

POLS 3270 - Latin American Politics and Government

Department of Political Science
Utah State University

Spring 2024

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Meeting time: TuTh, 15:00 to 16:15
Classroom: Old Main 301
Office hours: By appointment ([sign up here](#)).

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an overview of 20th and 21st century politics in Latin America, with an emphasis in the current challenges faced by countries in the region. The course has two parts. The first part consists of an historical overview of key issues in the development of the modern Latin American states. The second part deals with the problems and challenges Latin American countries face today. Most countries in the region are now democracies, but they face important threats, stemming from their inability to curb violence, corruption and inequality.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. *Understand and apply basic concepts used in comparative politics (e.g., democracy, state capacity, corruption, clientelism) to the study of Latin American politics.*
2. *Identify the key issues in contemporary Latin American politics and explain their origins.*
3. *Analyze current events Latin American politics in their broader context.*

Course Format

- ▷ Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 15:00 to 16:15.
- ▷ You will be required to read ahead of class. Reading assignments are listed in the schedule below.
- ▷ Participation is evaluated based on your engagement during meetings and as your contributions to Discussions on Canvas.
- ▷ The final project represents the largest portion of your final grade. It is comprised of a final paper and a presentation in class.

Readings and Textbook

Course readings will be drawn from academic journal articles (which will be available on Canvas), as well as the following required book (available as an e-book on Canvas):

Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend every lecture, to complete all of the required readings, and to read any additional material that is posted to Canvas each week. When additional materials are posted, I will note explicitly whether they are required or merely optional for interested students. Note that lectures will sometimes cover material that is not in the readings, and the readings may contain material that is not covered in the lectures. Students' performance will be evaluated based on the following items:

- ▷ Class Attendance (5%)
- ▷ Participation (10%)
- ▷ Quizzes (10%)
- ▷ Final Project (50%)
- ▷ Examination (25%)

Class Attendance & Participation (15%)

To succeed in the course, it is essential to attend class and actively participate in the lectures. Lecture slides will also be posted on Canvas. Attendance represents 5% of the final grade.

There are three primary ways students will be evaluated on their course participation. First, starting on week 2, students will choose a country they would like to focus on throughout class. Students are then expected to keep up with the news about their chosen country and to share updates in class (at least 5 during the semester) whenever something noteworthy takes place. These updates represent 5% of the final grade.

Second, outside of class, **students are expected to post their questions, comments, and reflections about course readings to the discussion board on Canvas**. Specifically, students will need to post, *by Friday at 18:00*, at least 2 questions (or answers) about the weeks' materials. Weekly participation in the discussion board represents 5% of the final grade.

Quizzes (10%)

Quizzes are activities based on assigned readings and lecture material; they are designed to help you evaluate how well you have understood the reading and/or the lecture. There will be **6** in-class quizzes. Each of them has two questions. At the end of the semester, your lowest score will be automatically dropped to calculate your score.

Final Paper (50%)

The final project consists of a short essay (no longer than 6 pages, double-spaced) and an in class presentation (about 10 minutes long). You can choose any of the themes we will explore during the class (listed in the schedule below), and write about it in the context of the country of your choosing. For example, you may choose to write about the incidence of political corruption in Guatemala or about the recent trends in urban-rural migration in Argentina.

This is an individual assignment. In order to make sure everyone stays on track the first milestone for this assignment will consist of a 2 page description of your essay idea. This first draft is due by 18:00 on **March 7**. Then, you will present your essay to the class during weeks 14 and 15. You will receive feedback from your peers and from me, which will improve your essay. **The final draft of your essay will be due on April 25 at 18:00.** Your final draft will be graded for substance and clarity. Formatting requirements: no more than 6 pages, double spaced, with 1 inch margins and 12-point Times New Roman font.

Grading for this assignment will be as follows:

- First draft (due on March 7): 20 points
- Final Presentation: 20 points
- Participation in the feedback sessions: 10 points
- Final draft (due on April 25): 50 points

Examination (35%)

There will be an in-class midterm exam on March 21st. We will hold a recap session to discuss your questions before the exam day. You will not be allowed to use your textbook or your notes. Please communicate with me as soon as possible if you require special accommodations.

Extra Credit

Students often find themselves a percentage point or two shy from their desired final grade (e.g., a 89% but they want to earn an A- for their final grade). To address these concerns—and mitigate any panicked emails at the end of the semester—I offer an optional extra credit points in the midterm exam.

Course Policies

Late Submissions

1 full point will be deducted for *every day late*, **unless a prior extension has been granted to you**. The only exceptions to this policy are *documented* cases of serious illness or family tragedy.

Therefore, *you are strongly encouraged to start working on your assignments early*, and to attend class and office hours to have questions answered promptly.

