



**LAKE FOREST
COLLEGE**

**Department of Politics
and International Relations**

Politics of Latin America
IREL 259 / LNAM 219 / POLS 219

Fall Semester 2023-2024

Professor:	Diana Davila Gordillo , Ph.D.	Office:	Brown Hall 331
E-mail:	ddavilagordillo@lakeforest.edu	Office Hours:	Mondays 14:00 - 16:00
Class Time:	T-R 14:30 - 15:50	Room:	Brown Hall 215

Course description: An introduction to politics and social change in Latin America. The study will focus on several Latin American countries and on special topics such as human rights, religion, the military, land reform, women, and population policy.

This seminar will focus on democracy in Latin America widely defined and the main historical and more current issues that determine and alter it with a particular focus on institutions. Latin America is one of the most unequal regions in the world. The global pandemic underscored this inequality. In the region, the entrenched inequalities meant that only a few could effectively and safely shelter in place and follow the higher levels of personal hygiene required during the pandemic; many faced precarious and cramped housing conditions and limited – if not nonexistent – access to piped water. Despite all this, the region has continued to have an active political life. Democracy in Latin America continues to be alive (if not entirely well). In this class we will discuss how these processes take place together, and how democracy continues to exist within inequality.

This course meets 2 times per week for 160 minutes per week. The course carries 1.0 course credit (equivalent to four semester credit hours). Students are expected to devote a minimum of 12 hours of total work per week (in-class time plus out-of-class work) to this course.

Learning outcomes: By the end of this seminar students will be able to:

- Engage critically, analytically, and thoughtfully with theories in political science and scholarship of Latin American Politics.

- Discuss the most important elements of current Latin American scholarship on democracy, development, and human rights.
- Understand institutions and processes that shape the economic and political realities of Latin America.
- Develop clear and cogent arguments in writing.

Course Materials:

Required Book: Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis by Gerardo Munck and Juan Pablo Luna, Cambridge University Press (2022). The book is available via course reserve at the library. You may purchase an ebook version. I have one extra copy that you can borrow.

Additional materials: Any additional text will be posted on Moodle and will be available via the library.

All readings and other materials are due on the date they are assigned. Students should come to class ready to answer questions and engage in discussions based on the readings.

Attendance:

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. If you will be absent due to athletics events or other college-approved events, please let me know at the beginning of the semester. If you must miss a class for any reason, I will allow for four (4) absences without penalty; each unexcused absence thereafter will result in a half-letter deduction from the final grade (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.). Six or more absences will result in failing the course. Be smart and save up your absences for when you REALLY need to miss a class!

Technology:

You may use your laptop in class to reference the readings or other class-related materials. Please do not use your laptops, phones, or other devices for browsing, texting, or social media as it is distracting not only to you but to students around you as well. Please be mindful and respectful.

Late Assignments:

Assignments submitted after the due date will be penalized a half-letter grade per day. If you are struggling to meet the deadline please reach out *before* the deadline.

Debates and Discussions:

The topics of this course are subject to debate, and students are expected to have different

ideas and perspectives. While productive discussions are highly encouraged, statements or comments that personally attack any individuals or groups will not be tolerated. If you have any particular sensitivities that might have bearing on your ability to read, hear, watch, or discuss certain material, please notify me. Please be aware, however, that because of the nature of this class, I cannot guarantee that you will be completely shielded from the material you find disturbing.

House Rules:

The recent years have been long and challenging for all. We have all made it to this point, facing enormous challenges and disruptions in our life plans. Some paths have been forever disrupted, and others appear more daunting than they should. Nonetheless, we have all continued to persevere and make the best out of challenging situations. To be sure, nobody signed up for the pandemic and its aftermath. However, as we need to continue moving, my commitment to you is to be tirelessly enthusiastic and work hard for you. Your success in this class is important to me. This class is a partnership between me as your lecturer and you as student. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect. We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If aspects of this course prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. If you go by a different name and/or pronouns than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Using correct names and gender pronouns is important to me, so please share those details with me and correct me if a mistake is made.

What do I expect from you to create an environment of mutual respect? I expect students to arrive to class prepared to contribute, meaning that you have completed the readings and completed the necessary assignments. I also expect professional behavior in class. Think of how you would behave at an important meeting. One arrives a few minutes early. One does not wander off, surf the web, explore social media, or text a friend. Repeated unprofessional behavior will be seen as a lack of engagement.

Important Deadlines:

- 1) Paper 1: Nation building and state myths Sept. 10
- 2) Paper 2: Military Regimes and Transitional Justice Sept. 27
- 3) Paper 3: Challenges and Quality of Democracy Oct. 18
- 4) Paper 4: Inequality in Latin America Nov. 12
- 5) Paper 5 (Final): Elections and Parties Dec. 3
- 6) Two presentations Assigned dates
- 7) Extra Credit paper Dec. 12

Submissions (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5) must be handed in electronically (via Moodle) at 23:59

(the latest) on the respective day. Submission (7) can be submitted until Dec. 12 by 11:00. This assignment will not be granted any extension.

