Course Syllabus and Policy Requirement Statement

In order to access your course materials, you must agree to the following, by clicking the "Mark Reviewed" button below.

By checking the "Mark Reviewed" link below, you are indicating the following:

- You have read, understood, and will comply with the policies and procedures listed in the class syllabus, and that you have acquired the required textbook(s).
- You have read, understood, and will comply with class policies and procedures as specified in the online Student Handbook.
- You have read, understood, and will comply with computer and software requirements as specified in the Student Orientation Course.

SEC 6331 Security Issues in Latin America I

Course Description/Overview

This course focuses on current, major issues within the Latin American region. While engaging in critical analysis of current issues, it examines the broader conceptual context and analytical framework that explain interactions within the region and the international arena.

The "Cultural Competency and Contemporary Security Issues in Latin America" course focuses upon the complex, linked security issues that predominate in the region while assessing policy options for dealing with these issues. This course first explores how the cultural context affects these issues, as the foundations of primarily Spanish and Portuguese colonization and development continue to influence the type and severity of traditional and nontraditional security issues. At the same time students will examine the prevalence of truly transnational security issues in the Western Hemisphere, spurred in part by the forces of globalization. These issues range from drug trafficking to violent crime to radical and extremist policies sponsored by state and nonstate actors. The course addresses in depth specific "public security" actors and issues (issues within states); and "external security" actors and issues (issues between states), highlighting several subregions and key countries. Throughout the course policies aimed at resolving these issues are assessed, along with United States perspectives. As the major power in the Western Hemisphere, most of these issues directly affect U.S. security concerns.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Objectives:

As a result of completing this course, the student will be able to:

- Analyze the historical-cultural context and factors of globalization that form the framework for contemporary security issues within the Latin American region.
- Analyze the key internal security issues, actors, and policies which affect most Latin American countries and subregions.
- Analyze the key external security issues, actors, and policies which affect most Latin American countries and subregions.
Grading Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Thread participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>(occurs in weeks with no written assignment).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Sunday of the fifth week.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Sunday of the fifth week. 10-12 page essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Wednesday of the eighth week. 18-20 page essay</td>
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Angelo State University employs a letter grade system. Grades in this course are determined on a percentage scale:

- A = 90 – 100 %
- B = 80 – 89 %
- C = 70 – 79 %
- F = 59 % and below.

Course Organization:

**Lesson One: Introduction to the Context of Security Issues in Latin America: Forces of Culture and Globalization**

This lesson provides a general overview of the Latin American region, briefly reviewing key geographic, historical, political, economic, and social facts to provide a common context for students—especially for those unfamiliar with Latin America. Cultural similarities and diversity within the region are highlighted, especially those factors bearing on security issues. Lesson 1 includes a short overview of public and internal security issues, ranging from the narcotrafficking and associated violence waged by criminal groups to the radical extremism of insurgents and terrorist groups. State-centered issues of concern are also introduced, from radical populism to external actors in the region such as Iran and China. This lesson clearly demonstrates that both cultural and globalization forces have significant implications for security concerns in the Western Hemisphere.

**Lesson Two: Mexico and the Drug Trafficking Challenge**

In this lesson, students explore the complex, seemingly intractable challenge of drug trafficking with its inescapable links to criminal violence in Mexico. While crime, violence, and corruption have long existed and fed off each other in Mexico, the incredible wealth afforded by drug trafficking has raised levels of violence and corruption on such a scale as to destabilize numerous regions of Mexico, especially along the U.S. border. Drug trafficking groups are targeting not only each other, but institutions of the Mexican state, and most ordinary Mexican citizens find it almost impossible to escape the consequences of this anarchy.
Significantly, this is occurring despite a fairly successful government campaign to apprehend major drug cartel leaders, and close cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican governments. Lesson 2 concludes by considering current policies such as the U.S.-funded Merida Initiative and other proposals to address this security challenge more successfully.

Lesson Three: Central America and the Challenge of Violence

Some twenty-thirty years ago all Central American countries except Costa Rica were experiencing long periods of insurgencies, civil war, and related violence. While peace agreements ended these ideologically fueled conflicts by the early nineties, tragically criminal gang-dominated violence has come to overshadow this struggling subregion. The challenge is becoming more complex and worrisome as the large Mexican drug cartels expand their operations into Central America, and collaborate, or compete, with the powerful Mara street gangs. Yet while clearly drug trafficking and other criminal activities fuel violence today, historically the extreme poverty and deliberate exclusion of the majority of Central Americans from productive employment or full participation in their political systems have provided the breeding grounds for this security challenge.

Lesson Four: Colombia and the NarcoInsurgency/Narcoterrorism Challenge

Until quite recently Colombia was the main country of concern in Latin America when considering security issues. Yet while narcoinsurgent groups like the FARC still assist the major drug organizations to grow coca and export cocaine, the influence of the FARC has been reduced as its leadership has been killed and captured (along with leadership from the traditional drug cartels), and its control of territory dramatically reduced. The U.S.-funded Plan Colombia has been praised for part of this success in improving Colombia's security forces and governmental institutions, along with determined Colombian leadership. But in spite of some progress, many Colombians continue to face extreme poverty and violence, with almost four million Colombians displaced within their own country. Additionally, the government remains concerned about its relations with neighbors such as Venezuela, which has harbored FARC insurgents and apparently cooperates in drug trafficking and possibly terrorist group activities. This lesson considers how follow-on proposals to Plan Colombia and other policy options can effectively address these various issues.

