17.554 The Political Economy of Latin America  
Professor Chappell Lawson

Purpose
This course is designed for graduate students in political science. Although doctoral students specializing in Latin America will presumably do outside reading, the class itself should be sufficient to prepare students for field exams. In case of unusually high enrollment, preference will be given to doctoral students over other students, and to students at MIT over those at other universities.

Prerequisites
The course assumes some familiarity with the history and geography of Latin America, as well as with comparative political science. For the uninitiated, useful sources on the region include *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith’s *Modern Latin America*, Gary Wynia’s *The Politics of Latin American Development*, or John Sheahan’s *Patterns of Development in Latin America*. There are also a number of widely available readers for those who feel the irrepressible urge to brush up on comparative politics.

Knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese is not required for this course. All course readings are in English, class discussions will be conducted in English, and papers should be written in English. However, non-native speakers who wish to read some of the course materials in their native language should see me during office hours, as many of the core readings are available in translation or were originally written in other languages.

Course readings
Weekly required readings average 175 pages. These readings are designed to acquaint you with the core paradigms in Latin American politics, as well as some of the most well known or well done empirical studies. They obviously leave out a lot. For this reason, there is an extensive list of recommended readings each week, listed in order of relevance for the course. Keep in mind, though, that these recommended readings are intended for two categories of people: (1) those who plan to write a review essay that week, an option discussed below, and (2) the type of crazy overachievers who think it is “fun” to run marathons. If you don’t fit into one of these categories, don’t fret about the recommended readings.

Most weeks are accompanied by a “literary overlay” of novels, essays, or films that treat themes raised by the required readings. These additional materials will not be discussed in class explicitly and you should not worry about them in your papers. They are on the syllabus because they are classics, and those of you who plan to concentrate on the region will find them worth the investment. Others may just want to rent a movie or two in the course of the semester. Regardless, please remember that the purpose of these materials is to lighten your mood by offering you a different perspective on the course themes, not to oppress you further.

Your course reader will have most of the required articles and book chapters. Required readings also include selections from books (listed below) which are not in the course reader. Those of you who plan to focus on the region will eventually want these books for your own library, so you
should probably just grit your teeth and buy them. Those who are not planning to focus on Latin America may prefer to but the first two and read the rest on reserve. In any case, they are listed in descending order of priority for the class, so you can decide for yourselves which you want to purchase.


Finally, as you will see, this syllabus contains several more weeks of reading than we actually have. Weeks will be rotated in different semesters, depending on student interest.

**Class presentations and summaries**
Each class will begin with a presentation discussing and critiquing the readings. You should choose a week (or, in the case of enrollment under ten people, two weeks) for your presentation. Bear in mind that the goal of your presentation is to refresh people’s memories about the readings, to highlight the key areas of disagreement in the readings, and to stimulate class discussion; you should not feel compelled to mechanically summarize every article.

**Written requirements**
You have the option of writing one of the following: (1) five short papers OR (2) three short papers plus one review essay OR (3) one long research paper.

Short papers should be 1,000-1,500 words and should address some of the required readings from the week in a coherent way. They should not be composites of separate critiques of the readings. Rather, they should use the course readings to develop a broader argument about a particular topic from that week – e.g., dependency theory, state formation, democratization in the southern cone, new social movements, etc.

Review essays should be 2,500-3,000 words and should cover the relevant required and recommended readings for that week, as well as any other materials you deem appropriate. They should summarize the main arguments from the materials you address in a way that culls from them a series of testable hypotheses -- along with the evidence for each. Keep in mind that these
review essays are not “book reviews,” and they do not need to address each article or book individually. Rather, they should be abridged versions of the sort of literature review you would do for a dissertation.

Both short papers and review essays are due to my mailbox in the political science department by 4 p.m. the day before class. I’ d like to practice blind grading, so please don’t include a title page or put your name in the footer. Also, at the risk of stifling self-expression and generally sounding like a pain, I ask that all essays and short papers be double-spaced and submitted in Times font. (Otherwise I learn people’s fonts after the first paper, which defeats the purpose of blind grading.)

