

Core Papers 2020-21

Latin America since Independence

Course provider

Professor Eduardo Posada-Carbó

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Course aims and objectives

This course aims at providing students with a general understanding of the modern history of Latin America since independence; familiarizing them with some of the key debates in the academic literature; and enabling them to engage with their subject in an scholarly manner, both in their writings and in class discussion, and to relate the history of the region to other disciplines in the social sciences.

Course description

The course covers a selection of major themes, either generally applied to the whole region or to individual countries. The topics covered include: independence; problems of state and nation building; the role of Britain in 19th century Latin America; liberalism and state-church relations; the abolition of slavery in Brazil; the export economy and immigration in Argentina; elections, revolutions and democratization; relations with the United States and the Cuban revolution.

Course structure

The course is taught in Michaelmas Term through a series of eight seminars. Students are expected to attend and actively participate in the seminars, to which they are required to contribute with at least one presentation. Covering at least the 'core readings' in advance is a requirement to attend the seminars. Students are also required to write three essays, to be submitted by the end of weeks 3, 6 and 8.

Students are also expected to attend the Latin American History Seminar (Thursdays, 5:00 p.m.), and other seminars organized by the LAC and the University, especially those on topics directly relevant to the course.

Introduction to the Latin American Economies

Course provider

Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea

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Course aims and objectives

Why are Latin American countries so unequal? How do income and race/ethnic inequalities interact? Why have they failed to catch up to the income levels in OECD countries? Why do they have periodic cycles of boom and bust? How has economic development interacted with the environment? These are vital questions to tackle if we want to understand the social, political and economic challenges of the region as well as its future prospects.

This course aims to provide students with tools to answer these questions and more. Adopting a historical political economy approach, we will consider the interactions between the state, social actors and the economic structure across time and space. We will discuss the different economic models that countries adopted since the beginning of the 20th century and evaluate their successes and failures. In the process, we will pay particular attention to the interactions between inequality and economic change.

This course is designed for those interested in political economy and in the process of economic and social development in Latin America, including students doing the M.Sc. and M.Phil. in Latin American Studies, and the M.Phil. in Development Studies. A basic understanding of economic concepts is desirable **but not required**. A selection of special readings on economic and development concepts is available upon request.

Course requirements

During the course, students are expected to do the following tasks: (a) Write one essay of around 2,500 words based on the list of questions provided. The essay will be discussed in a tutorial; and (b) Prepare blog entry of between 500 and 1000 words that other members of the course will comment. There may be other written assignments during the course of the term.

Course structure

This year the course aims to adapt to the special conditions created by the pandemic. Lectures will be pre-recorded and complemented with videos and other online resources. All students are supposed to do the core readings (three articles or book chapters) as well as watch the pre-recorded lectures and complementary videos. We will then meet to discuss the readings and have some group work. In order to do that, the class will be divided into two groups: one will meet face-to-face at the Latin American Centre and the other online.

Sociology of Latin America

Course provider

Professor Leigh A. Payne

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Course description

This course reviews the major sociological concepts and theories as applied to Latin America and the contribution of scholarship on Latin America to the field of sociology. The course covers issues including the state and nation formation, development, poverty and inequality, gender, social and revolutionary movements, religion, race and ethnicity, and crime and violence.

Course objectives

This course introduces students to advanced research on sociology in Latin America, and prepares students for doctoral research in this area.

Course structure

This course currently consists of 8 lectures and 8 seminars or small tutorials.

Course assessment

Unmarked assessments: The following will form part of the overall assessment of the student's progress in the programme, but will not constitute part of the final mark for the course.

- Weekly attendance and participation in lectures
- Two essays of approximately 2500 words (excluding footnotes and bibliographies), one submitted during term and one before week 10. The essay questions should be selected based on past exam paper questions or in consultation with the course provider
- Short presentation of one essay in tutorial
- One critical written and orally delivered review of another student's essay in tutorial
- Revisions sessions including a mock exam
- Critical review of another student's mock exam question

The International Relations of Latin America

Course provider

Dr David Doyle

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Course aims and objectives

This course aims to provide students with a general understanding of the international politics of Latin America over the course of the last decades. Students will develop an understanding of the major theories of international relations, and learn to use these theoretical frameworks to systematically analyze international politics and events across the region. Students will also become proficient in studying theoretical frameworks self-sufficiently together with the search and collection of empirical evidence underpinning their analysis and argumentation.

Course description

The course will examine the international relations of Latin America. Topics cover the evolution of the relations of the Latin American states with the United States (including hemispheric institutions such as the OAS); with other extra-regional powers (Europe, the USSR/Russia, China and Japan); the changing place of the region in the global economy and the development of relevant doctrines and theories; the evolving character of intra-Latin American relations, covering new security issues, migration, international trade and regional integration; and the foreign policy of the major states of the region. Students will become familiar with the broad historical development of the international relations of the region as well as the major theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the field.

