

# POLI 134D : Topics in Latin American Politics Ideology, Polarization, and Regime Breakdown Through Primary Source Materials

Summer Session II, 2013

Syllabus Updated:

July 31, 2013

New Classroom: SOLIS 111  
TR 5:00 - 7:50

Professor Scott Desposato  
Office: 397 Social Sciences Building  
Office Hours: T 2:00-3:00  
phone: 858-534-3548 (main office)  
email: [swd@ucsd.edu](mailto:swd@ucsd.edu)  
homepage: <http://swd.ucsd.edu>

## 1 Introduction

Latin American society, politics, and economies have undergone dramatic transformations over the last fifty years. In this course, we will study the changing political landscapes of these countries, focusing on the issues of regime breakdown and political polarization, leveraging the medium of popular media, including cinema and television. While not a historical record, film, television, and other popular media provide a lens through which we can understand perspectives and interpretations of politics. For studying questions of political culture and ideology in Latin America, this is particularly useful. Scholars do not enjoy access to extensive historical survey research archives of public opinion for Latin American countries, but we can gain insight on the structure of opinion and behavior through the documentation and dramatic portrayal of important political events and actors. The audiovisual materials have an additional benefit. Most undergraduates have not had the opportunity to personally visit Latin America. While not fully representative of reality, they provide images and personalities that will help ground your readings and your future studies.

In this course we will analyze Latin American political culture using a variety of audiovisual sources and readings, including films, television programs, political advertisements, and speeches. All the materials portray central features of Latin American

political life. The films include representatives from Latin American and North American filmmakers, addressing a variety of contemporary political issues across Latin America.

The materials will provide a backdrop to animate our investigation of political culture and ideology. The fundamental structures of political life have been dramatically transformed by the end of the cold war and the weakening of communism as a viable and desirable political program. These changes are reflected in the weakening of sharp left-right political divides, changes in political discourse, and revisionist portrayals of events and actors in a more romantic and less-ideological light. At the same time, fundamental problems and tensions persist in terms of income and resource inequality, discrimination, and violence. These divides, however, have been recast into new post-cold war ideological frameworks, with interesting results.

One of the interesting contrasts is between new and old materials, especially those considering identical events. In the 1960's and 1970's, many democratic regimes in Latin America collapsed and were replaced by military dictatorships. For example, some of the materials are films that examine democratic collapse and rebellion under authoritarian rule from various perspectives. The films were all made in Latin America, some in the 1970's and in the midst of regime collapse. Others were made in the last 10 years, after each country returned to democratic rule. The contrasts between perspectives help us understand changes in political culture and memory.

These films and other materials have very different portrayals of similar political events. Their quality as entertainment varies from excellent to "two-thumbs down", but all can contribute to our understanding of Latin American politics during the last 40 years.

## **Evaluation**

### **Participation**

A central part of the course is the discussion and exchange of ideas between participants. I expect we will all learn from each other. There will be random quizzes to encourage and reward your preparation and presence. Your presence and participation are expected in the course and together with quiz scores will determine 20% of your final grade. To maximize our time for discussion, your prompt arrival in class is necessary.

### **Essays**

There will be two take-home essay exams (40% each). The grade on each essay will be based on content (90%) and writing quality (10%). The essays will draw on films and other audiovisual materials, readings, and class discussions. Questions will be distributed in class and essays will be due via TurnItIn at the course website. I will not accept late papers, except under extreme circumstances.

Exam questions will require synthesizing course readings, discussion, and relevant films. For example, you might be asked to compare and contrast explanations for the emergence of revolutionary movements in Latin America. A good essay could summarize

the arguments in the readings, identify elements of each explanation in the films and discuss the implications of other images not explained by any of our academic readings.

I expect that essays will demonstrate excellent writing skills. After each assignment has been graded, we will compare and discuss (anonymous) passages from your essays.

Note: learning to write well can be a difficult process. The ability to write with precision and clarity, however, is one of the most important skills you can acquire and one that will serve you well in any profession. My intention is not to cause discomfort or fear, but to encourage and challenge you to improve.

If you miss a class where I hand out exam questions, it is your responsibility to obtain the questions from me.

As an alternative to one of the papers, students may opt to translate and analyze political messages from the Political Campaigns of the Americas Database.

