

# **POLS 146-01: LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS**

**San Jose State University - Department of Political Science**

Instructor: Dr. Sergio Bejar-Lopez

Fall, 2020

## **1 Course and Contact Information**

**Email:** sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu

**Office Location:** Virtual

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-5pm (Via Zoom)

**Classroom:** Virtual

## **2 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.

## **3 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, populism, and a variety of projects for economic development. Events in the region continue to raise questions about the effects 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 in the region.

**This is an Online Education course. All assignments and exams will be conducted over the Internet. Students are responsible for their own access to the Internet and computer resources.**

## 4 Course Expectations and Activities

Success in this class will depend upon your ability to: (1) think critically; (2) read and write University-level English prose; (3) develop an ability to understand and systematically apply the basics of research design; (4) work independently and in group when needed.

I expect students to:

- read this syllabus carefully,
- log on to the class web site a minimum of four times each week,
- read all assigned materials,
- watch lectures,
- submit assignments and exams on time,

DO NOT enroll in an online course if you know that you are going to be away from your Internet access for more than 5 or 6 days during the length of the course. Unless you have an extenuating circumstance, you have to submit all the assignments by the deadline.

Please note that students are responsible for their own Internet access and computing resources. A loss of connectivity is not an excuse for late assignments. Some Internet service providers (ISPs) are notorious for inferior, unreliable service. In previous semesters, students have lost Internet connectivity in the middle of exams. Students who wait until the last possible moment to submit an assignment also run the risk of an unanticipated service disruption that prevents timely submission.

## 5 Communication

I will post announcements in CANVAS on a regular basis. They will appear on your dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification from CANVAS. Please make sure to check them regularly, as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

In this course we will use the CONVERSATIONS feature on the help corner (located in navigation links) to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the CANVAS system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages regularly.

I receive many emails from students everyday, and I try to respond to all of them in a timely manner. An email is a formal communication between you and your professor, and it thus should be addressed properly. For my students, I am Dr. Bejar or Dr. Bejar-Lopez. Please keep this in mind when you send me an email. **I will not respond to emails that are not properly addressed.**

## 6 Creating an Environment of Mutual Respect

This class is a partnership between me as your professor, and you as students. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment to learn and to explore challenging questions about Research Methods in Political Science. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect.

What do I expect from you, to create an environment of mutual respect? I expect students to complete the readings and watch all the posted lectures. I also expect professional behavior in the class and to remain engaged throughout the semester. Lack of interest or engagement will be reflected in your grade.

What can you expect from me? You can expect me to be tirelessly enthusiastic and to work hard for you, both in this semester and in future semesters if needed. I encourage all of you to stop by my virtual office hours, even if you don't have a question and just would like to chat about the class, Latin America or life after SJSU. You can reach me best via email at [sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu](mailto:sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu). I will respond to you within 24 hours during the week, and within 48 hours on the weekend.

## 7 Department of 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.

## 8 Course's Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Gain a solid understanding of different theoretical frameworks used to analyze Latin America. This course should make it easier for you to read the

newspaper and think critically about current events (Lectures, readings, discussion boards, quizzes, exam).

- Learn about the history and political dynamics during recent history for select Latin American countries—namely, Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil (Lectures, readings, discussion boards, quizzes).
- Strengthen your critical thinking skills by applying social science methodological tools and causal inference. Students will learn to identify the causal claims of authors and to challenge their approaches and assumptions. These are skills you will bring to your other courses, and to your life after college (Lectures, readings).

## 9 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>.

## 10 Required Reading Materials

We are living through a difficult time as we face the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, I have decided to design a class that doesn't require students to purchase a textbook. I will make all the required readings available to you via the CANVAS page for the class.

In addition, I expect students to regularly check the following websites on Latin America:

Excellent directory of Latin American newspapers and websites, country by country, by The Guardian:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/feb/05/world-news-guide-latin-america>

Other sources in English:

[http://www.bbc.com/news/world/latin\\_america/](http://www.bbc.com/news/world/latin_america/)

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/americas/index.html>

<http://edition.cnn.com/americas>

<http://www.economist.com/world/americas>

<http://caracaschronicles.com>

# 11 Course Requirements

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

- 30% Group Assignments (3)
- 15% Discussion Boards (8)
- 30% Exams (2)
- 15% Quizzes (8)
- 10% Peer Evaluation

## **Group Assignments (30%)**

**Country Profile:** 4-7 pages with info-graphics and references. On September 1st you will be randomly assigned to a group, and each group will be assigned a country from the region. In Week 5 (**September 18th.**) you will present a country profile, both orally (i.e. short video presentation) and on-paper – consisting of a short narrative and key economic and human welfare statistics, including 10-year trends. The narrative should focus on the country’s modern evolution – the most salient political parties (PRI if studying Mexico, for example), social or political cleavages (agrarian elites versus Evo Morales in Bolivia for example, or President Kirchner versus the Central Bank in Argentina) and major current events (The Olympics and their backlash in Brazil, or the FARC negotiations in Colombia).

