

# PS 4900

## Latin American Politics



Instructor: Stephen Morris  
Office: Peck Hall 209-A ; Ph. 494-7687  
Office Hours: 9:00 – 12:00 MWF  
[sdmorris@mtsu.edu](mailto:sdmorris@mtsu.edu)

Spring Semester 2010  
Room: Peck Hall 211  
Tues-Thurs: 11:20 - 12:45  
Course Web Page: [www.elearn.mtsu.edu](http://www.elearn.mtsu.edu)

## SYLLABUS

### COURSE OBJECTIVES



Politics in Latin America are exciting, interesting, and different, featuring fundamental and often violent conflict over the basic nature of political authority and economic policy. Today, exciting things are happening across the region with many governments exhibiting a more leftist/progressive direction. Yet the countries continue to suffer from high levels of violence, weak rule of law, and deep-seated poverty and gross inequality.

This course offers a basic introduction to contemporary Latin America. Together, we will focus on issues of democracy and conflict, the rule of law, economic policy and development, and the blend of cultural, political and economic factors. In addition, we explore current developments in the countries of the region.

### REQUIRED TEXT

1. Blake, *Latin American Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2009.
2. *Real World Latin America: A Contemporary Economics and Social Policy Reader* (Dollars & Sense, NACLA)(2008).

### WEB ENHANCED

All materials for this course are available on-line. To access, go to [www.elearn.mtsu.edu](http://www.elearn.mtsu.edu). Here you will find copies of the syllabus as well as additional readings, descriptions of assignments, links to further materials, etc. I will continually update the site with news from the region. Some assignments for this class can only be completed by using the web page. Please check the site during the first week of class to make sure you have access.

### METHODS/ASSIGNMENTS

#### ***I. Reading/Participation***

You are expected to attend class, read the assigned material before coming to class, participate in class discussions, and develop an interest in the material. As noted, Latin American politics are exciting and interesting; hopefully, you will come to share that view.

#### ***II. Class Assignments/Projects.***

- a) Actor Profile and Role Playing . Everyone will select a political role (party leader, head of business association, indigenous leader, peasant leader, women activist, union leader, military officer, community organizer, etc) and work to develop an understanding of Latin America's

problems from that vantage point. The out-of-class portion of your final will be to draft an essay related to your role's perspective on Latin American politics. You should consider using the two other projects to help gather information about your role. Also, we will conduct in-class discussions on the different positions. SEE COURSE WEB PAGE for additional information.

- b) Public Opinion Project OR Election Project. Teams of 2 students will work together to summarize material and make a brief 15 minute presentation to the class. The presentation will focus on a chapter or recent report based on the Americas Barometer Insight series OR on a recent or upcoming election. SEE COURSE WEB PAGE for additional information.
- c) Weekly News Summary. Every week (beginning in week 2) we will discuss current (political) events in Latin America. You are expected to submit 6 (six) ½ page summaries of a recent news article or an NPR story on Latin America. I will try to maintain some updated news stories and NPR stories on the course web page. You can use these or others. The short papers that you submit should do two things: 1. very briefly, in one or two sentences, summarize the news story; and 2. describe briefly in another two sentences or so how the events illustrate some broader dimension or aspect of Latin American politics discussed in class or the text. SEE COURSE WEB PAGE for additional information.

### **III. Exams**

There will be a mid-term and final exam. Both will feature short-answer questions. The final will also include the take-home essay assignment on your role's perspective on Latin American politics today. This should be a 5-7 page essay drawing on your work during the semester. IT MUST BE PROPERLY CITED.

---

#### **GRADING**

---

Participation, Attendance (weekly summaries and team presentation)	25%
Mid-Term	25%
Final	25%
Final Essay	25%

---

#### **OTHER**

---

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the instructor may wish to modify the above requirements or their timing as circumstances dictate. For example, the instructor may wish to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students must be given adequate notification. Moreover, there may be non-typical classes for which these requirements are not strictly applicable in each instance and may need modification. If such modification is needed, it must be in writing and conform to the spirit of this policy statement.