Lesson Five: Venezuela and the ALBA Alliance: The Challenge of Radical Populism

Under President Hugo Chávez Venezuela has gradually evolved into a more authoritarian state with a particular ideology known as "Bolivarian socialism"--a radical populist ideology that is anti-free trade and anti-liberal democracy (and anti-United States). While this in itself might not constitute an actual security issue, President Chávez has deliberately engineered an alliance of like-minded states in the "ALBA" group (Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Cuba) which is meant to provide a clear-cut alternative to U.S. influence and more moderate initiatives in the region. This is just one reason why President Chávez has made it a practice to invite leaders of states actively hostile to, or competitors with, the United States to visit the region, such as Iran and Russia. Additionally, there is mixed evidence as to whether Venezuela, and its allies, are covertly supporting drug trafficking and other criminal groups (and perhaps terrorist groups) against the interests of states like Colombia and the United States. This lesson considers alternative policy options to radical populism such as moderate democratic socialism in Brazil and Chile.

Lesson Six: The Challenge of Radical/Extremist Nonstate Actors in Latin America

In contrast to Lessons 2-3 which addressed the challenge of criminal nonstate actors in the region, this lesson assesses the challenge of diverse radical/extremist nonstate actors who are motivated by some type of ideology or culture. This includes armed groups in Latin America who have long claimed to be motivated primarily by Marxist ideology--such as the FARC in Colombia and Shining Path in Peru--or more recently, groups linked to global radical and terrorist Islamic organizations such as Hizballah. On the other hand, one of the most important regional trends is represented by groups or communities motivated by culture; primarily indigenous cultures that have been present in Latin America for many centuries. The recent re-election of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first truly indigenous president, brought this issue to
prominence. Yet localized movements have been ongoing for years and even centuries in Bolivia, other Andean nations and in Mexico and Guatemala to challenge the government for increased autonomy and rights for indigenous and marginalized communities. Whether these groups use violence or not to achieve their agendas represents an additional security challenge within Latin America.

Lesson Seven: The Challenge of External State Actors in Latin America

While it is true that actors external to the Western Hemisphere have steadily increased their presence in the Latin American region, is that necessarily cause for concern? Many would view the very large commodities and investment relations that China has developed with key Latin American countries as a logical reflection of China's search for natural resources; and also as beneficial for most Latin American economies. Others would be ambivalent about Russia's growing relationship with Venezuela, including key Russian assistance in modernizing the Venezuelan military, along with other arms sales in the region. Probably the majority would agree that the increasing presence of Iran in the region is problematic for security concerns, especially where that presence is linked to supporting radical governments, and radical/terrorist Islamic groups in certain parts of Latin America. How the United States chooses to respond to these external state actors and its associated policies in the region will affect the security context in important ways.

Lesson Eight: Final Essay Assignment:

Students will complete a 6 - 7 page (approximately 1800 words) final essay assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to measure student mastery of the course objectives.

Course Bibliography and Required Readings:

Bibliography of Course Readings:


"The Zapatista Uprising" Website.


Ellingwood, Ken, and Brian Bennett, "High-Profile Panel Urges Non-Criminal Approach to World Drug Policy," latimes.com (Los Angeles Times), June 1, 2011.


Garcia, Cesar, "Top FARC Rebel from Colombia Captured in Venezuela," The Miami Herald, June 1, 2011.


Mark S. Steinitz, “The Terrorism and Drug Connection in Latin America’s Andean Region”.

Matthew Levitt, Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America, The Washington Institute


Oppenheimer, Andres, "'Latin American Decade' or Wishful Thinking?," The Miami Herald, February 5, 2011.


Organization of American States, Committee on Hemispheric Security.

Pat Paterson, Conflict Resolution in Colombia, June 2013.


Steinberg, James B., Deputy Secretary of State, "Remarks to the Center for Strategic and International Studies Colombia Conference" Speech, Washington, DC, June 13, 2011.

The New Nexus of Narco-Terrorism: Hezbollah and Venezuela.
Transparency International, "Corruptions Perception Index 2010."


U.S. State Department, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Background Note: Venezuela," February 8, 2011.

U.S. State Department, Bureau of Public Affairs, "Background Note: Cuba," April 28, 2011.


Valenzuela, Arturo, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. State Department, “U.S. Policy Toward Latin America.” Testimony Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, February 17, 2011.

Valenzuela, Arturo, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, "U.S. Policy Toward Latin America." Testimony Before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, February 17, 2011.


Vanda Felbab-Brown, Changing the Game or Dropping the Ball

Vanessa Neumann, The Significance of the Venezuelan National Assembly Elections.

Washington Office on Latin America, "Tackling Urban Violence in Latin America: Reversing


Wyss, Jim, "Venezuela Oil Giant Hit with Sanctions for Violating Iran Embargo," The Miami Herald, May 24, 2011.

Yapp, Robin, "Bolivia Renounces UN Anti-Drug Convention over Coca Leaf Controversy," The Telegraph (London), July 1, 2011.

Communication

Office Hours/Contacting the Instructor

See the Instructor Information section for contact information.

University Policies

Academic Integrity
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 and the ASU Student Handbook.

Accommodations for Disability
ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.

Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by emailing studentservices@angelo.edu, or by contacting:

Office of Student Affairs
University Center, Suite 112
325-942-2047 Office
325-942-2211 FAX

Student absence for religious holidays
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.