San Jose State University  
Department of Political Science  
Pols 146-01: Latin American Politics, Spring 2020

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Sergio Béjar-López
Office Location: Clark 402C
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Office Hours: T & TH 1:30pm-2:45pm
Class Days/Time: T & Th 12:00-1:15 pm
Classroom: DMH 160

Course Description
Survey of the political systems of Latin American countries. Places Latin American countries in a global perspective. Major themes include: civil-military relations, democratization, economic development, social movements, and foreign relations both within and outside Latin America.

Detailed Course Description
Latin American nations are endowed with enormous natural wealth. Yet, at the same time, they suffer from persistent poverty, income inequality, and low levels of political development. They have endured colonialism, authoritarianism, and a variety of projects for economic development. Events in the region continue to raise questions about the effect of political institutions like democracy, presidentialism, and political parties; the role of the state in economic development; and how we think about democracy and its benefits.

Political Science Learning Outcomes

Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

Application and Disciplinary Methods: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

Communication Skills: Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
Citizenship: Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

Course Learning Outcomes

1) Survey of the political systems of Latin American countries (Participation, Midterm exams, and Policy Memo).
2) Place Latin American countries in a global perspective (In-class activities, Policy Memo).
3) Understand major themes in Latin American politics such as civil-military relations, democratization, economic development, social movements, and foreign relations both within and outside Latin America (Participation, In-class activities, Midterm exams, Policy Memo).

Course Workload Expectations: Succeeding in a Four-Unit Course

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. Because this is a four-unit course, you can expect to spend a minimum of nine hours per week, in addition to time spent in class, on scheduled tutorials, assignments, or activities. This additional unit will allow for more in-depth investigation and engagement with course topics. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf.

Policy on Technology in the Classroom

1. Computers, tablets, cell phones, etc. may be used for note-taking only in lecture, or to look something up at the request of the professor. Please do all of your emailing and Facebook and twittering and snapchatting and so on outside of lecture.
2. Students should not use text or use cell phones in class. Violations of this rule will result in a deduction in your participation grade for each observed incident.

Reading Material

Students are expected to read several journal articles listed below, nearly all of which are available through JSTOR and which, when possible, may be posted as PDFs on CANVAS. Students are expected to complete the required readings for each topic by the date of that lecture and be prepared to discuss and ask questions about them.

During the course of the class, students are strongly encouraged to read the online version of the Latin American Weekly Reports as a way to supplement the readings with knowledge of current events in the region.
Course Requirements

Grades in the course will be based on the following items:

- Two (2) In-Class Exams (30% each)
- Policy Memo (20%)
- Participation (10%)
- In-Class Group Activities (10%)

Two In-Class Exams (30% of final grade each).

The exams will cover material from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The exam will consist of a series of short identification questions, followed by one essay question. **No make-up exams** will be given, please plan accordingly.

Research Design (10% of final grade)

In this assignment, students are asked to formulate a viable and relevant research question drawing from the research discussed in the first section on the state. In just one page, students will (1) state their research question, which must address an actual empirical puzzle of the region or country in the region; (2) formulate one hypothesis to be tested; (3) make explicit whether the DV and main IVs are political, economic, or societal variables (one must be state or regime-related); and (4) identify two sources of data (with full reference and corresponding online link). This exercise will test the causal thinking of students, their skills in designing a research project, and their understanding of the salience and relevance of contemporary Latin American problems. It is due on **February 11th**. Instructions will be posted on CANVAS one week before the assignment is due.

Policy Memo for the president elect of the United States (20% of final grade)

This final assignment gives students the opportunity to carry out research on a Latin American country of their choosing. Students will pick one issue (LGBT, Gender, Indigenous, or Environmental politics) to be explored in one country of the region. Drawing from the concepts and theories covered in the course, they will write a two-page memo to the new US president. The objective is to inform the new US president of the top two issues/problems in this policy area and recommend two policy proposals for the US to pursue through foreign policy. The memo is due on **December 15th**. I will provide specific guidelines for this assignment mid-semester.

Your participation in class is very important. Students are required to read all of the assigned readings and be prepared to speak about the main arguments/points in the readings. A significant portion of your grade will be based on your participation in class discussions and demonstrated familiarity with the readings. You should feel free to express your opinions and make comments during class discussions, but students who score highly in this realm are able to effectively reference information presented in the readings.
If you come to class every day but never participate in class discussions or answer questions and/or if your name is called and you can’t answer the question you will receive a “zero” for your participation grade.

