Introduction

Welcome to the study of Latin American politics and international relations. The region of Latin America is associated with significant economic, social, and political change. In the past decade many countries elected leftist presidents with some of these countries continuing to be governed by the Left, i.e., Bolivia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Other countries continue to be governed by the Right while Mexico saw the return to power of the PRI, a party that has previously governed for seven decades. Extending the historical lens further backward one can observe events and trends associated with the democratic transitions of the 1980s, the neo-liberal economic reforms of the 1990s, and the rise of the Leftist populist leaders in the 2000s. Much of the sense of optimism generated with the return to democracy and the adoption of market reforms has waned and replaced with a malaise tied to the persistence of poverty, social and political violence, and economic disappointments.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is provide students with an introduction to politics in Latin America and to develop a framework for understanding major economic, social, and political events. It is designed to acquaint students with some of the basic concepts and approaches adopted for a regional study of Latin America. The course will begin with a broad overview of the region and survey historical patterns and trends, examine the role of political actors and development of major political institutions in Latin America, and consider the immersion of Latin America into the international political system. Special themes and issues of Latin American politics will be examined such as the return to democracy, economic development, political violence and national security. After beginning with a broad overview of the region, the course will proceed to detailed studies of specific countries or sub-regions – Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Central America and Cuba. We will consider a brief overview of U.S.-Latin America relations. It is intended that by the end of the semester you will have acquired sufficient analytical skills and knowledge with which to analyze political, economic, and international phenomena within the context of Latin America. The final portion of the course will be devoted towards preparing for and carrying out a simulation exercise of a Latin American summit. Students will form delegations of two to four representatives, depending on the size of the country. As representatives of particular countries from Latin America you will decide how to organize your delegation based on the issues most important to your country.

Course Objectives:

- Gain factual knowledge about Latin American politics.
- Define some of the basic concepts specific to the region.
- Develop an analysis of historical and political development of Latin America.
Introduce conceptual frameworks and theories for the study of the region.
Understand key trends and policy issues in Latin American politics.

**Learning Outcomes:**
- To define concepts and analyze theories adopted for the study of Latin American politics.
- To describe factors that have shaped the development of political systems in Latin America.
- To describe and/or explain contemporary challenges of political governance facing the region.
- To use the scholarly literature to engage in learning and critical thinking.

**Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes**
- Learning outcomes will be assessed via oral presentations, written essays, examinations, and participation in simulation exercises.

**Blackboard**

The teaching of this course is integrated with the Blackboard platform. You will find useful information on Blackboard such as a copy of the course syllabus, information about exams, grading system, and your grades. I also will post Powerpoints presentations for the classroom lectures. It is a work-in-progress site and will be built upon as the class unfolds.

To access Blackboard you must have an ASU email account and be registered for this course. To login go to https://blackboard.angelo.edu/ and type in your ASU userid and password. Please try to access Blackboard as soon as possible to make sure that you are enrolled in the course and that you understand the various features of Blackboard.

**Communication**

Office hours are as follows:
M,T,R,F 10:00-11:00 AM;
M,T,W,F 2:30-3:30 PM; and
By appointment also

You can reach me by e-mail, and I will contact you using the ASU email account. To protect your privacy, I do not discuss grades over e-mail. If you use a different email address, please make sure to monitor your ASU email account on a regular basis to receive all transmitted messages.

**Class Format**

To attain these objectives a series of lectures will be provided for studying the region of Latin America. Class sessions will be set aside for lecture presentations, class discussions, and student engagement in simulation exercises. Each student is expected to attend class on a regular basis, deliver an oral presentation, prepare written assignments, engage in class discussions, take two exams, and participate in an in-class simulation Latin American summit. For the purposes of keeping up with current events for the region of Latin America, students are encouraged to

**Course Requirements and Grading**

**Attendance and Participation**

Each student is required to regularly attend class and attendance counts as part of the class participation grade. You are expected to be on time for the start of class and to participate actively in the sharing of your ideas during various classrooms discussions. Please note that class participation means more than merely attending class sessions; it also entails doing the class readings and contributing insightful comments and posing questions throughout the class sessions. Your questions, insights, and analysis of courses materials and assigned readings are strongly encouraged and valued. Attendance will be recorded daily via a sign-in sheet. If you have seven (7) or more unexcused absences, your grade will be lowered accordingly – one letter grade. Student absence for observance of a religious holy day will be treated in accordance with OP 10.19 of ASU’s Operating Policies and Procedures.