## Readings

The primary textbook is Skidmore and Smith's, *Modern Latin America*. This is the standard introductory text for Latin American history and political development. We will use it to provide essential historical context and other background information. You should be able to easily find this textbook at the campus bookstore, elsewhere in San Diego, or online. There are many revisions of this text, but any version published after 1995 will be acceptable.

Each week's lecture and a/v materials will be accompanied by focused thematic articles. These have been selected with several objectives. First, some of each week's materials provide supplemental factual and historical background on the subject matter dealt with by each set of video sources. The a/v materials, as expected, each portray the political phenomenon of interest with varying degrees of truth, accuracy, and bias. These readings will provide more specific contextual information and will help you distinguish between fact and fiction in each media. Second, readings also provide primary source material from actors involved in major political events, allowing us to contrast academic and media portrayals of events with the perceptions of eyewitnesses. Third, to the extent possible, we will examine popular reaction to and criticism of the film by those most involved in the events portrayed. Some films were extremely controversial for their perspectives on events, and perspectives on them may also have changed over time.

Nearly all the supplemental readings will be available online. Note that to access many of these materials, you must either be using a computer on campus or establish a VPN from your home computer. If you try to access these documents solely from home, you may not be able to do so. I suggest you experiment today to see how these work.

For those of you unfamiliar, JSTOR is an online repository for journal articles for many disciplines. You can access JSTOR at [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), and search by keyword, author, title, or other references.

Specific readings and assignments are listed in the course schedule, below. All will be posted on the course website.

## Study Habits

Obviously this class will differ from most political science courses in that class time will primarily be spent viewing and interpreting primary source material together, though I will lecture before each presentation. This difference, however, will actually make this class more challenging than other political science courses, and require more on-going attention from students. In particular, success in this course requires several strategies. First, complete all the readings before lecture. Successfully interpreting and learning from the a/v materials require specific political and historical contextual knowledge provided by the readings. As mentioned, exams will draw on a/v materials, discussions, and readings.

Second, come to class prepared to absorb the film and take notes. Observing and analyzing media cannot be an intellectually passive exercise; you must come to class thinking about specific issues and questions you will be watching for. The emotional and intellectual message of media can also be subtle - watch for it in the technical aspects of the film - cinematography, camera angles, sound, and other mechanisms that can subtly manipulate the video's message and how a viewer perceives it.

## Policies

You are expected to attend every class session, having already read the assignment for that day. Further, students should be prepared to discuss the papers assigned each week.

All analysis and ideas presented must be your own or properly attributed to another author. I will not tolerate cheating, plagiarism, or academic dishonesty of any kind. You should familiarize yourself with the University's rules, regulations, and code of academic conduct. Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade and permanent mark on your transcript.

The actual showing dates and other schedule details may change, depending on resource availability. Any changes will be announced in class and the online schedule will be updated.

**Nametags** This class is larger than in years' past, and we will require a name-plate/tag on your desk at every class, to facilitate our interaction. I will discuss this on the first day of class.

## Schedule & Assignments

The following schedule is to change; please watch the course website for updates.

### August 6, 2013

Course Introduction and Administrative Details

Lecture: Overview of Latin American Political Economic History, and a Brief Introduction to the Chilean Political System

Film: *The Battle for Chile, Part I: The Insurrection of the Bourgeoisie* (Chile, 1975)

Reading:

- Goldberg, Peter. 1975. "The Politics of the Allende Overthrow in Chile." *Political Science Quarterly*. 90:1. Spring. p93-116.(JSTOR)
- Optional background: Skidmore and Smith, Chile chapter.

