

## IS 274-01: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS

*Fall 2011*

*T/TH 2 – 3:15 PM, 110 Buckman*

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Office hours: Thurs. 1 - 2 pm

Fri. 10 - noon (or by appointment)

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This course will introduce students to the evolution of inter-American affairs, with an emphasis on past and present relations between the United States and Latin America. Our overarching goal for the semester is to understand the consequences of U.S.–Latin American relations for democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere. The first segment of the course addresses U.S. involvement in Central and South America during the Cold War and the continued relevance of these policies today. We then analyze U.S. efforts to promote democracy during the post-Cold War “Age of Uncertainty.” The second part of the course focuses on inter-American economic and social relations; in particular, we will grapple with the much-debated issues of immigration and trade.

Throughout the term, we will use specific country cases to shed light on these themes, examine a variety of actors involved in inter-American affairs (e.g., political leaders, activists, business, labor), and discuss the many political instruments — arms, money, ideas, etc. — that these actors use. In addition, we consider a range of perspectives from within the U.S. and Latin American countries. This course seeks to challenge and improve your understanding of the politics of U.S.–Latin American relations and international affairs more broadly. By the end of the semester, you should be better able to critically evaluate U.S. foreign policy, to assess media coverage of the issues discussed in class, and to support your own positions on these issues.

### Requirements

You are responsible for material covered in class and in the readings. Please note that some of the material covered in class is *not* included in the readings (and vice versa). Your final grade is based on the following components:

Research paper (& assignments)	25%	Due 12/1
Exam 1	20%	10/11-13
Exam 2	20%	11/17-19
Political analysis paper	10%	Due 9/20
In-class exercises	10%	Dates vary
Participation	15%	

- *Research Paper:* You will select a contemporary issue in inter-American affairs that interests you and become an expert on that theme by consulting outside sources. You are expected to research your topic throughout the semester (note the deadlines on the schedule below) and to write a final paper of approximately 12-15 pages. More detailed instructions for this assignment will be distributed.

- *Exams*: These consist of short answer questions, to be completed during class, and a take-home essay question, to be completed outside of class. Exam 2 will emphasize material covered since Exam 1.
- *Political analysis paper*: You will write a short paper in which you analyze either the positions of several presidential candidates on issues of relevance to inter-American affairs or bilateral relations between countries in the Hemisphere. Guidelines for this assignment will be distributed.
- *In-class exercises*: These unannounced exercises usually consist of brief questions on readings and are designed to encourage active, engaged reading before each class. At the end of the semester, your lowest score is dropped. No make-ups will be scheduled for missed exercises.
- *Participation*: The format of this course is a combination of short lectures and discussions. You are expected to complete the assigned readings before class, to bring your texts to class, and to participate vigorously in discussions and activities. This grade is determined by 1) your attendance record (see policy below), and 2) your in-class contributions.

The grading scale for the course is as follows: A (100-93); A- (92-90); B+ (89-88); B (87-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-78); C (77-73); C- (72-70); D+ (69-68); D (67-63); D- (62-60); F (59 and below).

### **Class policies**

- Honor Code: It is expected that the College's Honor Code will govern the work that you do in this course, as well as your conduct in class. Pertinent information is available at: <http://www.rhodes.edu/campuslife/1478.asp>.
- Absences: Students with **four** or more *unexcused* absences automatically receive a failing participation grade. *Excused* absences entail providing documentation of a personal or family emergency (e.g., illness) or prior commitment (e.g., jury duty) and are subject to the instructor's approval. Personal travel is not a valid reason for missing class; make your plans accordingly.
- If you participate in student athletics or other extra-curricular activities, it is your responsibility to inform me of travel/conflicts as soon as you know your schedule for the semester. You should prepare and turn in assignments early whenever possible.
- Tardiness: Arriving late to class more than 1-2 times signals to me that this is a low-priority course for you. As a result, your participation grade will be lowered by one whole letter grade.
- Please refrain from using cel phones or other electronic gadgets during class. Laptops should be used strictly for note-taking.
- Assignments submitted via email will not be accepted unless explicitly noted otherwise by the professor. I mark late work down one-third of a letter grade per day (for instance, an A becomes an A-, then a B+, etc.) until I receive a hard copy.
- If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x.3994 as soon as possible.
- I encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss assignments, study skills, issues raised in class, current events, etc. Keep in mind that the quality of your written work may be improved by visiting the Writing Center, where tutors assist students during multiple phases of the writing process.