**Current Events:** 2-3 pages. Due Week 10 (**October 22nd.**) With your team, present the most salient political or economic event preoccupying the public, or government, currently. This might be a regional dispute, an anti-terrorist operation, an indigenous group’s protest, or an economic crisis. Your job will be to frame the problem, isolate key stakeholders/actors and their 3 positions, and then analyze the problem through a context-sensitive lens that considers the local political economy or political history. You can draw from class resources, though you may need to read ahead, or outside of class, in order to best grapple with the analysis.

**Policy Memo:** 6-8 pages with references. Your policy paper (week 10) will build on the previous assignments, culminating in a policy position paper that explicates your current government’s approach to key overarching themes: a) Foreign Relations – regionally, with China, and with the United States b) Economic Growth c) Security – with a domestic focus d) Human Rights and e) Rural Development / Inclusive Prosperity. **Due November 19th.**

## **Online Quizzes (15%)**

There will be one online quiz per module. Each quiz will ask questions about a different set of readings (see below for details). Check the calendar on CANVAS for deadlines. Late quizzes –even a second late- will receive a zero.

## **Discussion Boards (15%)**

There will be one discussion board per module. Punctual postings and responses are critical to both the success of the course and the success of individual students. It is impossible for me to read and respond to several hundred

messages and assignments in the last week of class. Therefore, I have created a grading policy that rewards both the quality and timeliness of your responses and assignments.

Your postings should be well written and clearly address the issues being discussed. I expect each writing assignment to have: (1) A clear introduction that addresses directly the question posed by the instructor; (2) A body of factual examples that support your thesis; these examples may be drawn from either the assigned readings or footnoted sources researched independently by the student; (3) Appropriate source citations; plagiarized threads will be penalized. (4) A succinct concluding paragraph. Your responses must be posted by the deadline specified on Canvas. Late posts will receive a "0".

If I have some concerns or comments about your thread, I will post a response. My comments are intended to help you improve your threads. If you respond to my comments, you may earn additional points. In order to earn a perfect score, you generally have to post an excellent thread the first time around and by the assigned deadline. In addition, you must respond to the threads of at least two other students 24 hrs. after the deadline.

**Two Exams (15% each)**

The exams will take place on October 10th and December 5th. You must sit in the exam at the scheduled time. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical excuse. Make travel plans accordingly. The exams will include material presented both in the reading and in the lectures.

**Peer Evaluation (10%)**

When turning in your final assignment, you will individually score your group mates on participation and contribution from 0-5. Scores less than five will be used to deduct points from individual contributions that were substandard. These scores are confidential.

## 12 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.

## 13 Grading Scale

A plus = 97-100%; A = 94-96.9%; A minus = 90-93.9%  
B plus = 87-89.9%; B = 84-86.9%; B minus = 80-83.9%  
C plus = 77-79.9%; C = 74-76.9%; C minus = 70-73.9%  
D plus = 67-69.9%; D = 64-66.9%; D minus = 60-63.9%  
F = 59.99% - 0%

## 14 Written Work

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. Ideas from others must also be referenced. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct, which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/writeandcite>.

The SJSU Writing Center is 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 <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

## 15 Late Work

I understand that we all are facing difficulties during this pandemic. Therefore, I have created a schedule that not only is flexible, but also allows students to have plenty of time to complete their assignments. **Late work will not be accepted** –i.e. your grade will be **zero**.- If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact me by private message before the assignment is due to make alternate arrangements.

Each day the research 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 second 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.

## 16 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>.

## 17 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.

## 18 Tentative Course Schedule

### Introduction (August 19 - August 21)

Readings:

- Syllabus

### Module 1: The Latin American Puzzle (August 24 - August 28)

Readings:

- SGS, Ch. 12
- SGS, Ch. 13
- [www.t.ly/nE9q](http://www.t.ly/nE9q)
- [www.t.ly/Qeml](http://www.t.ly/Qeml)

### Module 2: Explanations of Backwardness (August 31 - September 11)

Readings:

- Acemoglu and Robinson. 2012. Ch.3
- Heller, Rueschemeyer and Snyder. 2009. "Dependency and Development in a Globalized World: Looking Back and Forward", Studies in Comparative International Development, 44.
- [www.t.ly/FsI2](http://www.t.ly/FsI2)
- [www.t.ly/wy4n](http://www.t.ly/wy4n)
- Safford. 1992. "The Problem of Political Order in Early Republican Spanish America," Journal of Latin American Studies, 24: 83-97.