### August 8, 2013

Lecture: Regime Failure in Chile

Film: *The Battle for Chile, Part III* (Chile, 1975) Reading:

- Maloney, William F. "Chile". *The Political Economy of Latin America in the Postwar Period*. Laura Randall, editor. Pages P37-46. (Electronic Reserves)
- Allende, Salvador. "The Chilean Road to Socialism". in *Problems in Modern Latin American History: Sources and Interpretations*. Edited by John Charles Chasteen and James A. Wood. SR Books: Wilmington. (Electronic Reserves)
- National Security Council, Options Paper on Chile (NSSM 97), November 3, 1970. (Via course website).
- Loveman, Brian. "Political Polarization in Chile: Two Views of the Crisis," *New Scholar* (Spring, 1974): 251-262. (Electronic Reserves)

### August 13, 2013

Lecture: Roots of the Cuban Revolution

Films: *I am Cuba* (Soviet Union, 1964); *Buena Vista Social Club* (in part)

Readings:

- Selected articles from the *New York Times*, electronic reserves.
- Skidmore and Smith, Cuba

**August 15, 2013**

**ESSAY # 1 TOPIC DISTRIBUTED DUE AUGUST 20 BEGINNING OF CLASS**

Lecture: Ideology and Revolution in Argentina

Film: *La Hora de Los Hornos* (Argentina, )

Possibly parts of: *Our Disappeared* (Argentina) Readings:

- Skidmore and Smith, “Argentina”, esp section covering 1960-1980.
- Munck, Ronaldo. 1985. “The Modern Military State in Latin America: The Case of Argentina”. See online link.

**August 20, 2013**

**ESSAY # 1 DUE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

Lecture: Polarization and Realignment in Latin America after the Cold War

Film: *Obstinate Memory* (Chile, 1997) OR *Machuca* (Chile, 2004)

Readings:

- Maloney, William F. “Chile”. *The Political Economy of Latin America in the Postwar Period*. Laura Randall, editor. Pages P46-55. Electronic Reserve.
- Angell, A. & Pollack, B., “The Chilean Elections of 1993: From Polarisation to Consensus” in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* Vol 14 No 2 1995. (JSTOR)

**August 22, 2013**

Lecture: Authoritarianism and Revolutionary Movements in Brazil

Film: *Four Days in September* (Brazil, 1997)

Readings:

- Hunter, Wendy. “Brazil’s New Direction”. *Journal of Democracy* .14:2. (JSTOR).
- Weyland, Kurt. 2001. The Growing Sustainability of Brazil’s Low-Quality Democracy. in Francis Hagopian (ed) *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks*. University of Notre Dame, Indiana. (Course Website)
- Optional Background: Alves, Maria Helena Moreira. “State and Opposition in Military Brazil”. Austin: University of Texas Press. Pages 103-137. (Electronic Reserves)

**August 27, 2013**

Lecture: The New Left and Regime Breakdown in Venezuela

Film: *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (Venezuela, 2002?)

Readings:

- *The Economist*. “What Revolution?”. October 7, 2004. (Via Course Website)

- “Defining the ‘Bolivarian Revolution’: Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela, Feb. 2001, 80 *Current History*. (Via course website)
- Speech of Hugo Chavez to the United Nations, September 16, 2005. (Via course website)
- Optional Background: Karl, Terry. 1997. *The Paradox of Plenty: Chapter Eight: From Boom to Bust*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1997. Pages 161-185. (Electronic Reserves)

**August 29, 2013**

**ESSAY # 2 TOPIC DISTRIBUTED DUE SEPTEMBER 3 5PM**

Lecture: The New Left and Bolivia

Film: *Cocalero* (Bolivia)

Readings:

- Readings Pending.
- Background on Bolivia: Selected articles from *The Economist*.  
Kozloff, Nikolas. *Revolution!: South America and the Rise of the New Left*. Selected Chapters.

**September 3, 2013**

TOPIC PENDING

**September 5, 2013**

Lecture: Revolution and Oppression in Central America

Film: *Men with Guns* (USA)

Readings:

- Losing Their Way: Fifteen Years of Post-Revolutionary Democracy in Close, David. 2004a. Undoing Democracy in Nicaragua. In David Close and Kalowatie ... Contemporary Nicaragua.
- “A revolution’s aging children” *The Economist*. Jul 22nd 1999 (Via course website).
- Florence E. Babb. 2004. Recycled *Sandalistas*: From Revolution to Resorts in the New Nicaragua. *American Anthropologist*. New Series, Vol. 106, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), pp. 541-555. (Via course website)
- Charles D. Brockett. 1991. “The Structure of Political Opportunities and Peasant Mobilization in Central America”. *Comparative Politics*. 23:3 (Apr., 1991), pp. 253-274.

September 7, 2013: ESSAY # 2 DUE