

## Latin American Politics

POLS 3322-01

Fall 2009

Professor: Eduardo Alemán, Ph.D.

Office: PGH # 434

Office Hours: M & W 1:15 pm to 2:15 pm

Email: ealeman2@uh.edu

Class website: <http://aleman.polsci.uh.edu/>

Class meetings: PGH 344, M & W 11:30 pm to 1:00 pm

Teaching Assistant: Aldo Ponce (afponce@mail.uh.edu)

This class introduces undergraduate students to the politics of Latin America. It is designed for students interested in learning about the political history of the region as well as the social and economic challenges faced by Latin America government. Among other topics, we will examine the colonial sources of Latin American underdevelopment; the breakdown of democratic regimes and the restoration of democracy; the implications of Latin America's peculiar version of presidentialism; and the ongoing struggles for human rights and economic development.

Students should come to class having read all the required material and ready to participate. The readings and handouts will be available on the class website. If you need to talk to me and cannot come to my office hours, email me to set up an appointment. I am usually available to meet students at other times in addition to my scheduled office hours.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Students should learn what major issues have guided research on Latin American politics during the last decades.
- Students should understand how institutions, economics, and societal conflict affect political outcomes in Latin America

### Readings:

Students should come to class having read all the assigned material and ready to participate. All the required readings are available through WebCT. Some class notes will also be available online.

### Grading:

Make-up examinations require a medical note to justify absence (unless absence is related to religious holy day). Plagiarism in student work will be punished according to UH guidelines. The final grade is made up of the following components:

Test #1	15%	date: 9/14
Test#2	15%	date: 10/5
Test #3	15%	date: 10/26
Test #4	15%	date: 11/16
Paper Presentation	10%	
Final Research Paper	20%	
Participation & Attendance	10%	

Information about the research paper (possible topics and requirements) will be distributed after the second week of class. Students are encouraged to discuss with the professor their projects several weeks before it is due. All students must turn in a two paragraph proposal summarizing their paper projects by Wednesday October 7<sup>th</sup>.

---

### **Topic # 1 –Political Instability, Social Inequality, and Development** [weeks 1 to 3, 8/24 to 9/9]

We begin the course discussing the historical sources of Latin America’s economic and political realities. In addition to reviewing some basic traits about the colonial period, the readings address the relationships between factor endowments, political institutions, and economic development. The authors of these articles present alternative explanations for the economic gap between the U.S. and Latin America.

#### Readings:

1. **Skidmore, Thomas E. and Peter H. Smith. 2000.** “The Colonial Foundations, 1492-1880s” in *Modern Latin America*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press. [Chapter 1, pp. 13-41]
2. **Sokoloff, Kenneth L. 2002.** “Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World,” Working Paper UCLA and NBER.
3. **North, Douglass C., William Summerhill, and Barry R. Weingast. 2000.** "Order, Disorder and Economic Change: Latin America vs. North America", in Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Hilton Roots (eds.), *Governing for Prosperity*, Yale University Press (pp. 1-54).
4. **Przeworski, Adam and Carolina Curvale. 2005.** “Does politics explain the economic gap between the United States and Latin America?” Working Paper, NYU.

**Test on Topic # 1:** Monday September 14<sup>th</sup>

---

### **Topic # 2 – Democracy and Dictatorship** [weeks 4 to 6, 9/14 to 9/30]

Next, we proceed to discuss political change and democratic experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: cycles of democracy, and transition from authoritarian rule. We analyze in more detail the case of Argentina, a country that experienced repeated regime transitions.

#### Readings:

5. **Smith, Peter H. 2005.** *Democracy in Latin America –chapters 1 & 2.*
6. **Skidmore, Thomas E. and Peter H. Smith. 2004.** “Argentina: Prosperity, Deadlock, and Change” in *Modern Latin America*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press. [Chapter 3, pp. 69-108]

Documentary: *La República Perdida* (1983 – directed by Miguel Pérez (Spanish with English subtitles)

**Test on Topic # 2:** Monday October 5<sup>th</sup>

---

### **Topic # 3 – Revolution and Civil War in Central America** [weeks 7 to 9, 10/5 to 10/21]

In weeks 7 to 9, we examine the politics of Central American countries. After discussing some basic patterns of development during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we concentrate on the period of insurgency and civil war (1960s to 1990s). The readings explore the conditions that led to violent insurgency in some countries and not in others.

#### Readings:

7. **Goodwin, Jeff. 2001.** “The Formation of Revolutionary Movements in Central America,” in *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Cambridge University Press [Chapters 5 pp. 142-179].
8. **Goodwin, Jeff. 2001.** “Not-So-Inevitable Revolutions: The Political Trajectory of Revolutionary Movements in Central America” in *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*, Cambridge University Press [Chapter 6, pp. 180-213].
9. **Booth, John A., Christine Wade, and Thomas W. Walker. 2006.** “Nicaragua,” in *Understanding Central America: Global Forces, Rebellion, and Change*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Westview Press. [Chapter 5, 69-93]

Movie: **Salvador** (1986 – directed by Oliver Stone)

**Test on Topic # 3:** Monday October 26<sup>th</sup>

---

---

### **Topic # 4 – Contemporary Politics: Latin America’s “New” Leftists** [weeks 10 to 12, 10/26 to 11/11]

Next, we move on to address some contemporary political issues. The readings examine the emergence of leftist government in Latin America, with particular attention to the case of Venezuela under the presidency of Hugo Chavez.

10. **Castañeda, Jorge G. 2006.** “Latin America's Left Turn,” *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2006.
11. **Gunson, Phil. 2006.** “Chavez’s Venezuela,” *Current History*, February 2006.
12. **Corrales, Javier and Michael Penfold. 2007.** “Venezuela: Crowding Out the Opposition,” *Journal of Democracy*, 18(2): 99-113.
13. A series of short articles from **The Economist**, 2009.

Documentary: **Frontline: The Hugo Chavez Show** (2008 – PBS)

**Test on Topic # 4:** Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>

---

---

**Presentations of Individual Research Projects** [weeks 13 to 15, 11/16 to 12/02]

Students will present their research papers during the last three weeks of class. After some introductory remarks by the professor, putting the presentations for the day into context, each student will have up to 10 minutes to present their own papers. Final papers are due the day of the presentation for those presenting during the last two weeks, while those students presenting during week 13 (11/16 and 11/18) can turn in their final paper on Monday November 13<sup>th</sup>.

---