POLS 4450
United States and Latin America
Utah State University

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Place: OM 177
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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**

We will use the following book throughout the class. It is available for purchase at the University Bookstore or Amazon.com, for those who wish to buy it. It is also available under course reserves in the library, for those that would rather not buy it:


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 a 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 “Missing”, a 1982 film directed by Costa Gavras. You must write a movie report connecting the audiovisual piece with the 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 movie, in order to help you with the assignment. We will devote a class to discuss some of these questions. You are also encouraged to meet with one of the two Writing Fellows assigned to this class to improve your essay.

The movie will be screened in class. If you cannot make it to the screening, the film will be available from August 26 to October 4 at the library, under course reserves, 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. Students who show they consulted with a writing fellow, will get extra-credit.
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 have to choose one of the topics and positions 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 a structured essay that advocates for or against a particular policy. The essay must be well researched, and the facts and information you use well cited. In order to make sure that we have essays portraying both sides of the argument, you will have to choose your topic and position 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. Accordingly, I will ask you to turn in three updates throughout the semester. The first update will be the literature review. It will count for 5% of your grade. The second update will be a first draft of the policy paper that we will workshop in class. The draft will count for 10% of your grade, the workshop (peer-review exercise) will count for 5%. The third update will be the final draft of the policy paper. This draft will count for 15% of your grade. Before you turn updates 2 and 3, you must meet with a writing fellow.

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 peer evaluators. Your group preparation for and performance during the debate, your attendance to other debates, and your peer evaluation will count for 10% of your grade.

- **Immigration Reform (I)**
  - In favor of considering legal use of government benefit programs as a key component to assess LPR
  - Against considering legal use of government benefit programs as a key component to assess LPR
  * For more information on this issue see:
    - The Hill: Trump administration releases new “public charge” rule making it easier to reject immigrants
    - CBS News: New Trump administration rule cracks down on welfare benefits used by legal immigrants
    - USCIS Public Charge Fact Sheet,

- **Immigration Reform (II)**
  - In favor of issuing a Third-Country Asylum rule for immigrants arriving through Mexico
  - Against issuing a Third-Country Asylum rule for immigrants arriving through Mexico
  * For more information on this issue see:
    - The Hill: What is a safe third country agreement?,
    - CBS News: Trump signs “safe third country” asylum agreement with Guatemala
• The Venezuelan Crisis
  
  – For unilateral sanctions (suspend oil purchases)
  – Against unilateral sanctions (maintain oil purchases)

* For more information on this issue see:
  
  · Congressional Research Service: Venezuela: Overview of U.S. Sanctions
  · World Politics Review: U.S. Sanctions and an Embargo Will Only Worsen Venezuela’s Humanitarian Crisis

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.

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 25 out of the 27 questions that will be handed out throughout the semester (i.e. you can miss or get wrong three without penalty.) If you answer correctly all twenty five questions, I will count the remaining three as bonus points that you can use to increase your final grade.

The remaining 5% of the participation grade relates to your contribution to group discussions, the peer-review exercise, and other class-related activities. I will assess it using a self-assessment participation form.

POLICIES

Respect and 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. This is an immigration, sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnic and religious inclusive and safe classroom. I will not tolerate homophobia, sexism, racism or any other kind of discriminatory behavior or attitude in class discussions, assignments, or anywhere else.

Child Care Policy

It is my belief that, if we want to make universities more inclusive, we should expect children to be present in some form. I will use the following policy in my classroom.

• All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcomed in class as often as is necessary.
• Unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to chose between missing class or leaving your child with someone you, or the child, does not feel com-
fortable with. While this is not meant to be a long term solution, occasionally, bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.

- In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your child needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met.

Disabilities

Students may find themselves limited in their ability to accomplish course requirements for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: autism, visible and non-visible physical disability, chronic illness, learning disability or mental illness. I aim to provide an inclusive and safe environment for all students and will work with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and the student to maintain an accessible and accommodating classroom. If you wish to work with the DRC, you can contact them (Room 101 of the University Inn, (435)797-2444, https://www.usu.edu/drc/). Alternate format materials (Braille, large print, digital, or audio) are available with advance notice.

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.

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: include a subject and a heading, and sign your email.

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 that you to keep your cellphone inside your backpack during class.
Attendance

Attendance is very important for your learning process. You are expected to come and participate in class. I will take attendance for record keeping purposes, but ultimately, this is your responsibility. If you cannot attend, it is incumbent upon you to catch up on the material, information or announcements you might have missed. For exams and assignments, I will excuse absences outlined as excused or allowable absences in the University Catalog (2019-2020).