Assignments, grades, and grading policy:

Participation 25%: Your participation grade will be divided into two items.

1. **In-class participation (15%)** This grade will depend on your in-class participation throughout the semester. I expect students to read the assigned materials before class and be prepared to discuss them. Your participation grade will be based on both the quantity and quality of your contribution to class discussions and group activities. I realize that some may feel more comfortable speaking up in class than others. For those who find themselves hesitant to participate, you should make it a point to see me during office hours or schedule an appointment with me so that we can discuss strategies to improve your performance in class. Of course, that invitation is open to all students to discuss whatever matter you would like.
2. **Discussion of peer's presentation (10%)** This grade will depend on your engagement with one of your peer's presentations. I will assign you a day in which you should make comments on your classmate's presentation. These comments should *add* to the knowledge we are receiving from your classmate. This means you can provide your perspective or knowledge about the case you wrote about in your **own** paper. You may also ask clarification questions.

Presentations: two (2) (each 10%): You will present two of your papers to your classmates. Dates for the presentations will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. For each presentation, you should plan to speak for about 8 to 10 minutes. You will present the main arguments/findings of your paper in a clear and accessible manner. You can use a power-point presentation, and include images and videos. These presentations are designed to share what you have learned about one country to your classmates.

Papers: five (5) - (each 11%): You will write five (5) papers in total in this class. Each paper has an assigned topic. You will receive specific instructions for each of the papers. Broadly speaking, you will select one country to write about (you can write about the same country throughout the semester or change the country for each paper). You will have to research information about the country regarding the assigned topic. Your paper should present this information while making one or multiple arguments. Each paper should be between 800 and 1000 words. You will write the paper *after* a class where we will discuss the main elements of the topic. In this manner, you will know **what** to research and **what arguments** to make. The fifth paper is equivalent to the final paper of this class.

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: what is state capacity? what makes a state weak? Is the US a weak state?

 Required reading

- LAP Textbook Chapter 1

Thursday - Sept. 7: Nation building

- Read the assigned text. Prepare to answer these questions: why are the authors talking about foundational myths? what is a myth?

 Required reading

- LAP Textbook Chapter 2

 First paper due by Sunday, Sept. 10 23:59.

Week 4: Presentations (Sept. 12) and Democracy and Authoritarianism (Sept. 14)

This week we will have the first presentations. Remember that you will either present or be tasked with commenting your peer's presentation. On Thursday, we will start our discussions about democracy and authoritarianism.

Tuesday - Sept. 12: Presentations

Thursday - Sept. 14: Democracy and Authoritarianism We will discuss democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America. Be prepared to answer these questions: is democracy easy to maintain? What are the characteristics of the regimes most prevalent in Latin America during the 20th century?

 Required reading

- LAP Textbook Chapter 3

Week 5: Military regimes and Transitional justice (Sept. 19) Development models and state capacity (Sept. 21)

This week we will talk about transitional justice and military regimes. On Thursday we will return to a conversation we had on week 2: what makes a state weak or strong? and link it to economic and development models in the region.

Tuesday - Sept. 19: Military regimes and transitional justice

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: why was amnesty possible? how does that reflect the power configuration of Latin America? how can prosecutions take place when amnesty measures have been taken?

 Required readings


- LAP Textbook Chapter 9

Tuesday - Sept. 21: Development models and state capacity

- Read the assigned text. This session will focus on the different development models applied in the region. Be prepared to answer these questions: why are these development models relevant? what was their most important effect? In your opinion which one was the best/worst model in terms of right for the population?

 Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapter 4

 Second paper due by Sunday, Sept. 27 23:59.

Week 6: Political parties in Latin America (Sept. 26) and Presentations (Sept. 28)

This week we will discuss how different interest groups are represented by political parties in the region. On Thursday, we will have the second set of presentations.

Tuesday - Sept. 26: Political parties in Latin America

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: are parties representing all groups in Latin America? Why are party organizations so diverse?

 Required readings.

- LAP Textbook Chapter 7

Thursday - Sept. 28: Presentations

Week 7: Movie week

Tuesday - Oct. 3: Movie, 1985

Thursday - Oct. 5: Movie, 1985

Week 8: Quality of Democracy (Oct. 10) and there will be no session on Thursday (Oct. 12) This week we will talk about the quality of democracy in Latin America. Are individuals happy with democracy in the region?

Tuesday - Oct. 10: Quality of democracy in Latin America

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer this question: what kinds of problems of democracy has Latin America experienced?

 Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapter 5

Tuesday - Oct. 12: No session

Week 9: Mid-semester break (Oct. 17) and Presentations (Oct. 19)

Tuesday - Oct. 17, Mid-Semester break Your third paper is due on Oct. 18 by 23:59. On Thursday we will have presentations.

-  Third paper due by Wednesday, Oct. 18 by 23:59.

Thursday - Oct. 19, Quality of Democracy

Week 10: Presentations (Oct. 24) and Social Rights in Latin America and Unequal democracies (Oct. 26). This week we will talk about social rights in Latin America and how these do not reach everyone in the region.

Tuesday - Oct. 24:

- Presentations

Thursday - Oct. 26: Social rights in Latin America and Unequal democracies

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer this question: given the levels of inequality in the region, can there be a healthy democracy?

 Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapters 12, 14, and 15
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Week 11: Corruption (Oct. 31) and Migration (Nov. 2). This week we will talk about corruption and migration trends in the region.

Tuesday - Oct. 31: Corruption

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: is high-level corruption equally/more/less important than low-level corruption?

Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapter 10

! Watch this video about Lava Jato <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMXumMJZYI&t=271s>

Thursday - Nov. 2: Migration

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: are women helping others move forward? are they not?

Required readings

- Working paper posted in Moodle

! Listen to this podcast (or read the transcript). CONTENT WARNING - this podcast discusses the difficult passage of the Darien Gap. This kind of stories are difficult to process so please take care of yourself. If the story is too difficult to follow, stop. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/20/podcasts/the-daily/darien-gap-migrants-us-border.html>

Week 12: Social movements and Inclusion (Nov. 7) and Social movements and Women's rights (Nov. 9). This week we will talk about social movements in Latin America and the inclusion of different groups.

Tuesday - Nov. 7: Social movements and inclusion

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: why is inclusion important? why are social movements a tool to get access?

Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapter 6


- Rice, R. (2017). "Indigenous Political Representation in Latin America." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

Thursday - Nov. 9: Social movements and Women's rights

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer these questions: why is how we frame issues important? why are social movements so important in the region?

 Required reading

- Daby, Mariela and Moseley, Mason W. (2022). "Feminist Mobilization and the Abortion Debate in Latin America: Lessons from Argentina". *Politics and Gender* 18: 359–393

 Fourth paper due by Sunday, Nov. 12 by 23:59.

Week 13: Presentations (Nov. 14) and The New Violence (Nov. 16). This week we will talk about social movements and women's rights. On Thursday we will talk about the new forms of violence in the region and answers to this phenomenon.

Tuesday - Nov. 14: Presentations

Thursday - Nov. 9: The New Violence

- Read the assigned text. Be prepared to answer this question: Latin America is currently considered one of the most violent regions in the world. Governments and citizens are consistently looking for "solutions" to this issue, and the answer often is: improving state capacity. Can more/better state capacity limit violence? If yes, what type of state capacity? If not, why?

 Required readings

- LAP Textbook Chapter 11
- Democracy Dies under Mano Dura: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/democracy-dies-under-mano-dura-anti-crime-strategies-northern-triangle>

Week 14: Elections and Campaigns (Nov. 21) and Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 23).

This week we will talk about Elections in the region. There will be no session on Thursday.

Tuesday - Nov. 21:

- Read the assigned texts. Readings will be announced closer to the date.

Thursday - Nov. 23: No class - Thanksgiving break.

Week 15: The Left (Nov. 28) and The Right (Nov.30). This week we will discuss the resurgence of Left and Right wing parties in the region.

Tuesday - Nov. 28: The Left


- Read the assigned readings. Be prepared to answer these questions: Why did the Left win elections in the early 2000s? Will they "come back" or are these parties different from those that already left power?

 Required readings

- Levitsky, Steven, and Kenneth M Roberts. (2011). The Resurgence of the Latin American Left. The Resurgence of the Latin American Left. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. **Chapter 1 – Introduction.**
- Latin America's New Left Surge <https://nacla.org/latin-america-new-left-surge>

Thursday - Nov. 30: The Right


- Read the assigned readings and watch the assigned videos. Be prepared to answer these questions: why are these authors talking about a return of the right? what are the characteristics of these organizations?

 Read the assigned texts.

- Mayka, Lindsay, and Amy Erica Smith. 2021. "Introduction: The Grassroots Right in Latin America: Patterns, Causes, and Consequences." **Latin American Politics and Society** 63 (3): 1–20.
- Video: The New right in Latin America <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRR1GSpvh4I&t=3013s>

Week 16: presentations (Dec. 5) This week we will have presentations

Tuesday - Dec. 5: Presentations

-  Extra credit paper is due on **Dec. 12 by 11:00**. No extensions are possible for this assignment.