### Module 3: The Incorporation of the Masses into the Political Process: Revolution and Populism (September 14 - September 25)

Readings:

- Skidmore. Ch. 7
- Achtenberg. The Enduring Legacy of Bolivia's Forgotten National Revolution.
- [www.t.ly/ivG9](http://www.t.ly/ivG9)
- Hawkins. 2003. Populism in Venezuela: The Rise of Chavismo.
- [www.t.ly/rwc3](http://www.t.ly/rwc3)

### Module 4: Breakdown of Democracy and Military Dictatorships (September 29 - October 8)

Readings:

- Hector Schamis. 1991. "Reconceptualizing Latin American Authoritarianism in the 1970s: From Bureaucratic Authoritarianism to Neoconservatism." *Comparative Politics*, 23(2): 201-220.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. "One Theoretical and Historical Background to the Study of the Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State."
- [www.t.ly/S2pW](http://www.t.ly/S2pW)
- [www.t.ly/zXIg](http://www.t.ly/zXIg)
- [www.t.ly/e2mm](http://www.t.ly/e2mm)

**\*\*\*Exam 1: October 8\*\*\***

**Module 5: Democratic Transitions and Neoliberal Reform (October 12 - October 23)**

Readings:

- Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 190-204.
- Lawson, Chappell. 2000. "Mexico's Unfinished Transition: Democratization and Authoritarian Enclaves in Mexico." *Mexican Studies*. READ from page 271 til the end.
- Williamson, John. 2006. "What Washington Means by Policy Reform." In Peter R. Kingstone, ed. *Readings in Latin American Politics*, Houghton Mifflin: Boston, pp. 83-89.
- Kathleen Staudt. 2018. "How NAFTA Has Changed Mexico." *Current History* 117(796): 43-48.
- Watch: [www.t.ly/B36K](http://www.t.ly/B36K)

**Module 6: Consequences of Neoliberalism in Mexico: Violence, Crime, Populism, the Left and AMLO (October 26 - November 6)**

Readings:

- Beatriz Magaloni and Zaira Razu. 2016. "Mexico in the Grip of Violence." *Current History* 115(778): 57-62.
- Max Fisher and Amanda Taub. "'The Social Contract is Broken': Inequality Becomes Deadly in Mexico." *New York Times*. September 30, 2017.
- Kenneth Greene and Mariano Sánchez-Talanquer. 2018. "Mexico's Party System under Stress." *Journal of Democracy* 29(4): 31-42.
- Jon Lee Anderson. "A New Revolution in Mexico." *New Yorker*. June 25, 2018.

- Jon Lee Anderson. “Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Donald Trump, and the Error of Comparison.” *New Yorker*. July 3, 2018.
- Rodolfo de la Torre. “Why AMLO Will Struggle with Mexico’s Poverty Rate—Just Like His Predecessors.” *Americas Quarterly*. August 12, 2019.
- Shannon O’Neil. “Lopez Obrador is Dismantling Democracy in Mexico.” *Bloomberg*. March 11, 2019.

**Module 7: The Turn to the Left and Political Polarization (November 9 - November 20)**

Readings:

- Kurt Weyland. 2009. “The Rise of Latin America’s Two Lefts: Insights from Rentier State Theory.” *Comparative Politics* 41(2): 145-164.
- Noam Lupu. 2014. “Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America.” *World Politics* 66(4): 561-602.
- David Smilde. 2015. “The End of Chavismo?” *Current History* 114(769): 49-55.
- Michael McCarthy. 2017. “Venezuela’s Manmade Disaster.” *Current History* 116(787): 61-67.
- William Finnegan. “Venezuela, a Failing State.” *New Yorker*. November 14, 2016.
- Planet Money podcast 731: “How Venezuela Imploded.”
- Watch: The Hugo Chávez Show (2008).

**Module 8: The Resurgence of the Right in Latin America (November 23 - December 7)**

Readings:

- Wendy Hunter and Timothy Power. 2019. “Bolsonaro and Brazil’s Illiberal Backlash.” *Journal of Democracy* 30(1): 68-82.
- Lindsay Mayka and Amy Erica Smith. “Could Corruption Investigations Undermine Democracy in Latin America?” *Vox*. May 17, 2018.
- [www.t.ly/KXet](http://www.t.ly/KXet)
- Robert Kaufman and Stephan Haggard. 2019. “Democratic Decline in the United States: What Can We Learn from Middle-Income Backsliding?” *Perspectives on Politics* 17(2): 417-432.

**EXAM 2 WILL POSTED ON CANVAS ON DECEMBER 9th, 2020**