**Summit Simulation Exercise**

The end of the semester will be devoted to small in-class-conference-simulations based on delegations of country presentations designed around regional topics of Latin America, such as democracy, economic development/growth, security, political instability/violence, and human rights. The class will be asked to prepare and carryout a Latin American summit, where regional challenges facing the region of Latin America will be considered from the perspective of a single country. The goal of the simulation exercise is to build upon the short case study analysis and to extent the study of Latin America to include a more extensive treatment of contemporary challenges facing the region. Once you select a country, you will become part of that country’s delegation, which is participating in the Latin American summit. You will be required to submit an issue profile summary, research paper on the analysis of your topic, and a reflection/response paper. Please note that this is the first time this simulation exercise has been incorporated to the course content and that some changes may still be made as the semester progresses and final plans are made for the Latin American summit simulation. Should changes be made, due notice will be provided in Blackboard announcements and class emails.

**Issue profile summary:** In preparation for the simulation summit you will have to submit an issue profile paper. The profile essay should provide a brief narrative of the topic/challenge, selected for your specific country and researched below. It should provide a description of the specific issue to be studied. It should identify major points that you assess are relevant to your analysis. It should cite at least 4 reference sources. The profile summary report should comprise approximately two pages (650 words, excluding reference citations).

**Research topic paper:** Each of you will prepare a topic research paper in which you develop an analysis of a specific issue/challenge relevant to the country that you have selected. In general you are to consider regional challenges of political governance facing the region of Latin America and focus on one significant challenge from the perspective of your individual country. You will need to research this topic in order to develop an analysis that considers history, major actors, relevant institutions, content/structure of controversy, and policy options. Your goal is to
analyze this topic with respect to your selected country’s options for handling this challenge and to recommend some policy options for how your country will deal and/or resolve this important issue. Finally, you will need to explain concisely what your delegation hopes to accomplish at the summit. Your research topic paper should comprise approximately eight pages (2,600 words) excluding reference page and title page.

Oral presentation: In addition, you will be asked to deliver a brief summary of your topic to the entire delegates attending the simulation conference in which you outline the most important points and/or positions. Your presentation will be delivered at the beginning of the simulation summit exercises. To help you deliver this presentation you will need to prepare a PowerPoint presentation that contains at least five slides:

- a brief description of the topic, include relevant content information and actors
- a visual element of the topic
- a summary of points, observations and goals to be sought

Reflection/response essay: The second paper is labeled as a post-summit essay. You are to comment with regards to your participation in the summit. Was there disagreement between your views and the other representative of your country’s delegation? Were you able pursue your goals with delegations from other countries? What were some successes and disappointments? How does your topic relate to other topics and issues presented by other country delegations? How did your participation in the summit conference simulation enhance your understanding of Latin American politics? Your response paper should comprise approximately five pages (1,625 words).

All written assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Your papers must be typed, paginated, and double-spaced with one-inch margins (unjustified) and Times New Roman font with a 12 pt. size. Please be advised that papers may not be submitted electronically unless you have made advanced arrangements. Be careful to avoid the offence of plagiarism which is the intellectual appropriation of someone else’s ideas or writings.

It is suggested that you consult appropriate scholarly journals. Among the appropriate journals, but not limited to, are: *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* (now titled Latin American Politics and Society); *Journal of Latin American Studies; Latin American Research Review; Journal of Inter-American Economic Affairs; Latin American Perspectives; Third World Quarterly; Comparative Politics; Comparative Political Studies; Foreign Affairs; Journal of Democracy; and *World Politics*.

The due dates for the written assignments of the simulation Latin American summit are specified in the syllabus. Late papers will be penalized by reduction of ½ grade taken off for every day late.

Examinations
Your grade will also be determined by two exams (each counting 25%). All exams will be closed book and a combination of multiple-choice, identification, and short essay. They will cover the assigned readings and class discussions. **If you miss an exam when scheduled, you are strongly encouraged to notify me within 24 hours so that alternative plans can be arranged.** Make-up exams will be granted only in cases of verified absences for health or
personal emergency. Make-up exams will be scheduled during the last week of the semester; they will be comprehensive and entirely essay. **You will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.**

According to the University Calendar, the last day for a partial or total withdrawal from the University is **Friday, November 3, 2017**. Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

**Grading System**

Your semester grade will be based on the total number of grade points accumulated for each course requirement, graded on a 100 point scale. Each course-required item is weighted according to the specified percentage (listed below) and will contribute to your sum total of **semester grade points**. The total number of earned semester points equals 100 semester points. Your total semester points will be used to determine your letter grade. The grading scale adopted for determining the letter grade is listed below. In order to be fair to all students it should be considered fairly rigid. Please note that there is no opportunity for extra-credit work. Your grade will solely be limited to the course requirements.

