Latin American and Caribbean Politics
Fall 2009 Tuesday & Thursday @ 8:45am-10:05am
Class Meets in the CH Bldg ~ Room 151

Instructor: Laura V. González-Murphy
Office: Humanities Basement 16
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 10:30am to 11:30am 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:
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. My lectures will be well prepared and organized. I will see that your papers and exam are graded promptly and accurately. I will remain accessible and hold office hours just after class and by appointment. 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:
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 Books

2. Calleros Alarcon - The Unfinished Transition to Democracy in Latin America (08') ISBN 9780415957632, T&F
Given the cost of this book I have a copy on reserve at the library; you have three hours to read in the library. A copy of Chapter 1 is on ERes. You may be able to rent it from chegg.com
The main readings come from these books, however we will also have additional readings that will be available on ERes. These readings are marked below; the required readings are marked [R]. **As class progresses however please note that I may make some changes to the readings but I will let you know in advance.**

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*


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.drcals.fas.harvard.edu/publications/revita.html
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.idialogue.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 two 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. You have up to three extra credits which are added to your final grade - so the possibility of improving this grade is significant - but these one page reviews must be analytical and special attention should be paid to how the film/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

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Why Latin America

Tuesday 8/31 - Introductory discussion about the class

Thursday 9/2 - Why Latin America and Introduction to Comparative Politics: Why do political scientists compare and how do they study foreign societies?
Readings: Landman Chapter 1

Socio-economic and Political Transition in Latin America

Tuesday 9/7 – Colonial Foundations
Read: SSG, Chapter 1 pp.13-41
Galeano Chapters 1 and 2

Thursday 9/9 No class – Keep up with the Galeano readings

Tuesday 9/14 Colonial Foundations and the Transformation of Modern Latin America
Read: Galeano Chapter 3 and 4

Thursday 9/16 The Question of Development
*Video: the Garden of Forking Paths; Dilemmas of National Development*
Take notes for review paper
Read: Galeano Chapters 5 and 6

Tuesday 9/21- Modernization Theory and Dependency Theory
Read: SSG Chapter 12; Valenzuela & Valenzuela

Thursday 9/23 – Neo-liberalism and the Washington Consensus
Read: Review SSG Chapter 12; Read: Hart-Landsberg; Williamson

Tuesday 9/28 - Interpreting Democracy in Latin America
Readings: SSG Chapter 13; Smith 2005(?)
Calleros Alarcon, Chapters 2 and 3

Thursday 9/30 - Continuation of Democracy in Latin America
Calleros Alarcon, Chapters 7, 8, and the very short conclusion
Guest Speaker: Calleros Alarcon – BE READY TO ASK HIM QUESTIONS – Please come with some written down, I will ask you to submit a copy of them to me at the start of class, it does not matter if it is only one question as long as it reflects that you have read

Wednesday 10/5- Traditional and Up and Coming Actors (women and society, the Catholic church, indigenous peoples)
Readings: Again Htun, 2002; Yasar, 1988;
revisit S&S pp. 381-383;
Monday 10/7 - Continuation of Traditional and UP and Coming Actors
Cruz & Diamint 1998; Murillo 2000;
Will look at Interview with Subcomandante Marcos – Mexico
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8OGghITYbo

Wednesday 10/12 Midterm exam

Case Studies

Monday 10/14 - Mexico
Read: SSG Chapter 3; Look again at Hart-Landberg; Gilbreth & Otero 2001

Wednesday 10/19- Mexico – Guest Speaker Teleconferencing from Mexico – Commerce – Same suggestions as with previous guest speaker

Monday 10/21 – Venezuela
Read: SSG, Chapter 8

Wednesday 10/26 - Venezuela - Be Prepared to discuss if Chavez a Democrat or a Dictator Zuquete, 2008.

Monday- 10/28 Colombia
Read: SSG Chapter 7

Wednesday – 11/2 Colombia vs Mexico and the Drug Cartels
(Hand outs - Discuss the Colombianization of Mexico)

Monday 11/4 - Cuba
Read: SSG Chapter 5; Perez (2002)

Wednesday 11/9 - Video on Cuba

Monday 11/11 - The Caribbean and Central America
Read: SSG Chapter 4

Wednesday 11/18 - Continuation of Caribbean and Central America

Monday 11/16 - Brazil
Read: SSG Chapter 11

Thursday 11/18 – Brazil – continuation
End of Cases Comparative Overview

Tuesday 11/23 Latin America and the World -
Read: SSG; Petras, 2009

Thursday 11/25 – Happy Thanksgiving!!!!

Tuesday -11/30 – Latin America and its Future
Read: Colburn, 2002

Thursday – 12/2 - Presentations (extra credits) and

Tuesday – 12/7 – Review of Final

Thursday – 12/9 Reading Day – no class

Date for Final Exam will be the one determined by the University – check the website list