## **Texts and readings**

Two *required* texts are available at the Rhodes Bookstore:

Smith, Peter H. *The Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the U.S., and the World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press (2008).

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. New York: Vintage Books (1994).

Additional required readings are available in my public folder, where they are saved under the author's last name (unless noted otherwise). Hard copies will also be kept in a folder in the IS Department office (on the bookcase to the left of my office door). Readings must be completed before the class meetings under which they are listed.

I also urge you to read high-quality sources of international news on a regular basis so that we can incorporate current events into our class discussions (see the suggested websites in my public folder).

## **Course schedule**

TH, 8/25: Greetings & introduction to the course

Why should we study inter-American affairs? What is at stake? What issues are currently dominating the inter-American agenda?

- Shifter, Michael. "Obama and Latin America: New Beginnings, Old Frictions." *Current History* (Feb 2010).

## **PART ONE: Democracy and Human Rights, Past and Present**

T, 8/29: Theoretical perspectives

How should we go about analyzing inter-American affairs? Which theoretical approaches are most useful?

- Snyder, Jack. "One World, Rival Theories." *Foreign Policy* (Nov/Dec 2004).
- Sikkink, Kathryn. *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (2004), Ch. 4 (p. 79-105).
- Recommended: "Ask the Experts: Do traditional models of international relations apply in Latin America?" *Americas Quarterly*, available online at: <http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/2441>

TH, 9/1: Historical perspectives

What are the recurrent historical patterns (or "structures," to use Smith's term) in U.S. - Latin American relations?

- Smith, p.1-8; 395- 414; Ch. 2.
- Recommended: Smith, Ch. 3.

T, 9/6: Containing communism during the Cold War

What policy instruments did the U.S. use in Latin American countries in pursuit of its Cold War strategy?  
What were their consequences for human rights and democracy in the region?

- Smith, Ch. 4; p. 148-157.
- Recommended: Selection from *Latin America and U.S. Foreign Policy: Opposing Viewpoints*, ed. Bonnie Szumski (1988), p. 132-144.

TH, 9/8: School of the Americas or “School of Assassins”?

- Gill, Lesley. *School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (2004), p. 77- 89; p. 198-232.

T, 9/13: Covert ops

Case study: *Chile*

- Maxwell, Kenneth. “The Other 9/11.” *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec 2003).
- Rogers, William and Kenneth Maxwell. “Fleeing the Chilean Coup: The Debate Over U.S. Complicity.” *Foreign Affairs* (Jan/Feb 2004).
- Recommended: Smith, p. 161-167.

TH, 9/15: Dealings with dictators in South America

- Sikkink, Kathryn. *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (2004), Ch. 5-6 (p. 106-147).
- Recommended: Smith, p. 194 -199.

T, 9/20: Discussion of political analyses

**\*Political analysis paper due at beginning of class\***

TH, 9/22: The Cold War gets hotter: Supporting counterinsurgency in Central America

Case study: *El Salvador*

- Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*, p. 3-84.

T, 9/27: El Salvador continued

- Danner, p. 85-161.
- “O.A.S. to Reopen Inquiry...” *The New York Times* (3/8/05). (Saved as “Mozote” in public folder).

TH, 9/29: Taking Stock

What are some of the enduring legacies of the Cold War for U.S.- Latin American relations? Are current (post-9/11) debates over U.S. foreign policy reminiscent of earlier tensions between national security and human rights?

- LeoGrande, William. "A Poverty of Imagination: George W. Bush's Policy in Latin America." *Journal of Latin American Studies* (2007).
- "Flash Back." *New Republic* (4/11/05). (Saved as "flashback" in public folder).
- "Case of Cuban Exile..." *The New York Times* (5/9/05). (Saved as "Posada" in public folder).

**Reminder: Preliminary research topics due in my office on Monday, 10/3, no later than 3 PM! (See research paper handout for instructions).**

T, 10/4: Taking Stock Con't

- Main, Alexander. "A New Chapter of Engagement: Obama and the Honduran Coup." *NACLA Report on the Americas* (Jan/Feb 2010).

TH, 10/6: Review for Exam 1

No reading assignment (time to catch up!).

**\*T, 10/11: Exam 1\***

Take-home essay is due in my office on Thursday, 10/13 at 3 PM (Class will not meet).