**Course Requirements & Component Weighting**

- Attendance and Participation ........................................... 5%
- Latin American Summit Simulation ...................................... 45%
  - Issue Profile Summary ........................................... 5%
  - Oral Presentation ..................................................... 5%
  - Research Topic Paper ............................................... 20%
  - Reflection Essay ....................................................... 8%
  - Summit Performance .................................................. 7%
- Two Exams (25% each) .................................................... 50%

**Grading Scale**

A=90-100  B=80-89  C=70-79  D=60-69  F=59 and below

[Numeric numbers refer to total semester points]

**Special Needs**

In accordance with OP 10.15 of ASU’s Operating Policies and Procedures, persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Academic Honesty**

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the university Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the ASU Student Handbook. See the Current Student page on the ASU homepage (URL address: http://www.angelo.edu/cstudent/) and click on Academic Honor Code. Acts of academic dishonesty and misconduct as referenced in Angelo State University's Student Handbook will be referred to the Dean of Students.
Unprofessional Behavior

A certain classroom decorum based upon mutual respect toward others contributes towards a productive environment. Please note that arriving late without a good reason or making distracting noise in the classroom, i.e., whispering or eating, is unprofessional and a sign of disrespect. Please be sure to turn off cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices with audible signals, and also refrain from bringing food and beverages.

Required Text:


Additional Class Readings (Short articles and other pertinent materials as made available throughout the semester)

Course Schedule:

[The schedule is a tentative and may vary depending upon class progress. At the instructor’s discretion, there may be some changes to the reading assignments listed below]

August 29: Introduction

What are the rules of the game for this course? What will be the basis for evaluating student performance? Questions pertaining to course requirements and management of the course will be answered.

Part I: Latin America: Historical, Political, & Economic Development

August 31 – September 12: Introducing the study of Latin America

What conceptual frameworks are suitable for the study of modern Latin America? How does one pursue the study of the Southern Hemisphere?

A. Colonial Foundations
B. Conceptual Framework for Analysis
   1. Export-Import Growth
   2. Import-Substitution Model
C. Latin America as a Region
D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapters 1-2.

September 14 – September 19: Argentina

How does one develop the case study of Argentina? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?

A. Historical Development
B. Economic Development
C. Political System
D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 9.

September 21 – September 26: Chile
How does one develop the case study of Chile? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?
   A. Historical Development
   B. Economic Development
   C. Political System
   D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 10.

September 28 – October 3: Brazil
How does one develop the case study of Brazil? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?
   A. Historical Development
   B. Economic Development
   C. Political System
   D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 11.

October 5: First Exam

October 10 – October 12: Mexico
How does one develop the case study of Mexico? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?
   A. Historical Development
   B. Economic Development
   C. Political System
   D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 3.

October 17 – October 19: Central America
How does one study the Central American region? What are the important events and major themes associated with the study of the region? In what manner in the conceptual framework applicable for this region?
   A. Historical Development
   B. Economic Development
   C. Political Systems
   D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 4.
October 24 – October 26: Venezuela

How does one develop the case study of Venezuela? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?

A. Historical Development
B. Economic Development
C. Political System
D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 8.

October 31 – November 2: Cuba

How does one develop the case study of Cuba? What are the important events and major themes associated with this case study? In what manner is the conceptual framework applicable to this case study?

A. Historical Development
B. Economic Development
C. Political System
D. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 5.

***November 2 – Issue Profile Summary Due***

November 7 – November 9: U.S.-Latin America Relations

What basic patterns shape U.S.-Latin America relations? What are the historical dynamics and the major contemporary issues associated with the Inter-American international system?

A. U.S. policy towards Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries
B. Challenges of the Inter-American system
C. Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 9.

November 14: Second Exam

Part II: Latin American Summit

November 16 – November 28: Oral Presentations

Country delegation presentations of research paper topics.

***November 16 – Research Paper Due***

November 30: Summit Conference

December 5 – December 7: Summit Proposals

***December 12: Reflection Essay Due***