Course requirements

Students must write at least two 2,500 word essays. The first essay must be submitted by the end of week 5 and the second essay must be submitted by the end of week 7. The essays should be based on past exam paper questions or on a topic set in consultation with the course provider.

Course structure

The course is taught in Hilary Term as a series of eight 90-minute sessions. Each session will include both a lecture component and a period of seminar-style discussion on that topic. The essays will be discussed in group tutorials (time and day to be agreed).

Term essays

I expect those students who want to present themselves for examination in Trinity to write at least two essays. Students are free in the choice of the topic and should present a theoretically guided and empirically sound systematic analysis (3000 words).

The Politics of Democracy in Latin America

Course provider

Professor Eduardo Posada-Carbó

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Course aims and objectives

The course aims at enabling students to understand the politics of Latin America, particularly since the processes of democratic transition in the late 1970s; to be acquainted with key themes in the academic debates and the related relevant literature; and to enable students to engage with their subject in a scholarly manner, both in their writings and their class discussions.

Course description

The course emphasizes concepts, theories, tools and methods for the study of politics in Latin America. Because the emphasis is on theoretical approaches, this means that the course does not have a specific country-based or sub-regional focus (although students are free to apply concepts and theories to case studies in their essays). We will cover topics such as authoritarianism, democratization, presidentialism, the design of political institutions (parties, elections, legislatures), political culture and political attitudes, voting and political participation, and the rule of law.

Course structure

The course is taught in Hilary Term through a series of eight seminars. Students are expected to attend and actively participate in the seminars, to which they are required to contribute with at least one presentation. Covering at least the 'core readings' in advance is a requirement to attend the seminars. Students are also required to write two essays, to be submitted by the end of weeks 3 and 7 of Hilary Term. These essays will be discussed in paired tutorials throughout Hilary.

Students are also expected to attend the general Latin American Seminar, and other seminars organized by the LAC and the University, especially those on topics directly relevant to the course.

Further Papers

Andean Politics

Course provider

Dr John Crabtree

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Course aims and objectives

The course aims to give students a general understanding of the dynamics underlying the politics of Peru and Bolivia since the 1960s. It will familiarise students with the key debates that arise in the academic literature, reflecting issues from the two countries concerned but also comparing these with experiences elsewhere in Latin America.

Course description

The course covers a selection of major issues that have defined the politics of both countries, in the case of Peru from the military government (1968-80) onwards, and in the case of Bolivia from the aftermath of the 1952 revolution. Topics will include democratisation, political violence, social movements, the activities of political parties, institutional weaknesses/reform, the narcotics industry, the military, amongst others. It will also involve some comparative analysis between the two countries, and reference to similar issues elsewhere in Latin America.

Course structure

The course will be taught in Michaelmas Term and, depending on numbers, probably on the basis of a weekly class. In principle, there will be eight classes, with students expected to write at least two essays of no more than 2,000 words, and to provide an oral presentation on a topic of their choice. The essay topics will be designed to cover as much as possible of the syllabus, but also chosen to reflect individual student's particular interests. A general reading list will be supplied as well as reading lists on the essay topics that students choose to select.

Cities and Citizenship in Latin America

Course provider

Dr Andreza A de Souza Santos

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Course aims and objectives

This course examines the development of Latin American cities. The course engages with colonial and post-colonial urban theories, cities design and execution, violence and urban sprawl (against envisioned plans), and nostalgia and participatory politics as responses. The puzzle of 'what is a good city', however, remains, and cities will be discussed in their promises and limits. Critical ideas of Latin American cities will be debated as cities are both, sites of innovation and entrenched inequality. Cities & Citizenship offers a reading of Latin America's paradox of broad citizenship (political rights) and diminished changes (entrenched inequality).

Course description

In Latin America, colonial and post-colonial power have been expressed in mortar, concrete, and steel. From squares of religious and political order, to utopian dreams of equality and nationality; Baroque buildings or Modernist architecture, it is possible to read politics, economic changes, and demographic curves through cities. Considering the limits of cities to prompt social realities: equality, national identity, modernization; the course turns to common problems of Latin American cities looking at: transportation, gendered spaces, urban violence, and gentrification.

The course will review insights and cutting-edge research on urbanisation, infrastructure, and participatory politics. Geography and Sustainable Development, or more specifically: Gentrification, Infrastructure and Mega-Events, Transportation, and Mega Cities are topics that will feature in this programme.

Course structure

The course will be organised as a series of eight 1.5 hours sessions. There will be a mix of introductory remarks by the instructor and seminar-style discussion on selected readings. Students planning to sit the "Cities & Citizenship" paper in Trinity Term should complete two tutorial essays. Wherever possible, students will be paired for tutorials on allied topics.