Attendance

Class attendance is required and this class cannot succeed without your participation. Also note that you cannot succeed in this class if you show up to class without previously having read the assigned material. As an instructor, I believe it is essential to reward students who come to class ready to learn and contribute to our discussions. To keep attendance, I will pass around a sign-in sheet for every class and enter this information into the Attendance record on Canvas.

In the event of excessive absences, grade penalties will be applied. [According to the USU General Catalog](#), “Excused absences may not exceed 20% of the class meetings.” Students with excessive absences will receive penalties on their final average. Students whose attendance is below 80% will be subject to letter-grade deductions, ranging from partial to full penalties depending on the number of absences. Students whose attendance is at or below 60% are at risk for failing the course.

Communication and Office Hours

I primarily use emails and announcements on Canvas to communicate with students. Please check Canvas frequently throughout the semester.

You should feel free to email me with any specific questions about course materials or logistics. Please treat your email as a professional correspondence and be as clear and specific as possible, and please include “PS 3270” at the beginning of the subject line.

I will hold weekly office hours on Thursday mornings. As indicated at the top of the syllabus, you must sign up for them using [this link](#). If you are unavailable during this time period, feel free to email me to schedule a separate appointment.

Collaboration With Other Students

In completing the assignments, you are encouraged to interact with your instructor and student colleagues. However, sharing answers to the assignments, including online reading quizzes or exams, is strictly prohibited. Copying other peoples’ work is also strictly prohibited. If assignments are submitted that look suspiciously similar, they will be investigated for academic misconduct (see below).

Use of AI Tools

I expect you to write your own work. The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to write your assignments will be treated as plagiarism.

Technical Problems

It is your responsibility to ensure that you can access the material posted on Canvas, and that you can use the Canvas site to take quizzes and exams, submit papers, etc. I cannot troubleshoot technical problems for all students, so you should consult the online [Service Desk](#) or contact their phone number at (435)-797-HELP or email servicedesk@usu.edu. If you are having a problem with Canvas, a good first step is to try a different internet browser or computer.

Academic Integrity

The University expects that students and faculty alike maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University ([Student Conduct](#)) addresses academic integrity and honesty and notes the following:

Academic Integrity

Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the University by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty and by reporting all violations or suspected violations of the Academic Integrity Standard to their instructors.

The Honor Pledge

To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity." Violations of the Academic Integrity Standard (academic violations) include, but are not limited to cheating, falsification, and plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes knowingly **“representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes using materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the sale of term papers or other academic materials.”** The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include warning or reprimand, grade adjustment, probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and referral to psychological counseling.

Students with Disabilities

USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the [Disability Resource Center](#)

(DRC) as early in the semester as possible (University Inn #101, 435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Mental Health

Mental health is critically important for the success of USU students. As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Utah State University provides free services for students to assist them with addressing these and other concerns. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).

Students are also encouraged to download the [SafeUT App](#) to their smartphones. The SafeUT application is a 24/7 statewide crisis text and tip service that provides real-time crisis intervention to students through texting and a confidential tip program that can help anyone with emotional crises, bullying, relationship problems, mental health, or suicide related issues.

Sexual Harassment

Utah State University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free from acts of sexual misconduct and discrimination and to fostering respect and dignity for all members of the USU community. Title IX and [USU Policy 339](#) address sexual harassment in the workplace and academic setting.

The university responds promptly upon learning of any form of possible discrimination or sexual misconduct. Any individual may contact USU's [Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity \(AA/EO\) Office](#) for available options and resources or clarification. The university has established a complaint procedure to handle all types of discrimination complaints, including sexual harassment ([USU Policy 305](#)), and has designated the AA/EO Director/Title IX Coordinator as the official responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment.

Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

- Jan 9 - Read the syllabus!
- Jan 11 - **No meeting.**

Week 2: Background I

- Jan 16 - The State and State Capacity

- Read: Chapter 1 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Jan 18 - Nation Building, Race, and Ethnicity

- Read: Chapter 2 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 3: Background II

- Jan 23 - Political Regimes and Democracy

- Read: Chapter 3 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Jan 25 - Development Models and Socioeconomic Welfare ([Zoom meeting](#))

- Read: Chapter 4 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 4: Democracy and Autocracy in the 21st Century

- Jan 30 - Democracy and the Quality of Democracy

- Read: Chapter 5 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Feb 1 - Stagnation and Backsliding

- Read: Mainwaring, Scott, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. 2023. “Why Latin America’s Democracies Are Stuck.” *Journal of Democracy* 34(1): 156-170.
- Read: Schwartz, Rachel A., and Anita Isaacs. 2023. “How Guatemala Defied the Odds.” *Journal of Democracy* 34(4): 21-35.
- Read: i Puig, Salvador Martí, and Macià Serra. 2020. “Nicaragua: De-democratization and regime crisis.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 62(2): 117-136.
- [Quiz 1, in class.](#)