#### **Inclement Weather and Class Cancellation Policy**

If Rutherford County Schools are closed (closings are posted by 6:00 a.m. and can be found on all local networks and at <http://newschannel5.com/snow/closings.html>), check your email before coming to campus. I will announce class cancellations via email only. If you do not hear from me, we will meet as scheduled. If the university is closed for any reason, we will not have class.

### **Withdrawal and Drop Policy**

The deadline to drop this course without a grade is March 3. Scholarship recipients need to be especially cognizant of the impact of dropping a course on scholarship eligibility (see below).

### **ADA Accommodation Policy**

If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodation, or you have questions related to any accommodation for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please contact the Office of Disabled Student Services (898-2783) with questions about such services.

### **Tennessee Lottery Scholarship**

To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. You may qualify with a 2.75 cumulative GPA after 72 attempted hours (and subsequent semesters), if you are enrolled full-time and maintain a semester GPA of at least 3.0. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility; if you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. Lottery recipients are eligible to receive the scholarship for a maximum of five years from the date of initial enrollment, or until a bachelor degree is earned. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form, review lottery requirements on the web at <http://scholarships.web.mtsu.edu/telsconteligibility.htm>, or contact the Financial Aid Office at 898-2830.

**Should the information in this paragraph conflict with the information provided by the State, the latter should be considered accurate and binding.**

---

## **COURSE OUTLINE/ READINGS**

---

### **Part 1: Introduction**

Weeks 1-4: Jan. 14-Feb 4

- What is a Latin America anyway?
- Historical Legacies
- Latin American Culture
- Economic Realities

**\*Readings:** Blake, Chapters 1 & 2

### **Part 2: Latin American Politics**

Weeks 5-9: Feb 9 – March 4, 16-18

- Basic features of LA Politics
- Authoritarianism
  - Video: “Capital Sins” (Brazil)
- Democratization and the New Politics
- Public perceptions of politics and democracy
- Corruption and Politics
- Actor Profiles

**\*Readings:** Blake, Chapters 3 & 4

*Real World LA:* “Latin America’s Left Off Track” (pp. 40-47)

*Real World LA* “By Means Legal and Otherwise” (pp. 48-56)

- Real World LA* “Laws and Injustice in Mexico” (pp. 58-62)  
*Real World LA* “Politics as Organized Crime in Colombia?” (pp. 68-72)  
*Real World LA* “The Anti-Neoliberal Backlash” (pp. 113-115)  
*Real World LA* “Turning Gas into Development in Bolivia” (pp. 116-124)  
*Real World LA* Chapter 5 (pp. 150-190)  
*Real World LA* “The Struggle for Latin America’s Water” (pp. 226-232)

**Mid-term exam Thursday March 25**

**Part 3: Case Studies**

Weeks 10-13: March 23 – Apr. 22

- Argentina
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 5
    - Real World LA*: “The Falcon Remembered” (pp. 72-78)
    - Real World LA* “From Resistance to Production” (pp. 134-142)
- Brazil
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 6
- Chile
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 7
    - Real World LA* “Is Chile a Neoliberal Success?” (pp. 79-87)
- Cuba
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 8.
    - Real World LA* “Cuban Development in the Bolivarian Matrix” (pp. 17-23)
- Guatemala
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 9
    - Real World LA* “Multinational Gold Rush in Guatemala” (pp. 240-245)
- Mexico
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 10
- Venezuela
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 11.
    - Real World LA* “Breaking with the Past” (pp. 9-16)
    - Real World LA*: “Venezuela’s Cooperative Revolution” (pp. 125-133)

**Part 4: Conclusions**

Week 14: Apr 27

- Actor Discussion/Review
  - \***Readings:** Blake, Chapter 12

**Final Exam Thursday, May 6, 10:30**

\* *March 3 – Last day to Drop on RaiderNet with a grade of ‘W’*

