POLS 4450
UNITED STATES AND LATIN AMERICA
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since the 19th century, the United States has been a preponderant power in the American continent. Notwithstanding hegemonic, the US policies towards Latin America have varied across countries and across time. How? What factors have influenced US policies towards Latin America? What factors have influenced Latin America’s (lack of) response? Have these policies helped or hinder the region’s development? Have they helped the United States achieve domestic and international goals?

In this course we will answer these questions. We will analyze US policies towards Latin America, as well as Latin America’s response to those policies. In doing so, we will not only assess domestic and international factors that influence US-Latin American relations, but also the impact that the latter have on the region as a whole.

The goals of this course are:

1. Identify United States’ policies towards Latin America. How have they changed and how have they remained the same.
2. Identify Latin American’s responses to these policies. How have they changed, how have they remained the same.
3. Assess the consequences of these policies for both: the US and Latin America.

By participating in this course you will be able to:

1. Enhance your understanding of current issues in US-Latin American relations
2. Develop your ability to think critically and creatively about those issues.

REQUIREMENTS

Readings

The following books will be available at the University Bookstore or Amazon.com:


All other readings will be available in Canvas. You are responsible for the material covered in the lecture and the reading.

**Take-Home Exams**

Over the course of the semester you will have two take-home exams (a midterm and a final). In each exam, you will have to answer one of three essay questions. These questions will be issue oriented. They will ask you to articulate concepts, theories, and facts learned in class, in a single argument. A good essay should show not only that you understand basic concepts and theories, but also that you are able to use them effectively in your own analysis. You are not expected to do research outside of what we have read, seen or talked about in class. Your essays will be evaluated on your ability to provide a thoughtful, well-supported analysis using class material.

I will distribute the questions one week before the deadline. I will not read early drafts, but I am happy to discuss essay outlines and/or ideas with you during office hours. The essays are meant to give you a chance to practice writing skills and assess your understanding of class material. Each take-home exam will account for 15% of your grade.

**Movie Report**

During the semester we will watch two films:

- “*Missing*” directed by Costa Gavras
- “*The Two Escobars*” directed by Cary Fukunaga

You must choose one of these films and write a movie report connecting the audiovisual piece with the political science concepts and cases we are discussing in class. I will provide a handout highlighting some of the points/questions you should think about when you are watching the movies, in order to help you with that assignment. We will devote a class to discuss some of these questions.

Both movies will be screened in class. If you cannot make it to the screening, I will make the movie available so that you can watch it at your convenience. The movie reports will be due a week after the movie discussion. It will account for 10% of your grade.

**Book Report**

During the semester we will read *Tell Me How It Ends*. It is a short essay that discusses immigration from a very particular and personal perspective. You must write a book report connecting the book with the broader debate about immigration. I will provide a guideline highlighting some of the points/questions you should think about as you read. We will also discuss the book in class.
United States and Latin America

Immigration is a sensitive topic and this book is not particularly “neutral.” It is a literature piece and, as such, it does not evaluates two sides of an argument, discusses few facts, and is mostly written from an important, but very personal perspective. I expect some of you to agree with the picture and points the author is making, but I also expect some of you to disagree with the picture and points the author is making. Book reports and in class participation from either position are very much welcomed as long as they are made or written with respect and based on well researched facts. The book report will account for 10% of your grade.

Policy Paper

During the semester, we will prepare a series of policy debates. This exercise will not only increase your knowledge about Latin America and the U.S., but it will also help you practice writing and oral skills, and allow you to think about Latin American-U.S. relations from a perspective other than your own.

In preparation for this debate, you will choose one of the topics below and write a policy paper. Think of it as a recommendation for either a member of Congress or the President, in the form of an structured essay that advocates one of the points listed bellow. The essay needs to be well researched and the sources for the facts and information you mention well cited. In order to make sure that we have essays portraying both sides of the argument, you will have to choose your topic ahead of time. There are a limited number of “spots” for each topic/position.

Good policy papers cannot be written from one day to the other. To get you started with this project I will ask that you turn in a literature review within the first month of class. This literature review will account for 5% of your grade, while the final essay will account for 20%.