**Disclaimer 1:** I usually know who is in class and who’s not, and I have a tendency to call the names of students who are not present. So you can be sure (99.9999%) that if you miss class, you will also miss participation points that session**.

**Disclaimer 2:** Unless you have a medical note, I DO NOT want to receive emails telling me that you will not be in class**.

**In-class Group Activities (10%)**
There will be at least five (5) in-class group activities during the semester. The only task you need to do in order to earn these points is to show up to class and participate in those exercises. The dates for these activities will not be announced, so you need to attend classes regularly if you’d like to earn these “free” points.

**Political Science Departmental Writing Policy**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm. For assistance with writing, please see me or visit the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the Writing Center website at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter.

**Policy on Submitting Written Work in this Course**

I expect my students to submit written work that fits the grammatical, stylistic and citation expectations for college-level work in English. All written assignments in this course are therefore graded in two ways: both in terms of content (information in terms of logic, quality of evidence, etc.) and in terms of writing. If you are at all uncomfortable with writing at the college level, you need to take steps to rectify this.

**Late Work**

Missed exams may be re-taken under the following circumstances only:
1) Death in the immediate family (parent, spouse, sibling, or child) within 2 weeks before the exam.
2) Unforeseeable medical emergency affecting yourself, your spouse, or your child (something beyond feeling under the weather---car accident, major sickness, or the like).
3) Participation in an official SJSU-sponsored academic or sporting event.

In the case of reasons (1) or (3), you must give me at least 24 hours advance notice (such as an e-mail or phone call) that you will miss the exam or it may not be made up. I may require supporting documentation. Conflicts with a work schedule and leaving for a non-academic trip or vacation are not an excuse to miss an exam or any other assignment in this class; I suggest that you consult the course schedule in advance and drop the course if you cannot be present for the classes and assignments.

Each day a paper is late will result in a drop of 5 percentage points, e.g., 95% to a 90%, etc.

All work is late if submitted after the date and time specified as the due date, **even if only one minute late**. The number of days late is counted from the due date and time. To ensure fairness (particularly in a large class), this policy will be strictly enforced.

**Extra-Credit**

There will be NO extra-credit opportunities. If you are looking for a course that allows students to make-up points lost in exams or assignments, this class is not for you.

**Grading and Written Work Policies**

A plus = 97-100%; A = 93-96.9%; A minus = 90-92.9%
B plus = 87-89.9%; B = 83-86.9%; B minus = 80-82.9%
C plus = 77-79.9%; C = 73-76.9%; C minus = 70-72.9%
D plus = 67-69.9%; D = 63-66.9%; D minus = 60-62.9%
F = 59.99% or lower

**University Policies**

Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs **maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.”**

You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP’s Syllabus information web page at [http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo)

**Disclaimer**

All information in this syllabus may be subject to change with fair notice by the instructor, the Department of Political Science or San Jose State University.
INTRODUCTION (January 23)

Broad Economic Trajectories (January 28)


Broad Political Trajectories (January 30)


THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

Institutional Approach (February 4)


Dependency and Modernization (February 6)


COLONIAL LEGACIES AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE
Colonial Legacies: Origins, Institutions, and Inequality (February 11)

Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson (2012), Why Nations Fail, Crown Publishers: New York, Chap. 1


Emerging Markets and States: Elite Democracy (February 13)


**POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY: SOCIAL CONFLICT, REPRESSION, AND DEMOCRACY**

Theories on Democracy and Dictatorship (February 18 & 20)


The Rise of Populism and the Incorporation of the Masses (February 25 & 27)


Insurgency and Revolution (March 3 & 5)


**Review Midterm Exam (March 10)**

**Midterm Exam 1 (March 12)**

**Breakdown of Democracy and Rise of Authoritarianism (March 17 & 19)**


**Democratization (March 24 & 26)**


THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA: TOPICS

Macroeconomic Crisis and Economic Reform (April 7)


Dysfunctional and Weak States (April 9)


Political Institutions: Presidentialism, Parties and Checks and Balances (April 14)


The Rise of Left-Wing Parties in Latin America (April 16)


Clientelism and Vote Buying (April 21)


**Political Resource Curse (April 23)**


**Current Affairs and Other Topics (April 28 & 30)**

Review Midterm Exam 2 (May 5)

Midterm Exam 2 (May 7)

Policy Memo (May 13)