Human Rights in Latin America

Course provider

Professor Leigh Payne leigh.payne@sant.ox.ac.uk

Dr Francesca Lessa francesca.lessa@lac.ox.ac.uk

Course aims and objectives

By the end of the course students will have developed a critical understanding of the key disciplinary and interdisciplinary concepts associated with the study of human rights and transitional justice issues in Latin America. They will also have acquired sound empirical knowledge of country case studies as well as the limitations and challenges associated with key human rights concepts and themes.

Course description

Human Rights has been a salient social, political, legal, economic, and cultural issue in the Americas since its so-called "discovery" or "conquest." This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the historical legacy of human rights abuses, contemporary human rights challenges, and international, state and non-state actors' responses to those abuses and challenges. It analyses a variety of themes relating to human rights in the region, encompassing issues relating to truth, justice, reparations for past and present human rights abuses, the role of the Inter-American System for the protection of human rights, and recent challenges emerging from economic, social, cultural and health rights in the region. The theme-based analysis is complemented with specific country case studies (from Brazil and the Southern Cone countries to Central America). Additional themes related to human rights violations based on gender, LGBT, indigenous peoples, and the environment will also be explored.

Course structure

This course consists of weekly lectures, seminars, and tutorials in Michaelmas term and two revision sessions in Trinity term.

Course assessment

- * Regular attendance, preparation of the weekly readings, and participation in class discussions is expected but not marked;
- * Submission of three written essays of no more than 2500 words. Essays form part of the overall assessment of the student's progress, and assist in the preparation of exams, but do not form part of the final mark for the course;
- * Oral presentations of two essays, one in class and one in tutorial;
- * Critical written and oral presentation of a review of another student's essay in tutorial;
- * Mock exam (one question) in Trinity Term and critical evaluation of another student's exam;
- * Assessment has typically been based on a standard three-hour written examination paper on Human Rights in Latin America during Trinity term that constitutes 100% of the final grade for this course.

The Politics of Brazil

Course provider

Dr Andreza A de Souza Santos (with Professor Timothy Power)

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Course aims and objectives

This lecture series explores politics and society in contemporary Brazil. With a population of over 200 million, Brazil has been hailed as an “emerging power” and a “fallen giant” in just over a decade. Brazil's singular importance justifies the attention it receives. In this course we focus on a sustained theoretical and empirical evaluation of Brazil's political system.

Course description

While the broad theme of the course is the Brazilian democracy, we will focus on many of the theoretical concepts and literatures that have been brought to bear in the comparative study of Brazil. These include clientelism, patrimonialism, race and inequality, military autonomy, social authoritarianism, new social movements, the politics of federalism, and formal political institutions in the country.

Course structure

The course will be organised as a series of eight 1.5-hour sessions. There will be a mix of introductory remarks by the instructor and seminar-style discussion on selected readings. Students planning to sit the “Politics of Brazil” paper in Trinity Term should complete two tutorial essays. Wherever possible, students will be paired for tutorials on allied topics.

State, organized crime and drug trafficking in Latin America

Course provider

Dr Timo Schaefer

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Course aims and objectives

The course offers to examine the varying ways in which drug trafficking groups interact with the state and society in contemporary Latin America, as well as the political, economic and social implications of this interaction.

The students will gain knowledge about the historical dynamics and contemporary features of the political economy of the Latin America-U.S. drug trade, as well as its related patterns of violence. Students will develop an understanding of the major concepts and theories on political order and crime, as well as a greater familiarity of how drug trafficking became such a formidable challenge for the recent democratization process in the region. Finally, the option aims to encourage students to think about public policy at local/national/regional level that might minimize the violent effects of drug trafficking.

Course description

Drug trafficking and drug related violence are one of the greatest challenges Latin America has faced in the last decades. Every country in the region, and almost every aspect of domestic and foreign policy is somehow affected by the illicit trade and the efforts to counter it. Building on the recent literature on the production of violence in Latin America (which draws from an interdisciplinary approach, combining criminology, political science, history, political economy and sociology) the course addresses some key questions on the relation between political order and crime in Latin America: Why do drug trafficking networks generate different levels of violence? How do these groups shape political life at the local level? Why is the decrease in violence not always a sign of state success but sometimes rather the opposite? Does illegality breed drug related violence in Latin America? Why do particular forms of drug related violence emerge in some cities and not in others?

Course structure

The course will be taught in Hilary Term.

The course examines the ways in which criminal groups relate to the state in contemporary Latin America. The course includes sessions based on specific features of individual countries or cities, as well as sessions focused on common problems. The course is divided into eight different sessions.

1. History of the Law in Latin America
2. The origins and evolution of the international narcotics trade in Latin America
3. The economics of illicit drug trafficking in Latin America (markets, value, trafficking routes)
4. Organizational, gender and class structure of trafficking groups

5. The dynamics of criminal governance: micro level armed regimes in urban Latin America (examples of Rio de Janeiro, Medellín, Kingston)
6. Two case studies: Colombia and Mexico
7. Human Rights and U.S. Drug Policy in Latin America (20th century)
8. Current debates and drug reform in contemporary Latin America: which are the alternatives?