After you have turned in your policy proposal you will get together with other students that chose the same topic/position and come up with a collective strategy to advocate your position. You will present these arguments in a series of debates that we will hold the last week of class. You will have enough in-class time to prepare for the debate. Attendance to both the preparation session and the final debates will count towards your debate grade. While one group is presenting, the other groups will serve as juries of the debate using a guide that I will provide. Your group preparation for and performance during the debate will count for 5% of your grade, your peer-evaluation will count for 5% of your grade.

• Immigration Reform
  – For restricting legal immigration
  – Against restricting legal immigration

• The Venezuelan Crisis
  – For unilateral sanctions (suspend oil purchases)
  – Against unilateral sanctions (suspend oil purchases)

• NAFTA
  – For sunset clause
  – Against sunset clause
Participation

This is an interactive course. In order to learn, you need to participate in class. This means, first, asking questions. It is VERY important that you ask when you don’t understand. In my experience, it is very likely that if you have a question others in the class have similar doubts as well. Therefore, when you ask questions you help yourself and your classmates. Active participation also means contributing and engaging in class discussions, peer-review exercises, and other in-class activities. In order to do that, you need to come to class prepared. You are expected to read the assigned materials before the class.

Participation counts for 10% of your grade. Your participation will be assessed in two ways. Every session there will be an in-class short quiz. This assignment will account for 5% of your grade. You need to correctly answer 20 out of the 25 questions that will be handed out throughout the semester (i.e. you can miss or get wrong five without penalty.) If you answer all twenty, I will count the last five as bonus points that you can use to increase your final grade.

The remaining 5% of the participation grade will account for in-class participation. It will be assessed in terms of your contribution to group discussions, peer-review exercise, and other class-related activities, using a self-assessment participation form.

HONOR CODE

Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by USU’s Student Code. Group study is encouraged but, all class assignments are individual. I expect each one of you to present your own work. Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated. Any violation to academic integrity will be punished according to USU’s policies.

 Civility

Learning requires an open and inclusive environment. Having a diverse group of students with different life experiences, backgrounds and points of view enrich us all. It is important that we engage with one another with respect and sensitivity. This means framing our comments and opinions in a respectful and courteous manner, as well as carefully listening to what others say. For more information see USU’s Student Code.

POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is very important for your learning process. You are expected to attend and participate in class. I will take attendance for record keeping purposes, but ultimately, it is your responsibility to attend class. If you cannot attend, it is also your responsibility to catch up on the material, information or announcements you might have missed. For exams and assignments, I will only excuse absences outlined as excused or allowable absences in the University Catalog (2018-2019).
Email

You are welcome to email me with questions and comments. Please allow me 24 hours to respond. During weekends or holidays it might take me longer to write you back.

It is extremely important to know how to write professional emails. What you write and how you write it reflects how serious and professional you are. When you email professors, you are writing a professional email. As such, please make sure you use the appropriate email etiquette: address me by title and name, end your email with a closing and a signature, etc.

Before you write me, you should also make sure you cannot find the information you are asking for elsewhere. Information like my office hours, the readings assigned, the assignments deadlines etc. is information that you can easily find in the syllabus and Canvas. If you want more information about how to write professional emails refer to this guideline: Email Etiquette: Guidelines for Writing Your Professors.

Electronic Devices

You can use your laptop and tablet in class to access the readings and/or take notes, but please refrain from using it for any other activity (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, email, messenger etc.). Doing so distracts you and everybody around you (including me!) For that same reason, I will ask you to keep your cellphone inside your backpack during class.

