

Latin American Politics

POLI 354

Fall 2023

Instructor: Gustavo Guajardo

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Class room: Sewall Hall 307

Class time: Tuesdays and Thursdays (2:30PM - 3:45PM)

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11AM-12PM (or appointment)

Office: Herzstein Hall 100

Course description

This course introduces students to Latin American politics, focusing on Latin America's history, recent developments, and political institutions. How did democratic governance emerge in Latin America? How has foreign intervention shaped the region's development? What role do democratic institutions play today and how do they vary across Latin American countries? Why do poverty, corruption, and violence persist? What are the major challenges to democratic governance today? The goal is not to make the student an expert in Latin America's rich history, but to understand the contemporary political landscape and the major challenges to governance from a comparative perspective.

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Develop a broad understanding of the major developments, political institutions, and challenges of Latin American politics.
- Develop critical thinking skills and the ability to apply political science theories to understand current issues in Latin American politics.
- Apply the framework of comparative political science research to other areas of study and regions of the world.

The course is divided into three parts. The first part will consist of a brief overview of the history of Latin America (mostly covering the 19 and 20th centuries) and the emergence of democratic governments. The second section will focus on modern democratic institutions, with an emphasis

on their characteristics, variations, purpose, and effects. The third section of the course will focus on the ongoing challenges to governance and stability that the region still faces. We will use a combination of case studies, recent news stories, and cutting-edge academic research on those topics.

Required materials

The main source of the content for the class will be the Smith (2012) book (available at the library and university bookstore).

Smith, Peter. 2012. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press.

All other materials will be provided on Canvas.

Being up to date on Latin American politics is essential for the class. Here are some useful sources:

- [Latin News \(Weekly report\)](#)
- Latin America in Focus Podcast (available in Spotify)

Grade policies

In order to be successful in the course, students will be required to do the assigned readings, participate, write response essays based on a case study, and complete two exams.

- Participation (20%). The participation grade will be a combination of attendance, in-class participation, submission of questions related to the readings on Canvas, and quizzes.
- Country reports (30%). Students will write three country-specific essays throughout the semester. I will provide a question related to recent class content and the student will write a short essay focusing on a country of their choice.
- Midterm (20%). The exam will be comprehensive (involving all topics seen so far) and a combination of short essays and multiple choice questions.
- Final exam (30%). The final examination will be take-home and open-book. It will consist of open-ended questions and hypothetical scenarios where students will be able to showcase their grasp on theory and concepts.

Late assignments will be accepted with a 10% penalty per each 24 hours, unless you receive an extension **prior** to the due date.

Re-grading will be possible **within a week** after the assignment is returned to the student. The student will be required to submit a short memo describing why the exam should be re-graded. If a student submits an exam for re-grading, it is important to consider that as a result, the new grade might be higher, lower, or equal to the original grade. Re-grading can only be applied once per assignment.

Grading scale:

100% - 93%	A	79% - 75%	C+
92% - 90%	A-	74% - 70%	C
89% - 87%	B+	69% - 65%	C-
86% - 83%	B	64% - 60%	D+
82% - 80%	B-	59% - 55%	D
		54% - 0%	F

Absence policies

Students are allowed to miss one class no questions asked! ☺ Let me know via email if the absence is related to a medical or family emergency, those will not count against your attendance and participation grade. Please get in touch if you are experiencing any issues that may interfere with your attendance and participation. If scheduling conflicts arise with university-sponsored events, including athletics competitions, please inform me in a timely manner so we can work on accommodations to make up for the work missed.

Classroom environment

What should students expect each class? Class will consist of dynamic lectures, beginning with an overview of the goals for the day. Students will be expected to do the required readings and participate. I may ask questions using a randomizer if I feel participation is low. However, students will not be evaluated based on whether their class participation is “correct” (in many cases there is no *right* answer). I will also post guided reading questions on Canvas, so be sure to have them in mind while you are reading! Students will be asked to submit either 1-2 questions or a reflection about the readings to Canvas (before class). Questions can be related to things you didn’t understand, topics you wish you would’ve seen, or they could be open-ended and thought provoking. Reflections can be connections between readings, things that surprised you, or what you believe was the most important lesson from the reading. Reflections also don’t need to be longer than a paragraph. Questions and reflections are not graded, but their submission does factor into the participation grade. I might then select some of these questions for class and give other students the opportunity to answer them. Some weeks, class will be divided into 2-3 groups so that students in each group read a specific article.

Feel free to bring laptops to take notes, but this does not include smart phones. Please refrain from using smart phones during class time.

Diversity statement

We are all different, and through those differences we enrich each other. This classroom aspires to provide a safe forum for ideas and diversity. All students will be able to freely express their opinions, but this must be done so respectfully. Be sure to voice any concerns over classroom dynamics, whether you consider the materials exclude content that is important for you, or whether your personal situation requires any type of special attention.