Research papers should be approximately 6,000 words. They may be either: (1) a much more extensive version of a review essay or (2) a presentation of original research related to the course themes. If you choose to write a research paper, you must meet with me to discuss your topic as soon as possible. You must then submit a one paragraph abstract within ten days of the first class, a reading list by the third class, a draft paper at least three weeks before grades are due, and the completed paper at least one week before grades are due. I strongly encourage those of you who wish to write a research paper to choose a topic related to your dissertation or some other larger project. Just make sure, though, that anything you submit for this class is substantially different from work you have turned in or will turn in for other courses.

Total workload
Counting reading, preparation for class, presentations, and writing, students should expect to spend approximately 12 hours per week on the course.

Grading
Half of your grade (50%) will be based on class participation, including your presentation(s). For grading purposes, each presentation will count as three class sessions – that is, about 10% of your overall grade. My somewhat odd habit is to record letter grades for each student after each class, so regular class participation is taken seriously. However, each student is entitled to one unexcused absence or “unprepared” over the course of the semester (i.e., your grade for that will not be counted).

The other half of your grade will be based on your written work. Short papers will all count equally (10% each), and the review essay – if you select this option -- will count as two papers. If you are feeling wildly ambitious and want to write more than the requisite number of papers, the highest of your grades will be counted.
Course Readings and Schedule

Week 1. The current Latin American context

**REQUIRED:**


*The Economist*, "Yes, we have no mananas," November 13, 1993, L5.


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Literary Overlay:**
Week 2. Dependency and development in Latin America

REQUIRED:


RECOMMENDED:


LITERARY OVERLAY:
Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) OR
Week 3. Dependency and politics in Central America

**REQUIRED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Week 4. Dependency, development, and bureaucratic-authoritarianism**

**REQUIRED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Literary Overlay:**
Week 5. The politics of economic reform

REQUIRED:


RECOMMENDED:


Literary Overlay:
Week 6. The political consequences of market-oriented reform in Venezuela

REQUIRED:


Carlos Gervasoni, "The Electoral Consequences of Market-Oriented Reform in Latin America," TBA.


RECOMMENDED:


William C. Smith and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz, eds., *Politics, social change, and economic restructuring in Latin America* (Coral Gables, FL: North-South Center Press; Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), chapter on Chiapas.


*Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Special Double Issue on Poverty and Inequality in Latin America, Summer/Fall 1996, 38 (2/3).

**LITERARY OVERLAY:**

None
Week 7. Spectacular screw-ups: the Mexican peso crisis


RECOMMENDED:


Denise Dresser, "Neopopulist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems" (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1993).


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**
Week 8. Transitions from authoritarian rule in the Southern Cone

REQUIRED:


RECOMMENDED:


Charles Guy Gillespie and Luis Eduardo Gonzalez, “Uruguay: The Survival of Old and Autonomous Institutions,” in Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset,


Literary Overlay:
Week 9. Civil-military relations: Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, etc.


**RECOMMENDED:**


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**
The movie *Z: A Political Tragedy in Greece.*
Week 10. Limits of democratization: Brazil in comparative perspective

**REQUIRED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**
The movie *Central Station* OR P. J. O'Rourke, *Holidays in Hell* (chapter on the Philippines).
Week 11. Reforming the state in Peru and elsewhere

REQUIRED:


RECOMMENDED:


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**

Week 12. Ambiguous political transition in Mexico

REQUIRED


RECOMMENDED:


Week 13  Parties and elections in Latin America

REQUIRED:


RECOMMENDED:


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**
None
**Week 14. Religion, political mobilization, and civil society**

**REQUIRED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**
Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude OR The Other Mexico* in *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985).
Week 15. Revolution

REQUIRED


RECOMMENDED:


Week 16. The mass media in Mexico and Argentina

Sallie Frank, TBA.


RECOMMENDED:


**Week 17. The hemispheric context**

**REQUIRED:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**LITERARY OVERLAY:**