DEADLINES

Take-Home Exams
# 1 ............................................... Oct 11
# 2 ............................................... TBD

Movie Report
# 1 ............................................... Oct 25

Policy Proposal
Topic ............................................. Sept 6
Literature Review ................................ Sept 27
Policy Proposal #1 .............................. Nov 8
Policy Peer Review .............................. Nov 8
Policy Proposal #2 .............................. Dec 2
Debate ........................................... Dec 2-6

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 ............................................... 10%

Policy Paper
Lit Review ........................................ 5%
Draft #1 .......................................... 10%
Final Draft ....................................... 15%
Policy Peer Review #1 ........................ 5%
Debate .......................................... 10%
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 26: Course Overview

August 28-30: No Class

Approaches to US-LA

September 4: Approaches


September 6: Approaches

- *Talons of the Eagle* Ch. 15 Pp. 341-356.


US Imperialism

September 9: Rise of US Hegemony


September 11: Puerto Rico


September 13: Puerto Rico


September 16: US-LA 1900-1940s

- Bob Mondello. “‘Walt & El Grupo’ Documents Disney Diplomacy” NPR: All Things Considered Aired: September 10, 2009. (Audio file available the link)
- “‘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 18: Introduction to the Cold War


September 20: Courting Dictators


September 23: Making Friends


September 25: Crushing Enemies


Break for Immigration
**September 27: Presentation by Spencer Lee**

**NOTE: We will meet at Huntsman Hall 226**


**Back to the Cold War**

**Sept 30-Oct 4: Movie Missing**


**October 7: Movie Discussion**

**October 9: Crushing Enemies**

- Shesgreen, Deirdre. How US foreign policy in Central America may have fueled the migrant crisis*USA Today*, December 21, 2018.

**October 11: Fighting the Cold War in Latin America**


**October 14: Cuba**
United States and Latin America


COLD WAR AFTERMATH (1990s)

October 16: Transitions to Democracy


October 18: Fall Break

October 21: Hegemony and Geoeconomics

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

October 23: USMCA (or the new NAFTA)


• Amanda M. Countryman “How is ‘new NAFTA’ different?” A trade expert explains.” The Conversation, October 2, 2018.


October 25: Latin America’s Left Turn

• Talons of the Eagle Chapters 10 (Pg. 226-245) and 12 (Pg. 269-290)

October 28: Venezuela: What Went Wrong?


• Laura Gamboa. Venezuela has lost its democratic facade, The Conversation, April 12, 2017.

October 30: Venezuela: Now what?

- Annette Idler. Venezuela’s Instability has far Broader Implications. Here’s What is at Stake, Monkey Cage (Washington Post), August 10, 2017. Del Toro, Francisco. It is not an embargo: The new Venezuelan sanctions are all about Citgo, Monkey Cage, August 6, 2019

- Purcell, Thomas. Venezuela: US sanctions hurt, but the economic crisis is home grown, The Conversation, February 6, 2019.

- Aponte-Moreno, Marco. 5 reasons why Trump’s Venezuela embargo won’t end the Maduro regime, The Conversation, August 7, 2019

- Cyr, Jennifer and Jessica Maves Braithwaite. Here are 4 ways that Venezuela’s crisis could end, Monkey Cage, May 24, 2019.

War on Drugs

November 1: War on Drugs


November 4: War on Drugs, Mexico


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


And Cuba?

November 6: 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
• John M. Carey. Don’t expect the Cuban government to be grateful when the embargo lifts. *Monkey Cage (Washington Post)*, April 6, 2016.


• Martina Kunović. Five things you need to know about Trump’s Cuba policy – and who it will hurt, *Monkey Cage (Washington Post)*, June 22, 2017

*November 8: Peer-Review Workshop*

**IMMIGRATION**

*November 11: Legal Immigration*

• Review


• Sana, Mariano. "Americans’ support for immigration is at record highs – but the government is out of sync with their views", *The Conversation*, August 8, 2019.

*November 13: Illegal Immigration*


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

*November 15: Immigration and Jobs*


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

*November 18: Immigration and Welfare*
• Nowrasteh, Alex. "Immigration and the Welfare State: Immigrant and Native Use Rates and Benefit Levels for Means-Tested Welfare and Entitlement Programs.” *Cato Institute*, May 10, 2018

• Fox, Justin. "Immigrants are a Bargain, Fiscally Speaking.” *Bloomberg*. October 30, 2018.


**November 20: Immigration and Violence**

• Review


**Policy Debates**

*November 22-25: Debate Prep*

*December 2-6: Debates*