Mental health statement

The wellbeing and mental health of students is important; if you are having trouble completing your coursework, please reach out to the [Wellbeing and Counseling Center](#). Rice University provides cost-free mental health services through the Wellbeing and Counseling Center to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being. If you believe you are experiencing unusual amounts of stress, sadness, or anxiety, the Student Wellbeing Office or the Rice Counseling Center may be able to assist you. The Wellbeing and Counseling Center is located in the Gibbs Wellness Center and can be reached at 713-348-3311 (available 24/7).

Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at <http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/>. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Disability Resource Center

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Title IX

At Rice University, unlawful discrimination in any form, including sexual misconduct, is prohibited under Rice Policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment (Policy 830) and the Student Code of Conduct. Please be aware that all employees of Rice University are mandatory reporters, which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. To report sexual harassment, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@rice.edu. To explore supportive measures and other resources that are available to you, please visit the Office of Interpersonal Misconduct Prevention and Support at <https://safe.rice.edu>.

Course schedule

** This syllabus is a general guide and subject to change with advanced notice.

Important dates to keep in mind:

- **September 5** → Country map quiz
- **September 21** → Country report due #1
- **October 5** → Midterm exam
- **October 24** → Country report #2
- **November 30** → Country report #3
- **December 12** → Final exam due

Week 1: Introduction to Latin American Politics

(Tuesday 8/22) - Syllabus walk-through

- No readings today ☺

(Thursday 8/24) - Research in the social sciences

- Hoover, Amelia. 2013. [“How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.”](#)
- Arceneaux, Craig. 2015. “An Institutional Approach to Democracy and Democratization in Latin America.” (Chapter 1, pg. 2-11)
- In-class: Annotated bibliography exercise

PART I: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Week 2: Early history and democratization

(Tuesday 8/29) - Independence movements and nation-building

- Smith, Peter. 2012. “Cycles of Electoral Democracy” (Chapter 1, pg. 19-42)
- Encyclopedia Britannica. “The independence of Latin America.” (pg. 1-24)
- In-class: Latin America Trivia

(Thursday 8/31) - Democratic transitions and the 3rd wave

- Smith, Peter. 2012. “Transitions and Continuities.” (Chapter 2, pg. 43-71)
- The Washington Post. [“Across Latin America, citizens and governments are clashing over their countries’ authoritarian pasts”](#) (July 2021)
- In-class: Country map quiz

Week 3: International influence

(Thursday 9/5) - Foreign intervention

- Smith, Peter. 2012. “Global Context, International Forces.” (Chapter 4, pg. 106-131)
- McPherson, Alan. 2019. “US Interventions and Occupations in Latin America.” (pg. 1-21)
- In-class: Interactive map
- Country report #1 instructions

(Tuesday 9/7) - Strategies of development

- Vanden and Prevost. 2012. “The Political Economy of Latin America.” (Chapter 7, pg. 154-186)
- The New York Times. “[Who is to Blame for Argentina’s Economic Crisis?](#)” (August 2019)
- In-class: Grinberg (2022) case studies

PART II: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 4: Electoral Systems

(T 9/12) - What makes a democracy?

- Arceneaux, Craig. 2015. “An Institutional Approach to Democracy and Democratization in Latin America.” (Chapter 1, pg. 14-23)
- Mainwaring et al. 2007. “Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America, 1945-2004.” (pg. 123-160)
- In-class: Measures of democracy

(T 9/14) - Electoral institutions

- Arceneaux, Craig. 2015. “Electoral Systems: The Core of Democratic Politics.” (Chapter 7, pg. 224-263)
- In-class: Political Database of the Americas

Week 5: Presidentialism

(T 9/19) - Presidentialism *vs* Parliamentary systems

- Smith, Peter. 2012. “Presidents or Parliaments?” (Chapter 5, pg. 135-145)
- Mainwaring and Shugart. 1997. “Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal.” (pg. 449-469)

(T 9/21) - Hyper-presidentialism

- Neto, Amorim. 2006. "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas." (pg. 415-437)
- The New York Times. "Ecuador's President Dissolves Congress Amid Impeachment Trial"
- **Country report #1 due** (May 2023)

Week 6: Political parties

(T 9/26) - Party systems

- Jones, Mark. 2010. "Beyond the Electoral Connection: The Effect of Political Parties on the Policymaking Process" (Chapter 2 of the IADB book, pg. 19-46)

(T 9/28) - Political ideology

- Saiegh, Sebastian. 2015. "Using Joint Scaling Methods to Study Ideology and Representation: Evidence from Latin America." (pg. 363-382)
- "Chile's Election is a window into Latin America's Polarization"
- In-class: Interactive map and Argentinian presidential elections

