

FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY SWITZERLAND

POL 204—GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA

Spring 2019

Tue/Fri 11:30-12:45, LAC 2

Professor Roberto Cordón

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Fridays 16:00-17:00; or by appointment
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Final Exam: Friday May 10, 11:00—13:00

Course Description

This survey course will introduce students to the historical, cultural, social, and economic dimensions that have characterized the founding, development, and contemporary evolution of the political systems of Latin America.¹ After an introduction to the geography and history of the region, the course will look at the major political developments, trends and movements in Latin America during the 20th Century. The second half of the semester will look at the political systems (and their historical/economic context) in selected Latin American countries.

Course Objectives

Since Aristotle political scientists have tried to understand political phenomena in a systematic way, comparing different countries to explain their similarities and differences, and to draw inferences for future policy-making. Latin American countries, sharing a similar colonial heritage and post-independence development patterns, provide a particularly interesting set of case studies. The *primary goal* of this course will be to introduce students to the main political issues, trends, opportunities and challenges of Latin American countries, so that they can express informed opinions on this important region. Furthermore, students will apply the background acquired in previous social science courses in order to discuss and analyze press articles and books on recent developments in Latin America. As with other courses in comparative politics, a good understanding of Latin American politics, although grounded in political science, will also draw on familiarity with the history, economics and sociology of the region. Finally, students will be encouraged to develop their own opinions, in order to discuss and debate the issues at-hand.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Understand the major historical and political issues that have shaped modern Latin America.
- Be able to discuss the key politico-economic ideologies in the region during the 20th Century and how these were shaped by global/regional developments.
- Understand the complex relationship between the US and Latin America.
- Analyze a specific country challenge in its historical, economic and political context.

Textbook (main)

- Howard Wiarda and Harvey Kline, Latin American Politics and Development, 8th Edition, Westview Press (*W&K*)

¹ For the purposes of this course, Latin America is defined as the 19 Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking countries in the American continent. French-speaking Haiti is sometimes also included as part of Latin America, but its historical pattern is very different, having –if anything—more in common with the other English-speaking islands in the Caribbean.

Additional Readings

- *On reserve:* T. Skidmore and P. Smith, Modern Latin America, 7th Ed., Oxford U. Press (*Skid*)
- *On reserve:* Gavin O’Toole, Politics Latin America, Pearson (*O’T*)
- Students should follow Latin American events on a regular basis by reading the coverage in international media, including English newspapers in Latin American countries.
- Reading local press in Spanish or Portuguese is also encouraged.

Course Requirements

- Weekly readings from textbooks or handouts, as assigned by instructor.
- Midterm and Final Exams
- A quiz (~30 min) on Latin American geography and major historical/political personalities.
- Each student will be asked to follow current events in one Latin American country, be a reference point for that country during class discussions (counts towards class participation), and write a paper (10-12 pages) analyzing a specific political or economic issue relating to that country. This issue will be discussed with and approved by the instructor and the paper will show good familiarity with the politics of the country. A few weeks before the deadline, all students will need to hand in an outline, an annotated bibliography of key sources, and I may request an in-class writing sample.

Grading (*indicative, may vary slightly*)

• Midterm Exam	22%	
• Final Exam	25%	
• Outline + annotated bibliography	5%	
• Country Paper	20%	
• Geography/Personalities Quiz	8%	
• Class Participation (incl. country infos)	20%	=100%

All elements will be graded on a scale from 0 to 100. Grades are generally distributed along a normal curve. However, I am perfectly willing to bend the curve one way or another if many students perform well or poorly. (Obviously I would prefer to give more A’s than D’s!) **Students need to pass either the midterm or the final exam, regardless of performance on other course elements.** *Indicatively:*

A: > 93.3 A-: 90 - 93.3 B+: 86.7 - 90 B: 83.3 - 86.7 B-: 80 - 83.3 C+: 76.7 - 80
C: 73.3 - 76.7 C-: 70 - 73.3 D+: 66.7-70 D: 63.3-66.7 D-: 60 – 63.3 F: < 60

Class Attendance, Participation and Course Contribution

Class discussions are integral to understanding and contextualizing the readings. We will discuss current events; your opinions and questions benefit the whole class. ***Active and constructive participation in class discussions will be rewarded.*** Thus, class attendance will be essential to perform well and contribute to this course. Students who miss more than *three* classes may have their grade reduced by one level (a B becomes a B-). Poor attendance will also certainly impact the class participation note.

Late Assignments Policy

Students needing extensions for their written assignments should discuss them in advance with the instructor. The standard penalty is 5% (half a letter grade) per day.