Week 5: Political Participation and Inclusion

- Feb 6 - Participation and Inclusion

- Read: Chapter 6 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Feb 8 - Political Parties

- Read: Chapter 7 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 6: Clientelism

- Feb 13 - Electoral Clientelism
 - Read: González-Ocantos Ezequiel, Oliveros Virginia. 2019. “Clientelism in Latin American politics.” In Prevost G., Vanden H. (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of Latin American politics*. Oxford University Press.
 - Read: González-Ocantos, Ezequiel, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, Carlos Meléndez, David Nickerson, and Javier Osorio. 2020. “Carrots and sticks: Experimental evidence of vote-buying and voter intimidation in Guatemala.” *Journal of Peace Research* 57(1): 46-61.
 - Read: Muñoz, Paula. 2014. “An informational theory of campaign clientelism: the case of Peru.” *Comparative Politics* 47(1): 79-98.
- Feb 15 - Patronage and Relational Clientelism
 - Read: Oliveros, Virginia. 2021. “Working for the Machine: Patronage jobs and political services in Argentina.” *Comparative Politics* 53(3): 381-427.
 - Read: Chapter 3 of Nichter, Simeon. 2018. *Votes for survival: Relational clientelism in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

Week 7: Corruption

- Feb 20 - Corruption
 - Read: Chapter 1 of Arellano-Gault, David. 2019. *Corruption in Latin America*. Routledge. (ebook available from the library).
- Feb 22 - Corruption in Latin America
 - Read: Chapter 10 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - **Quiz 2, in class.**

Week 8: The New Violence: Homicides, Drugs, and the State

- Feb 27 - Homicides, Drugs, and the State
 - Read: Chapter 11 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Feb 29 - Policing
 - Read: Denny, Elaine K., David A. Dow, Wayne Pitts, and Erik Wibbels. 2023. “Citizen cooperation with the police: Evidence from contemporary Guatemala.” *Comparative Political Studies* 56(7): 1072-1110.

- Read: Ahnen, Ronald E. 2007. “The politics of police violence in democratic Brazil.” *Latin American politics and society* 49(1): 141-164.
- Quiz 3, in class.

Week 9: Migration

- Mar 5 - Migration in the Americas
 - Read: Sánchez-Alonso, Blanca. 2019. “The age of mass migration in Latin America.” *The Economic History Review* 72(1): 3-31.
 - Read: IOM. 2023. *Migration Trends in the Americas*.
 - Read: Pérez-Campuzano, Enrique, Guillermo Castillo Ramírez, and Mateo Carlos Galindo Pérez. “Internal migration in Mexico: Consolidation of urban–urban mobility, 2000–2015.” *Growth and Change* 49(1): 223-240.
 - Quiz 4, in class.
- Mar 7 - Migration to the United States
 - Read: Abuelafia, E., G. Del Carmen, and M. Ruiz-Arranz. 2019. *In the footprints of migrants: Perspectives and experiences of migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the United States*.
 - Read: Denny, Elaine, Romero, Diego, Levy, Gabriella, Pitts, Wayne, Tellez, Juan F., Villamizar Chaparro, Mateo, Wibbels, Erik, and Zabala, Pamela. 2023. “The Human Impact of Deportation.” *Working paper*.
 - 2-page draft of the final paper is due by 18:00.

Week 10: Spring Break

- Mar 12 - No meeting
- Mar 14 - No meeting

Week 11: Recap Week

- Mar 19 - Recap, *No assigned readings*.
- Mar 21 - **Midterm Exam (in class)**

Week 12: Inequality

- Mar 26 - Social Inequality
 - Read: Chapter 12 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mar 28 - Economic Inequality
 - Read: Chapter 15 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - Quiz 5, in class.

Week 13: Civil Rights and Justice I

- Apr 2 - Civil Rights
 - Read: Chapter 8 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Apr 4 - Transitional Justice ([Online session](#))
 - Read: Chapter 9 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 14: Project Presentations

- Apr 9 - Presentations
- Apr 11 - Presentations

Week 15: Civil Rights and Justice II

- Apr 16 - Transitional Justice: The Case of Colombia ([Online session](#))
 - No assigned reading. The session will include videos and short readings.
- Apr 18 - Sustainable Development and Neoextractivism ([Online session](#))
 - Read: Chapter 13 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 16: Final Week

- Apr 23 - Latin America in Perspective: Lessons and Prospects
 - Read: Chapter 16 of Munck, Gerardo L., and Luna, Juan Pablo. 2022. *Latin American Politics and Society: A Comparative and Historical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 - **Quiz 6, in class.**
- Apr 25 - There is no class meeting, but **the final paper is due by 18:00.**