**T, 10/18: No Class (Fall Recess)**

TH, 10/20: Democracy promotion in the post-Cold War era  
*Case study: Venezuela*

How have governmental and non-governmental actors in the U.S. sought to promote democracy in recent years? What are the strengths and weaknesses of such efforts?

- Isaacs, Anita. "International Assistance for Democracy: A Cautionary Tale." In *The Future of Inter-American Relations*, ed. Jorge Domínguez (2000), p. 259-286.
- Corn, David. "Our Gang in Venezuela?" *The Nation* (8/5/2002).
- Recommended: National Endowment for Democracy Venezuela funding, available online at: <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/latin-america-and-caribbean/venezuela>

## PART TWO: Economic and Social Relations: The Quest for Prosperity

T, 10/25: Western Hemisphere immigration

How do inter-American migration flows affect both the U.S. and the sending countries? What is the logic behind U.S. policies, and how successful have they been? How is the issue of immigration related to NAFTA, national security, and human rights?

- Yeoman, Barry. "Silence in the Fields." *Mother Jones* (Jan/Feb 2001).
- "Imagining Life Without Illegal Immigrants." *The New York Times* (1/11/04). (Saved as "imagining" in public folder).
- Smith, p. 257-269; 320-324.

TH, 10/27: Other border issues

- Logan, Sam et al. "Deportation Feeds a Cycle of Violence in Central America" (3/14/06), available at: <http://www.samuellogan.com/articles/deportation-feeds-a-cycle-of-violence-in-central-america.html>
- Peruse the Minuteman Project website (<http://www.minutemanhq.com/hq>). See, for example, "About Us," "Press Releases," "Minuteman Pledge," and "SOP."

T, 11/1: Perceived threats to national identity

- Huntington, Samuel. *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004), Ch. 9 (p. 221-256).
- Alba, Richard. "Mexican Americans and the American Dream." *Perspectives on Politics* (June 2006).

TH, 11/3: Promoting free trade and integration in the Western Hemisphere

How do economic liberals and dependency theorists envision the international economic system? What are some of the arguments for and against freer trade? What are the consequences of increased trade, investment, and integration on different segments of the population within Latin American countries and the U.S.?

- Walters, Robert and David Blake. *The Politics of Global Economic Relations* (1992), p. 1-12.
- Vanden, Harry and Gary Prevost. *Politics of Latin America* (2006), Ch. 7.

**Reminder: Outline of research and working bibliography due in my office on Monday, 11/7, no later than 3 PM! (See research paper handout for instructions).**

T, 11/8: Debating NAFTA

- Castañeda, Jorge. "NAFTA at 10: A Plus or a Minus?" *Current History* (Feb. 2004).
- Chapter One of "The Southeast in Two Winds: A Storm and a Prophecy," Subcomandante Marcos (August 1992), available online at:  
[http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/marcos\\_se\\_2\\_wind.html](http://struggle.ws/mexico/ezln/marcos_se_2_wind.html)

TH, 11/10: Understanding contemporary U.S. - Cuban relations

What explains the continuity characterizing bilateral relations over several decades?

- Weinmann, Lissa. "Washington's Irrational Cuba Policy." *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2004).
- Perez-Stable, Marifeli. *The United States and Cuba: Intimate Enemies* (2010), Ch. 5. Skim the chapter and emphasize p. 112-122 and the Conclusion.

T, 11/15: Review for Exam 2

- Logan, Sam and Ben Bain. "China's Interest in Latin America: A Cause for Worry?" (8/25/05), available at: <http://www.samuellogan.com/articles/chinas-interest-in-latin-america-a-cause-for-worry.html>

**\*TH, 11/17: Exam 2\***

Take-home essay is due as an email attachment on Saturday, 11/19 by 3 PM. An identical hard copy is due in my office on Monday, 11/21 by 3 PM.

T, 11/22: Research workshop

- Bring your questions, concerns, and inspirations to class to discuss.

**TH, 11/24: Happy Thanksgiving (no class)**

T, 11/29: Guest speaker TBA

TH, 12/1: Discussion of research projects

**\*Research paper due at beginning of class\***

T, 12/6: **Last class meeting**

Looking ahead, how do you expect inter-American relations to evolve in the future, and with what consequences for democracy, human rights, and economic prosperity in the Western Hemisphere?

- Hurrell, Andrew. "Brazil and the New Global Order." *Current History* (Feb 2010).