Description of the Course

This course is designed to provide students with a general introduction to Latin American government and politics. We begin with the understanding that Latin America is a complex and varied region, and that any effort to study Latin America must take into account the many differences between and among countries. Yet as social scientists, we must also seek to identify common trends and patterns in the region’s politics. In this course we will examine some of the theoretical debates and policy issues of importance in the region by examining and comparing the politics of several different countries.

We begin with a brief overview of the region’s historical development and a discussion of some of the key issues shaping the region’s politics. We discuss colonialism and its legacies; the wars of independence and the challenges of nation-building; different modes of governance, including authoritarianism, populism, and democracy; the challenges of development, including issues of poverty and inequality. In the second part of the course, we survey the politics of three countries from different regions in Latin America: Guatemala (Central America), Argentina (Southern Cone); and Peru (Andes). In the course of our review of the case studies, we will examine the politics of the military and the challenge of constructing democracy in Latin America; the challenges of development and the rise of illicit economies, particularly the drug trade; the ongoing challenges of corruption and weak institutions; and the role of the United States in Latin American politics. In the third part of the course, we address a series of topical issues, including urban violence, human rights, environmental conflicts, and immigration.

Course Objectives

The course will help students to think and write theoretically and critically about government and politics in Latin America. Through assigned readings and assignments, students will acquire the capacity to engage in critical analysis and will develop and hone their research skills. By the close of this course, students should be able to:

- Have a firm grasp of key issues in Latin American politics, including regime type and challenges of democratization; state and society relations; development and inequality; human rights and political violence; and citizenship and political representation.
- Identify, summarize, and evaluate the fundamental questions and debates in the study of Latin American politics
- Employ key concepts and theories discussed in the course in independent writing

Course Requirements
Students must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Class participation (50 points, 10% of final grade)
   - Students are expected to attend class regularly. Attendance will be taken at each class. Effective participation requires consistent class attendance.
   - Students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to class and participate actively in class discussions and in small group sessions in an informed and intelligent way.
   - Students are responsible for the material covered in class lectures and are urged to take detailed notes. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes for that day from a classmate.

2. Midterm Exam (100 points, 20% of final grade)
   The midterm, which will be based on class lectures and assigned readings, will be administered in-class on **October 16**.

3. Book report (50 points, 10% of grade).
   Prepare a 3-page book report of a work of political fiction or nonfiction from the following list. Other books may be used upon approval by professor. Deadline: **November 2**
   - *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez
   - *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop*? by Francisco Goldman
   - *Massacre in Mexico* by Elena Poniatowska
   - *He Who Searches* by Luisa Valenzuela
   - *The Massacre at El Mozote* by Mark Danner
   - *Lost City Radio* by Daniel Alarcón
   - *The Inhabited Woman* by Gioconda Belli

4. Writing assignments (150 points, 30% of final grade)
   Complete a 5-7 page writing assignment. Guidelines and paper topics will be handed out at the beginning of the semester. Deadline: **November 28**.

5. Final Exam (150 points, 30% of final grade)
   The final exam, which will be based on class lectures and assigned readings, will be administered on December 14 at 10:30 a.m.

**Writing-Intensive Course (WIC) Requirement.** This course fulfills the Writing-Intensive Course requirement in the Government & International Politics major through the three required writing assignments.

**Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book report</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>5-7 page paper</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>490-500</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>460-489</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>450-459</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>440-449</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>299 and below</td>
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Required texts: (available for purchase at the GMU bookstore, also available on reserve at Mason library)

- Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo by M. Guzman Bouvard (1994)

Other reading assignments:
In addition to these books, your required reading assignments include articles which are available either via E-reserve (which you will be able to access from the course Blackboard or from the Mason Library Website); by accessing a database via the GMU Library Website; or online through an open-access website.

- E-Reserve: Readings available via e-reserves may be accessed on the course Blackboard page under “E-reserves.”
- You may also access articles from academic journals directly through the Mason Library via the varioUs databases. The easiest way to do this is using “E-Journal Finder”. Simply type in the name of the journal the article appears in, and then locate the correct volume and number of the desired journal.

Course readings may be modified, and additional readings assigned, during the course of semester.

Resources on Latin America:

There are a wide variety of resources available on Latin America. On the Web, consult the LANIC site at [lanic.utexas.edu/index.html], which provides detailed lists of available Websites, including media, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, for nearly every Latin American country. You may also consult the State Department Web site for general information, and for the U.S. government perspective on Latin American politics. There are numerous non-governmental organizations which offer in-depth research on key issues in the region, including: the Institute for Policy Studies, which publishes Foreign Policy In Perspective (www.frip.org); the Washington Office on Latin America (www.wola.org); the Interhemispheric Resource Center (www.irc.org); Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org); and the World Policy Institute.

At the Mason library, consult the weekly publication published by Latin American Newsletters, The Latin American Weekly Report, as well as the monthly regional reports published by Latin American Newsletters. This provides a concise, up-to-date analysis of events in the region. In addition to The New York Times, The Economist, a weekly magazine, has excellent coverage of Latin America. See also NACLA Report on the Americas, a bimonthly magazine with in-depth reporting on different aspects of contemporary Latin America, which is available at the Mason library.

