

V53.0530 Politics of Latin America

Professor Christopher Mitchell
Spring, 2006

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING LIST

Course requirements: (1) **Reading.** Required readings are assigned for most topics. Please keep up with the reading carefully; readings will often be discussed during class sessions, and mastery of them will be carefully tested. Please treat handouts distributed in class as assigned readings. Books may be bought in the NYU Bookstore, or may be read in the Bobst Reserve Room, on Lower Level 2 in Bobst Library. One film will also be shown during the course. Students who miss the film showing have the obligation to view the film at Bobst Library's Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media, on the 2nd floor in Bobst. The Fisher Center call number for the film is listed below, linked to the title. (2) **Attendance in class:** regular participation in class discussions will be an important course requirement, and attendance will be taken. (3) **Mid-term exam:** there will be a one-hour exam in class, on **Thursday, February 23**; it will include both a short-answer section and an essay section; both will be designed to test mastery of the reading. This mid-term will count for 25% of a student's final grade. Only a written medical note will be accepted if you are absent. (4) **Book review:** A five-page book review will be due on **Thursday, April 6**, and will count for 25% of each student's final grade. A list of the books will be distributed shortly; the review must be based on one of these books. (5) **Final exam:** a two-hour final, including both essays and short-answer questions, will be held on **Thursday, May 4** from **10:00 to 11:50 AM**. (Please do not schedule any travel that would conflict with this exam date.) The final will cover the full course, and will count for 50% of each student's final grade.

e-mail: Prof. Mitchell's e-mail address is <chris.mitchell@nyu.edu>. This is a good link through which to ask questions, arrange office hour appointments, etc.

Office hours: Professor Mitchell holds office hours each week, at 726 Broadway, Room 767, on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon. To make a specific appointment, please use the sign-up sheet posted on the office door; if you must re-schedule, please call or send a timely e-mail message. If Tuesday afternoons are impossible for you, please send an e-mail and we'll make another appointment.

Topics and Readings

We will read substantial sections of the following books:

Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 6th edition 2005)

Joe Foweraker, Todd Landman and Neil Harvey, *Governing Latin America* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003)

Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Harold A. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela: A Comparative Perspective* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005)

Gregory Weeks, *The Military and Politics in Postauthoritarian Chile* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003)

I -- INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE REGION'S POLITICS

A. Introduction – January 17

B. Latin America's economic and political evolution until the achievement of independence (1825) – January 19, 24

Reading: Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, pp. 13 through 41.

C. Latin America's economic and political development from independence to the present – January 26, 31

Reading: Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America*, pp. 42 through 68

II MAJOR THEMES IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

A. Authoritarianism, and the growth and practice of democracy – February 2, 7

Reading: Foweraker *et al.*, *Governing Latin America*, pp. 1-55

B. Accountability and legitimacy, including human rights and constitutionalism – February 9, 14, 16

Reading: Foweraker *et al.*, *Governing Latin America*, pp. 59-91, 123-144

Film to be shown in class February 21: *A Question of Conscience: The Murder of the Jesuit Priests in El Salvador* (1990). (Call number at Bobst Library's Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media, 2nd floor in Bobst: VCA 3654)

Mid-term exam: Thursday, February 23, in class

Focus on political problems, #1: The attempted auto-golpe of 1993 in Guatemala – February 28

Reading: Concise clippings packet, to be distributed in class

C. Political parties, government institutions, elections – March 2, 7, 9

Reading: Foweraker *et al.*, *Governing Latin America*, pp. 95-122, 190-203

Spring break – week of March 13

III-- BUILDING DEMOCRACY AT AN EARLY STAGE OF NATIONAL
MODERNIZATION: EL SALVADOR – March 21, 23, 28

Reading: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 11: “Central America: Colonialism, Dictatorship,
and Revolution” (pp. 356-395)

Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below*, Chapters 1 through 4 (pp. 3-107)

IV - INSTITUTIONS, PERSONALISM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY AT AN
INTERMEDIATE PHASE OF MODERNIZATION – VENEZUELA: March 30,
April 4, 6

Reading: Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela*, pages to be
announced.

Comparative book reviews - due at the start of class – April 6

Focus on political problems, #2: Alberto Fujimori seeks a fourth term as Peru’s president –
April 11

Reading: Concise clippings packet, to be distributed in class

V -- DILEMMAS OF DEMOCRACY AT A HIGH LEVEL OF MODERNIZATION:
CHILE – April 13, 18, 20

Readings: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 4: “Chile: Socialism, Repression and
Democracy” (pp. 109-138)

Weeks, *The Military and Politics in Postauthoritarian Chile*, pp. 41-162

Focus on political problems, #3: The political strategies of President Néstor Kirchner in
Argentina – April 25

Reading: Concise clippings packet, to be distributed in class

VI -- PATTERNS AND LESSONS FOR DEMOCRACY-BUILDING IN LATIN
AMERICA – April 27

**Final Exam – Thursday, May 4 – 10:00-11:50 AM.
Location will be announced.**