Overview

This independent study class is designed to explore political violence in Latin America. It begins by looking at forms of collective violence during the colonial period and then proceeds to examine insurgency, civil war and revolutions in the region during independence and post-independence periods. Divided into eight weekly lessons the class is designed to analyze across historical periods the region's security problems. Special attention is given to the modern era and the vexing problems of insurgency and narcoterrorism.

Core Objectives: By the end of the class the student will understand

1) The historical, economic, political and cultural roots of collective violence in Latin America
2) The various forms of collective violence (insurgency, terrorism, and civil war) the region has experienced across historical periods
3) How collective violence has changed across historical periods in Latin America

Books:


Topics and Weekly Lessons

I. Lesson 1: Historical Roots of Societal Violence

This lesson explores the impact of European colonization of the “New World” that has been associated with genocidal wars against native peoples, economic exploitation and the importation of slaves. The colonial legacy has endured creating the basis of ethno-racial stratification, autocratic governance and economic inequality that have been the incubators for today’s political violence.

Readings:

Chasteen, Chapter 2
II. Lesson 2: Independence Struggles

This lesson examines the growth of anticolonial resistance movements and their struggle for independence from Spanish, French and Portuguese occupation. It analyzes such inspirational figures as Jose Marti and Simon Bolivar and the role of the United States in facilitating the success of these anti-colonial revolutionary movements.

Readings

Chasteen, Chapter 3 -5

III. Lesson 3: Post-Independence Violence during the Cold War

This lesson analyzes the impact of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy and the region as a battleground pitting authoritarian regimes against communist rebel movements. It examines the issues of civil war, oligarchic rule, right wing dictatorial rule and guerrilla insurgency.

Readings:

Chasteen, Chapters 6-8

Rosenberg, Introduction

IV. Lesson 4: State Terror and Death Squads

This lesson looks at the role of state actors as incubators for collective violence against the populations they rule. It explores the human rights abuses of autocratic and revolutionary regimes and the role of torture and death squads in Latin American society.

Readings

Chasteen, Chapter 9

Rosenberg, Chapters 2-4
V. Lesson 5: Che Guevara’s Legacy

The lesson explores the life of Ernesto “Che” Guevara and his doctrine of guerrilla warfare that continues to inspire insurrectionary movement across the world. Che’s participation in the Cuban revolution and his role in Castro’s early regime are given special attention.

Readings:

Chasteen, Chapter 8-Section IV: The Cuban Revolution
Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare" (all)

Rosenberg, Chapters 5-6

VI. Lesson 6: Post-Cold War Security Issues

This lesson examines collective security problems the region has experience since the end of the Cold War. Despite the wave of democratization during the 1990’s and the end of civil wars in Central America the region has been rocked by political violence. This is especially true of Columbia that has experienced over a generation of societal conflict that has only recently subsided. The future of relations between Cuba and the United States is assessed.

Chasteen, Chapter 10


VII. Lesson 7: Drug Wars and Narco-Terrorism

This lesson looks at drug wars in Latin America. It concentrates on the problem of narco-terrorism in Columbia in the 1990's and in contemporary Mexico. The role of U.S. counter narcotics policy in the region is examined.

Rosenberg, Chapter 1


Boris Saavedra, "Confronting Terrorism in Latin America: Building up Cooperation in the Andean Ridge Region," Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement pp. 156-171, 2006 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09662840500072847](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09662840500072847)

Lesson 8: Hezbollah to Latin America

This lesson looks at the development of Hezbollah terror network in Latin America. Among some of the topics examined are (1) the network’s role in terror attacks in Argentina in the 1990’s and (2) its financial and operational nexus with Latin American criminal gangs in South America’s tri-border area.

Readings:


Joshua M. Brandon and David H. Gray "Iran's Foothold in Latin America: Striking Back at the United States," Global Security Studies, 6:3, 2015


Rotella, Sebastian, "The Terror Threat and Iran's Inroads in Latin America," ProPublica, 2013

Student Assignments:

Assignment I: Midterm Paper (Due at the End of the Fifth Week) (40% of Student Grade)

Length: 12-15 double spaced pages (12’ New Times Roman font)

Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition Referencing citation format

Topic

Please discuss the forms of collective violence (revolution, state terror, and insurgency) that have plagued Latin American Society since the advent of the colonial age. What are the historical, economic, political and cultural roots of this violence and how has violent conflict changed since Independence. How was this collective violence been affected by the advent of the Cold War? How did Ernesto Che Guevara contribute to Latin America’s culture of violence?

Assignment II: Final Paper (Due at the End of the Eight Week)

Length: 18-20 double spaced pages (12’ New Times Roman font)

Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition Referencing citation format

Topic

What major security challenges does Latin America face in the Post- Cold War Era? Why has insurgency persisted in Colombia and what role does the drug war play in rebel violence in that country. Discuss the twin perils of Narco Violence and Terrorism in Latin America? Why is Mexico a major battleground in the Drug War? Why does Hezbollah have operations in Latin America and what is the network’s connection to terror attacks and criminal operations in the region?