Academic journals that publish scholarly articles, research reports and book reviews on Latin America, and which are accessible via the Mason library databases, include: Latin American Research Review; Journal of Latin American Studies; Latin American Politics and Society; Latin American Perspectives; The Bulletin of Latin American Research; The Hispanic American Historical Review; and the Journal of Latin American Anthropology.

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest association of scholars, practitioners and policymakers engaged in the study of Latin America. LASA holds an annual congress at which students, faculty, practitioners and policymakers present their research through panel discussions, roundtables, and book presentations. LASA has a wealth of resources on its webpage, including a bulletin, LASA Forum (http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/eng/forum/), the newly launched Latin American Research Commons (https://www.larcommons.net) which includes access to articles published in the Latin American Research Review, as well as a list of available opportunities for students and researchers (http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/members/).
COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS

I. INTRODUCTION TO COURSE
August 29 Course Overview; Review Syllabus and Course Requirements and Expectations

II. THE MAKING OF LATIN AMERICA
August 31 The Making of Latin America: Food for Thought. When Worlds Collide
September 5, 7 Conquest, Colonialism & Castas
September 12, 14 Independence, Caudillismo and the Challenges of Nation building
September 19, 21 Race and Racism in Latin America

III. COUNTRY STUDIES
September 26, 28, October 3, 5 Guatemala
October 10 No class – Holiday
October 12 Midterm
October 17, 19, 24, 26 Argentina
October 31, November 2, 7, 9 Peru

IV. CURRENT TOPICS IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS
November 14, 16, 21 Violence and the Crisis of Citizen Security in Latin America Today
November 23 No class – Thanksgiving Holiday
November 28, 30 Environmental Conflicts in Contemporary Latin America
December 5, 8 Latin America & the United States

FINAL EXAM: December 14 10:30 am – 1:15 pm

READINGS:
I. INTRODUCTION August 29 Overview of the Course and Course Requirements

II. THE MAKING OF LATIN AMERICA

August 31 The Making of Latin America: When Worlds Collide
Read these short first-hand accounts of the conquest:
- Christopher Columbus, Journal (1492)
- Bartolomé de Las Casas, Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies. (1542)

September 5, 7 Conquest, Colonialism & Castas
Read these short first-hand accounts of the colonial period and the racial classifications:
- Read the brief description of the Spanish Racial Classifications known as “Castas” here: https://nativeheritageproject.com/2013/06/15/las-castas-spanish-racial-classifications/

September 12, 14 Independence, Caudillismo and the Challenges of Nation building
September 19, 21 Race and Racism in Latin America

III. COUNTRY STUDIES

September 26, 28, October 3, 5 Guatemala
- Read: Bitter Fruit
- Documentary film: Finding Oscar

October 10 [HOLIDAY - NO CLASS]

October 12 Midterm Exam

October 17, 19, 24, 26 Argentina
- Read: Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo
- Documentary film: Who am I?

October 31, November 2, 7, 9 Peru
- Read: Political Violence and the Authoritarian State in Peru
- Documentary film: State of Fear

IV. CURRENT TOPICS IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

November 14, 16, 21 Violence and the Crisis of Citizen Security in Latin America Today
- Read: A History of Violence: Living and Dying in Central America
- Insight Crime, “Why are the World’s Most Violent Cities in Latin America?” At: https://goo.gl/1Qq4fs
- Excerpt from Zetas, Inc. and Guest lecture by Professor Guadalupe Correa Cabrera

November 23 No class – Thanksgiving Holiday

November 28, 30 Environmental Conflicts in Contemporary Latin America
Reading TBA
When Two Worlds Collide

December 5, 8 Latin America & the United States
Reading TBA

December 14 Final Exam 10:30 am – 1:15 pm
**Classroom Expectations:**
Debate and discussion imply tolerance and respect for opinions other than one’s own. All students must demonstrate courtesy toward professor and fellow students at all times.
All assignments must be handed in on time. No late papers will be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies. There will be no incompletes, make-up exams or extensions except in cases of documented emergencies.
Cellular phones and other electronic devices that could disrupt class must be turned off during class time. Computer use in the classroom must be strictly limited to the course discussion and assignments. The professor reserves the right to ban computers from the classroom if this proves to be disruptive.

**Honor Code:**
The written work for this class will be submitted electronically through Blackboard. Essays may be processed through on-line databases so as to access the originality of work. The George Mason University Honor Code states: “Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee.” Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code in the University Catalog (http://catalog.gmu.edu) and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be addressed following the guidelines outlined in the University Catalog. Please see me if you have any questions regarding the honor code.

**Special Needs:**
Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should contact the Disability Resource Center (703) 993-2474.

**Enrollment:**
Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. After the last day to drop, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

**Mason Email Accounts**
Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

**Other Useful Campus Resources:**
**Writing Center:** A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; http://writingcenter.gmu.edu
**University Libraries:** “Ask a Librarian”; http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html
**Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS):** (703) 993-2380; http://caps.gmu.edu

**University Policies**
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

**Important Dates and Information**
**Registration and Tuition**
Last day to add and drop classes with no tuition penalty: September 5
Last day to drop with no academic liability and some refund: September 19
Final drop deadline (with 67% tuition penalty): September 29

**Grades and Exams**
Selective Withdrawal Period: October 2 - October 27 (Undergraduate, degree-seeking students only)
Students may view grades via Patriot Web https://patriotweb.gmu.edu