Laptops and Cellphones

As they are very disruptive to the instructor and other students, laptops are not allowed in class or exams and cell phones should be turned off. If your phone rings during class, you will leave the classroom to answer the call and will not be allowed back in.

Indicative Course Schedule

Week of:	Topic	Reading
22 January	Introduction to Latin America Overview of Latin American geography and “trivia”	in class
29 January	The Context of Latin American Politics The Colonial Period	W&K 1, Skid 1 Skid 2 (on res.)
05 February	The Colonial Period Recent History: Strategies for Economic Development	Skid 2 (on res.) Skid 12 (on res.)
<i>Latin American Geography/Personalities Quiz on 05 Feb in class (~25 min.)</i>		
12 February	Recent History: Dynamics of Political Transformation The Struggle for Democracy in Latin America	Skid 13 (on res.) W&K 5
19 February	Political Issues: Interest Groups and Parties Structuralism and Dependency <i>No class on Friday 22 February</i>	W&K 3 O’T 15 (on res.)
26 February	Neoliberalism Redistributive Models	O’T 16 (on res.) O’T 17 (on res.)
05 March	Review and Integration of Concepts	
<i>Midterm on Tuesday 05 March (in class)</i>		
12 and 19 March	Academic Travel (enjoy!)	
Country Case Studies <i>(dates/countries may shift based on student interest, current events and guest speakers)</i>		
26 March	México: revolution, consensus, regional leadership	W&K 16 Skid 3 (on reserve)
02 April	Guatemala: the challenge of indigenous people Costa Rica: Switzerland of Latin America? <i>Outline + annotated bibliography due on Tuesday 02 April</i>	W&K 21 W&K 18
09 April	Nicaragua: reaction to US involvement Cuba: revolutionary light or shadow?	W&K 19 W&K 17
16 April	Chile: clear-cut political and economic evolutions	W&K 8
23 April	Brazil: country of the future?	W&K 7 + Skid 5 (on reserve)
30 April	Argentina: another country of the future? US Policy towards Latin America <u>or</u> Venezuelan Collapse <i>Country paper due on Tuesday 30 April</i>	W&K 6 (handout)

Academic Dishonesty: Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism

A student whose actions are deemed by the University to be out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives or the spirit of good conduct as fostered by the University and Swiss community, may be placed on Disciplinary Probation or become subject to dismissal from the University. Cheating and plagiarism are dishonest actions that run counter to the University ideals. Furthermore, cheating reflects negatively on one's personal integrity and is unjust to other students. Consequently, the University has adopted the following code:

- When an examination is in progress, all unauthorized books, notes, papers, notebooks, and phones must be left outside the classroom, or, where this is not feasible, left beneath the student's seat unopened.
- Students will be asked to distribute themselves around the room during an exam so as to leave the widest possible space between them.
- During the examination only the blank paper required for the examination and a pencil, pen or other tools as permitted by individual instructors may be on the desk.
- Should an instructor see written crib notes in evidence or see a student consult a cell phone during an exam, the presumption will be that the student has cheated on that exam.
- If a student must leave the classroom during an examination due to physical duress, the student must turn in the exam and will not be allowed to return during the examination period. No make-up examination will be administered.
- It is within the prerogative of the instructor to take a student's paper during an exam and to ask that student to take an oral exam, or another exam, at the instructor's discretion.
- A student found cheating will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A second offense, in the same or any other course, will result in dismissal from the University.
- A student found cheating on an exam will be given an "F" for that examination. If it is a final examination, the student may be given an "F" for the course.
- A student whose paper or assignment has clearly been plagiarized will receive an "F" for that paper. Notification will be sent to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A second offense, in the same or any other course, will result in dismissal from the University.

Cases of academic dishonesty may be handled by the instructor in whose course the violation occurred if the matter is a result of student ignorance or is a first offense. The instructor will assess the severity of the violation and impose an appropriate penalty. In the event of a repetition of dishonesty, the matter will be referred to the Dean of Academic Affairs, and the student will risk dismissal from the University.

Furthermore:

A student who is strongly suspected of submitting a paper written by someone else, may receive a failing grade for the course, unless the student can prove his/her authorship. The professor will decide on a suitable means of assessment, e.g. by an oral discussion on the paper's topic, by providing evidence of a meaningful research and drafting process, or other appropriate mechanisms. In such cases, the student will also be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs on the grounds academic dishonesty.

By the same token, if there is a strong suspicion that a student has written a paper for another student, they will be referred to the Judicial Board for potential disciplinary sanction, according to the FUS' Code of Conduct.

Please note that I hold the above statements very seriously. In my courses, any case of cheating will result in an automatic "F" for the whole course.