 8. Do not start packing your bags and backpacks until class has ended. 9. Turn your cell phone to silent before class begins, NOT on vibrating and don't text-message during class.

What to expect from me:
1. While no one can claim to be completely impartial, I will do my best to be fair and to faithfully present different sides of policy debates. 2. My lectures will be well prepared and organized. 3. I will see that your papers and exam are graded promptly and accurately. 4. I will remain accessible and hold office hours just before class and by appointment. 5. During the second week of class I will ask for anonymous evaluations to make adjustments that improve the course.

Plagiarism: Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. Any work submitted by a student for academic credit must be the student's own work. Students will strictly abide by SUNY Albany standards of academic conduct as outlined: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html

If you are involved in academic misconduct the penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. In this one regard there are no second chances. If you are unsure if something violates standards please don’t hesitate to ask.

Your papers must use footnotes or endnotes to document all direct quotations, paraphrases, statements of fact, and the work of other authors. If you do not know what footnotes or endnotes are or what types of material you should include in them, please ask me. The simplest format to use is MLA http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/ , however any format is acceptable.

Attendance Policy:
Frequent unexplained absences count against you and will affect your grade. Your absence must be documented and a result of a legitimate reason, such as illness or bereavement. Please let me know if you have a problem. Late papers will automatically result in a lesser grade if not a result of a legitimate reason.

Accommodations: Accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). This office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html). Please inform the instructor as soon as possible if you need academic accommodations for this course.

Course Requirements:
Text Book

The main readings come from this text, however we will also have additional readings that will be available on ERes. These readings are marked below, the required readings are marked [R]. To access ERes for this course the password is: branch

Following are the additional required [R] and suggested readings:
Note that the readings with an * are mainly meant to familiarize you with the scholars and their understanding of the concepts, especially if you are interested in continuing with graduate education, a quick overview of them will be helpful.


*_______ (1975) The comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research’, Comparative Political Studies, 8(2): 158-177


A good outline of the uses of comparative history and of Mill’s methods of agreement and difference
Yashar, Deborah J. (1998) "Contesting Citizenship: Indigenous Movements and Democracy in Latin America." Comparative Politics 31 (October), 23-42. [R]

You are expected to keep up with current events in the region and to do so you can consult the following sources. A good source of links from online newspapers to government ministries is The Latin America Network Information Center, www.lanic.utexas.edu. You can also find more extensive coverage on Latin America in the U.S. newspaper The Miami Herald and I highly recommend looking at The Economist which has in depth regional reports. NACLA reports provide deeper, critical investigation www.nacla.org as well as reports by the advocacy group WOLA which focuses on public security and human rights, www.wola.org and the Harvard Review of Latin America, REVISTA www.drcas.fas.harvard.edu/publications/revita.html

Among Latin American based research centers, for wide ranging and timely scholarship see FLACSO
At www.flacso.org

You can also look at think tanks that produce timely publications and address events with a significant Latin American focus are the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars www.wwics.si.edu It focuses on domestic politics, conflicts, public security issues
The Inter American Dialogue presents analysis of political and economic trends: www.idai dialogue.org
The United States Institute for Peace which focuses on issues of conflict resolution and as such includes a database of peace accord documents www.usip.org
The Canadian Foundation for the Americas, FOCAL is also an excellent source for information www.focal.ca

Assignments and Grade Breakup
1. There will be three exams, each worth 35% of your grade. The other 30% consists of regular attendance, regular reading, participation and surprise quizzes. The extra credit options available to you include writing a short review of the films we watch and/or presenting on a news clip or article (including those on ERes not marked required) that you find of interest. Special attention should be paid to how this film or article addresses questions raised in the classroom.

NOTE: your grade will NOT be affected by choice of arguments or the political implications of your analytical choices.

2. The unscheduled brief quizzes will be on the readings to ensure you have been keeping up with them. You will need to pass 2/3 of the reading quizzes in order to get the full score (10%). They are simple so as long as you do the readings you will be fine.