Week 7: Legislatures

(T 10/3) - The role of legislatures

- Saiegh, Sebastian. 2010. "Active Players or Rubber Stamps? An Evaluation of the Policymaking Role of Latin American Legislatures." (Chapter 3 of the IADB book, pg. 47-76)

(T 10/5) - **MIDTERM**

- Country report #2 instructions

PART III: CHALLENGES

(T 10/10) - FALL BREAK ☺

(T 10/12) - Recap class

- Review of the Midterm

Week 8: Political representation

(T 10/17) - Ethnic and Gender Representation

- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie. 2010. "Political power and women's representation in Latin America." (Chapter 1, pg. 3-39)
- Piscopo and Wylie. 2020. "Gender, Race, and Political Representation in Latin America." (pg. 1-25)

(T 10/19) - Case studies

- Htun, Mala. 2016. "Inclusion without Representation in Latin America." (Chapter 1, pg. 1-19)
- Group 1: Chapter 3 (pg. 44-69)
- Group 2: Chapter 4 (pg. 70-92)
- Group 3: Chapter 5 (pg. 93-120)
- In-class: Slide design

Week 9: Corruption

(T 10/24) - Theory and measurement

- Fisman and Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets." (pg. 1020-1047)
- UNODC. "Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption." (pg. 1-26)
- In-class: Measures of corruption

(T 10/26) - Why does corruption persist?

- Group 1: Chong et al. 2015. "Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification." (pg. 55-70).
- Group 2: Boas et al. 2019. "Norms versus Action: Why Voters Fail to Sanction Malfeasance in Brazil." (pg. 385-398)
- **Country report #2 due**

Week 10: Violence

(T 10/31) - State repression

- Group 1: Franklin. 2008. "Shame on you: The Impact of Human Rights Criticism on Political Repression in Latin America." (pg. 189-208)
- Group 2: Hill and Jones. 2014. "An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for State Repression." (pg. 661-684)
- In-class: Case studies

(T 11/2) - Drug-related violence

- Trejo and Ley. 2018. "Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence." (pg. 900-932)
- Group 1: Snyder and Duran. 2009. "Drugs, Violence, and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets in Mexico and Colombia." (pg. 61-91)
- Group 2: Dube et al. 2013. "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Guns Laws and Violence in Mexico." (pg. 397-416)
- The Washington Post. "[Honduras, the Narco-state that illustrates US contradictions](#)" (June 2021)

Week 11: Election crimes

(T 11/7) - Clientelism

- Kitschelt and Wilkinson. 2008. "Citizen-politician linkages: an introduction" (pg. 1-46)
- Group 1: Cantú, Francisco. 2019. "Groceries for Votes: The Electoral Returns of Vote Buying." (pg. 790-802).
- Group 2: Gonzalez Ocantos et al. 2013. "The Conditionality of Vote-Buying Norms: Experimental Evidence from Latin America." (pg. 197-210)

(T 11/9) - Voter fraud

- Hernandez-Huerta and Cantú. 2022. "Public Distrust in Disputed Elections: Evidence from Latin America" (pg. 1923-1930)
- The New York Times. "[A Bitter Election. Accusations of Fraud. And Now Second Thoughts.](#)" (June 2020)
- Country report #3 instructions

Week 12: Democratic participation

(T 11/14) - Who votes?

- Fornos et al. 2004. "Explaining Voter Turnout in Latin America, 1980 to 2000." (pg. 909-938)

(T 11/16) - Support for democratic values

- Smith (2012) - Chapter 11 (pg. 289-312)
- Group 1: The Economist. "[Listen to Me](#)" (October 2013)
- Group 2: The Washington Post. "[Amid Rising autocracy, Latin American democracy is holding on](#)" (October 2022)
- Group 3: The Economist. "[Nayib Bukele shows how to dismantle a democracy and stay popular](#)" (July 2023)

Week 13: Poverty and inequality

(T 11/21) - The poverty trap

- Banerjee and Duflo 2012. “Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty.” (Chapter 1, pg. 1-16)
- Acemoglu and Robinson. 2012. “Theories that Don’t Work.” (Chapter 2 in *Why Nations Fail*, pg. 58-83)

(T 11/23) - THANKSGIVING BREAK

(T 11/28) - Correlates of poverty

- Pribble et al. 2009. “Politics, Policies, and Poverty in Latin America.” (pg. 387-404)
- Foreign Policy. “[From Model to Muddle: Chile’s Sad Slide into Upheaval](#)” (November 2023)
- In-class: Case studies

Week 14: The future of Latin American politics

(T 11/30) - The future of Latin American politics

- Smith, Peter. 2012. “Epilogue: The Future of Democracy.” (pg. 329-344)
- In-class: Slide presentation design
- **Country report #3 due**