

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

Spring 2008

T/TH 11 – 12:15 PM, 110 Buckman

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Office hours: Wed. 11 - noon; 2:30 - 4 pm

Fri. 3 - 4:30 pm (or by appointment)

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	25%	Due 3/28
Exam 1	20%	2/21
Exam 2	20%	4/10
Presidential politics paper	10%	Due 1/24
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. At the end of the semester, you will give an informal presentation to the class on your project. 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 and turned in the following day. Exam 2 will emphasize material covered since Exam 1.
- *Presidential politics paper*: You will write a short paper in which you analyze the positions of several presidential candidates on issues of relevance to inter-American affairs. 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 (69-60); 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.
- **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.
- I will not accept assignments submitted via email. 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.

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*, 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press (2008).

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

Additional required readings, marked with an asterisk (*) below, are on reserve in Barret Library and available in my public folder, where they are saved under the author's last name (unless noted otherwise).

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, 1/10: 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?

- *LeoGrande, William. "A Poverty of Imagination: George W. Bush's Policy in Latin America." *Journal of Latin American Studies* (2007).

PART ONE: Democracy and Human Rights, Yesterday and Today

T, 1/15: 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).

TH, 1/17: 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, 1/22: 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, 1/24: School of the Americas or “School of Assassins”?

- *Gill, Lesley. *School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (2004), Ch. 3 (p. 77- 89).

Presidential politics paper due at beginning of class

T, 1/29: 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, 1/31: 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, 2/5: The Cold War gets hotter: Supporting counterinsurgency in Central America

Case study: El Salvador

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

TH, 2/7: 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).

Reminder: *Outline of research and working bibliography due in my office on Friday, 2/8, no later than 4 PM!*

T, 2/12: Supporting “freedom fighters” in Central America

Case study: Nicaragua

- Smith, p. 172-179.
- *Selections from *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History*, ed. Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolof, p. 297-299 (Documents #108, 109, 110).
- *Excerpts from *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History*, ed. Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne (1993), p. xv-xxiii; 374-378.

TH, 2/14: 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? How have activists and political leaders responded to these issues?

- *Gill, Lesley. *School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (2004), Ch. 8 (p. 198-232).
- * “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).

T, 2/19: Review for Exam 1

No reading assignment (time to catch up!).

TH, 2/21: Exam 1

Take-home essay is due in my office on Friday, 2/22 at 4 PM.

T, 2/26 & TH, 2/28: 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).
- National Endowment for Democracy Venezuela programs, available online at: <http://www.ned.org/grants/venezuelaFacts.html>.
- Recommended: Smith, p. 352-361.

3/4-6: ***No Class* (Spring Break)**

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

T, 3/11: 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, 3/13: Other border issues

- Logan, Sam et al. "Deportation Feeds a Cycle of Violence in Central America" (3/14/06), available at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/3152>
- Peruse the Minuteman Project website (<http://www.minutemanhq.com/hq/>). See, for example, "About Us," "Press Releases," "Minuteman Pledge," and "Training Manual."

Note: Individual paper conferences will be scheduled during 3/14 and early in the week of 3/17.

T, 3/18: 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).

3/20: *Easter Recess (no class)*

T, 3/25: 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.

TH, 3/27: Debating NAFTA

- *Castañeda, Jorge. "NAFTA at 10: A Plus or a Minus?" *Current History* (Feb. 2004).
- Excerpt from "The Southeast in Two Winds: A Storm and a Prophecy," Subcomandante Marcos (August 1992), available online at: http://retanet.unm.edu/plans/attachments/the_first_wind.html.

Reminder: *Research papers due in my office on Friday, 3/28, no later than 4 PM!*

T, 4/1: Sugar and sex: Cuba's future niche in the global market?

- *Wonders, Nancy and Raymond Michalowski. "Bodies, Borders, and Sex Tourism in a Globalized World: A Tale of Two Cities, Amsterdam and Havana." *Social Problems* (2001).

TH, 4/3: Understanding contemporary U.S. - Cuban relations

- *Weinmann, Lissa. "Washington's Irrational Cuba Policy." *World Policy Journal* (Spring 2004).

T, 4/8: Review for Exam 2

- Logan, Sam and Ben Bain. "China's Entrance into Latin America: A Cause for Worry?" (8/25/05), available at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/389>
- Recommended: Smith, p. 285-298.

TH, 4/10: Exam 2

Take-home essay is due in my office on Friday, 4/11 at 4 PM.

T, 4/15: Research presentations & discussion

TH, 4/17: Presentations con't

T, 4/22: **Last class meeting**

Course wrap-up: 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?

- *Isacson, Adam. "Closing the 'Seams': U.S. Security Policy in the Americas." *NACLA Report on the Americas* (May/June 2005).

Note: The above schedule is subject to modification if the instructor deems it necessary.