3. I value participation since it is an important way to learn and reinforce your knowledge and understanding of concepts and events. I strongly encourage you to raise questions or make appropriate comments during lectures. If there is something you did not understand, feel free to bring it up. Chances are that if you are confused on an issue, you are not alone and many of your classmates are also confused. I will not grade you on your opinion or perspective since I believe that we are all entitled to our own, but make sure that you are backing it up with the proper sources. Please keep in mind that attendance is not participation.

Grading Breakdown: For a total of 100%

Exams 35% each: 70%
Participation: 10%
Attendance: 10%
Reading quizzes: 10%

COURSE OUTLINE

Why Latin America

Monday 8/31 - Introductory discussion about the class

Tuesday 9/2 - Why Latin America and Introduction to Comparative Politics: Why do political scientists compare and how do they study foreign societies?
Readings: Skidmore & Smith, pp.1-12; Landman Chapter 1
Socio-economic and Political Transition in Latin America

Monday 9/7 - Labor Day – No class

Wednesday 9/9 – Colonial Foundations
Read: Skidmore & Smith pp.13-41

Monday 9/14 Colonial Foundations and the Transformation of Modern Latin America
Read: Skidmore & Smith pp. 42-67

Wednesday 9/16 – The Question of Development
*Video: the Garden of Forking Paths*
*Take notes for review paper*

Monday 9/21 - Modernization Theory and Dependency Theory
Read: Review SIS Skidmore & Smith pp.55-58; Valenzuela & Valenzuela; Wallerstein

Wednesday 9/23 – Neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus
Read: Review Skidmore & Smith 58-62; Read: Hart-Landsberg; Vilas 1996; Williamson

Monday 9/28 - No class

Wednesday 9/30 - Interpreting Democracy in Latin America
Readings: Smith 2005; Weyland, 2004

Monday 10/5 Continuation of Democracy in Latin America
Hakim, 2003; Vilas, 1997

Wednesday 10/7 - Traditional and Up and Coming Actors (women and society, the Catholic church, indigenous peoples)

Monday 10/12- Continuation of Traditional and UP and Coming Actors
Cruz & Diamint 1998; Murillo 2000;

See [www.lamilitary.com](http://www.lamilitary.com) a website that gathers information on LA militaries

Wednesday 10/14 Midterm exam

**Case Studies**

Monday 10/19 - Mexico
Read: Skidmore & Smith Chapter 8; Look again at Hart-Landberg; Gilbreth & Otero 2001

Wednesday 10/21- Mexico – Guest Speaker Teleconferencing from Mexico
Monday 10/26 - Venezuela
Read: Hellinger in Vanden & Prevost; Zuquete 2008.

Wednesday 10/28 - Venezuela - Be Prepared to discuss if Chavez a Democrat or a Dictator

Monday 11/2 Colombia
Read: Skidmore & Smith; Chapter 7

Wednesday – 11/4 Colombia vs Mexico and the Drug Cartels
(Hand outs – Discuss the Colombianization of Mexico)

Monday 11/9- Cuba
Read: Skidmore & Smith Chapter 9; Perez (2002)

Wednesday 11/11 Video on Cuba

Monday 11/16 - The Caribbean OR Central America (per class discussion)
Read: Skidmore & Smith Chapter 10 OR Chapter 11

Wednesday 11/18 Continuation of selection
Read: Hand outs

Monday 11/23 Brazil
Read: Skidmore & Smith Chapter 5

Wednesday – No class - Happy Thanksgiving!

Monday 11/30 - Brazil

End of Cases Comparative Overview

Monday 11/29 Latin America and the World
Read: Skidmore & Smith, Chapter 12; Petras; 2009

Wednesday -12/2 – Latin America and its future
Read: Skidmore & Smith Epilogue, Colburn, 2002

Monday – 12/7- Review for Final Exam

Wednesday – 12/9 – Final Exam