Disabilities

Students with ADA-documented physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. All accommodations are coordinated through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Room 101 of the University Inn, (435)797-2444, https://www.usu.edu/drc/. Please contact the DRC as early in the semester as possible. Alternate format materials (Braille, large print, digital, or audio) are available with advance notice.
**DEADLINES**

**Take-Home Exams**
- # 1 .............................................. Oct 22
- # 2 .............................................. TBD

**Movie Report**
- # 1 .............................................. Oct 12
- # 2 .............................................. Nov 5

**Book Report**
Read Book by.................................... Nov 5
Report ............................................. Nov 19

**Policy Proposal**
Topic ............................................. Sept 5
Literature Review ............................. Sept 17
Policy Proposal ................................ Nov 26
Debate ........................................... Dec 3-7

**NOTE:** Late assignments will get a deduction of 10 points (out of 100) per day.

**GRADING**

**Take-Home Exams**
- # 1 .............................................. 15%
- # 2 .............................................. 15%

**Participation**
Class Quizzes .................................. 10%
In-class Participation ........................ 5%

**Movie Report (1/2)**
- # 1 .............................................. 10%
- # 2 .............................................. 10%

**Book Report**
- # 2 .............................................. 10%

**Policy Paper**
Policy Paper .................................. 25%
- Lit Review #1 .................................. 5%
- Final Draft .................................... 20%

**Debate** ........................................ 10%
- Debate Performance #1 ...................... 5%
- Peer-Evaluation .............................. 5%
ESSAY RULES

All writing assignments (exams, movie reports, position paper) will follow the same rules.

- **Deadline**: Before 2:30, on the day they are due
- **Medium**: Canvas (Word File)
- **Format**:
  - Times New Roman
  - Font Size 12
  - 1 inch margins
  - 1.5 spacing
- **Length**: 500-700 words (approximately two pages)

CLASS SCHEDULE

*NOTE: We may discover that we want to spend more/less time on certain topics. I may consider making changes to the class schedule if such a change would benefit most students’ learning in this course.*

**INTRODUCTION**

August 28: Course Overview

August 29-31: No Class

**APPROACHES TO US-LA**

September 8: Approaches


**US IMPERIALISM**
September 7: Rise of US Hegemony


September 10: Puerto Rico


September 12: Puerto Rico


September 14: US-LA 1900-1940s


- “ ‘What Walt Disney Learned from South America” Interview to Ted Thomas, director of “Walt & El Grupo” NPR Aired: September 17, 2009. (Audio file available in the link)

Cold War

September 17: Introduction to the Cold War


September 19: Courting Dictators


September 21: Making Friends

**September 24: Crushing Enemies**


**September 26: Crushing Enemies**


**Sept 28-Oct 3: Movie Missing**


**October 5: Movie Discussion**

**October 8: Fighting the Cold War in Latin America**


**October 10: Cuba**


COLD WAR AFTERMATH (1990s)

October 12: Transitions to Democracy


October 15: Hegemony and Geoeconomics

- Russell C. Crandall. The United States and Latin America After the Cold War Pp. 54-84.

October 17: NAFTA


October 19: Fall Break

WAR ON DRUGS

October 22-26: Movie “The Two Escobars”

- Although there are no readings assigned for this week. It might be a good time to read Visselli’s book.

October 29: Movie Discussion

October 31: War on Drugs, Colombia


November 2: War on Drugs, Mexico


• *(Optional)* “Drugs and Democracy: Toward a Paradigm Shift.” *Statement by the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy*.


**IMMIGRATION**

**November 5: Basics of Immigration**


**November 7: Illegal Immigration and Violence**


**November 9: Illegal Immigration and Violence (II)**


• Katie Benner and Charlie Savage. *Due Process for Undocumented Immigrants, Explained*.

• **OPTIONAL** Frontline. *Separated Children at the Border, PBS*, July 31, 2018. (Documentary).

**November 12: Illegal Immigration and Economics**

• Almudena Toral and Andrea Patio Contreras. *America First: The Legacy of Immigration Raid, Univisión and The Intercept*, 2018. (Documentary)


**November 14: Legal Immigration**


**Other “Hot” Topics**

**November 16: US and Cuba**


- (Optional) López, Mark Hugo and Jens Manuel Krogstad. “As Cuban-American Demographics Change so do Views on Cuba” *Pew Research Center* December 23, 2014


**November 19: Venezuela: What Went Wrong?**


November 26: Venezuela: Now what?


Policy Debates

November 28-30: Debate Prep

December 3-7: Debates