On July 2, 2000, Mexico experienced a political earthquake. After 71 years of uninterrupted single-party rule, the country peacefully transitioned to democracy with the election of Vicente Fox, a member of the opposition National Action Party.

Or so the narrative goes.

More than a decade and a half after “democratization,” the promises of political openness remain unfulfilled. Only 19% of Mexicans are satisfied with the functioning of their democracy and fewer than half believe democracy is preferable to all other forms of government. This frustration is understandable. While Mexico is the United States’ third largest trading partner, has a growing economy based on increasingly complex manufacturing, and is among the most popular international tourist destinations, it is also a country in crisis where drug cartels hang tortured bodies from bridges and corrupt politicians join the ranks of international fugitives sought by Interpol. How do we make sense of these dual realities?

One explanation for both Mexico’s contemporary successes and its failures can be found in the country’s political system, one that has transitioned to democracy from a unique single-party authoritarian regime but which remains institutionally tethered to the past. In this course, we will explore five of the most pressing issues facing Mexico today—governance, human rights, freedom of expression, drug violence, and immigration—seeking to understand how the legacies of non-democratic rule and democratization have shaped the country’s future.

Five questions will guide our approach:

- How do we define democracy and do we consider Mexico to be democratic?
- What is the relationship between democracy, development, and the drug trade in Mexico?
- What have been the impacts of democratization—or incomplete democratization—on Mexico’s political and social landscape?
- What factors have impeded or favored democracy in Mexico?
- Is Mexico, on the whole, becoming more or less democratic?
WRITING ASSIGNMENT

For your capstone, you will write a 20 to 25 page research paper on a topic of your choosing, but related to some aspect of democracy, development, or drugs in Mexico. You will develop a focused research question based on preliminary research and an arguable thesis supported by secondary and primary sources. Your focus may be historical, contemporary, or theoretical (meaning you may use Mexico as a case study for an established theory) but most importantly your paper will be argumentative not descriptive. You are encouraged to use the course’s five central questions as guides and inspiration, but they are not specific enough to serve as research questions for this paper.

The schedule for the writing assignment is as follows:

Week 2: A preliminary research report consisting of a short paragraph describing a topic you are interested in researching, a potential idea for your paper, and a list of three sources you have consulted.

Week 4: A formalized research question and an annotated bibliography of at least six sources you consulted in developing the question. In 4 to 5 sentences, each annotation should describe the author’s thesis or argument, the general information the source contains, and its place in the broader literature about the topic.

Week 6: A prospectus for your paper describing, in at least five pages, the stakes of your paper’s topic, your research question and preliminary thesis, some of the support you have for your thesis, and the significance of your thesis relative to the existing literature.

Week 9: You will exchange a rough draft of your final paper with a partner at some point before Week 10. You may mutually agree on a deadline later than Wednesday of Week 9, though this should not be later than Sunday in order to allow each of you to read and comment on your partner’s draft. I will not read rough drafts, though I will be available to discuss them in office hours.

Week 10: The first half of class will consist of a meeting with your rough draft reader to discuss suggestions and ideas. We will then discuss the ideas raised by the paper in the second half of class.

Finals Week: Your paper is due by Wednesday of Finals Week.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
All work for this course must be your own; plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported. This applies to all writing assignments, quizzes, and exams. If you have any questions as to what constitutes academic misconduct, consult the UCSD Academic Integrity Office website: http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/defining.html

TECHNOLOGY, PARTICIPATION, AND ATTENDANCE POLICY
We are fortunate to have a class small enough for meaningful discussions, and I hope that we will be able to take advantage of that. While most class meetings will have some lecture component, as I try to provide additional context and information to supplement the readings, I do not intend to make monologues a core feature of the course. Rather, I expect that you will have completed the assigned readings and will come to class prepared to talk about them. Bring questions, curiosities, opinions, and ideas, and share them. Neither does not mean, however, that you should feel the need to talk incessantly in order to earn participation points: one thoughtful comment can contribute a great deal, and I hope that everyone will feel comfortable participating. It goes without saying that you cannot participate if you are not present, and I do expect you to attend class regularly.

A note on notes: In a small class setting, I generally believe laptops are an obstacle to productive discussion and a distraction more than a learning tool. I would ask that you take notes by hand during my lectures. Don’t panic. There is no exam for this course, so your notes will largely serve as reference during discussion, and you can always type them out later.

A note on technology: Please respect me and your classmates by putting your cellphone away during class.

GRADING BREAKDOWN
Research Report: 5%
Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Prospectus: 20%
Rough Draft: 5%
Final Paper: 35%
Participation: 25%
Unit 1 – For a Democracy Without Adjectives: Mexico’s Political Evolution

January 11: A Perfect Dictatorship: Course Policies and Mexican History

January 18: Democratization and the PRI’s Path Back

Research Report Due

Reading: Mark Williams, “Traversing the Mexican Odyssey: Reflections on Political Change and the Study of Mexican Politics” (30pp); Alberto Olvera, “The Elusive Democracy: Political Parties, Democratic Institutions, and Civil Society in Mexico” (30pp); David Crow, “The Party’s Over: Citizen Conceptions of Democracy and Political Dissatisfaction in Mexico” (20pp)

Supplemental Readings: Gustavo Flores-Macías, “Mexico’s Stalled Reforms”; Diane E. Davis and Viviane Brachet-Marquez, “Rethinking Democracy: Mexico in Historical Perspective”; Andreas Schedler, “Common Sense without Common Ground: The Concept of Democratic Transition in Mexican Politics”

Other Readings: Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith, Dictablanda; Barbara Geddes, “What do we Know About Democratization?”; Beatriz Magaloni, Voting for Autocracy.

Suggested Movies: La Ley de Herodes; La Dictadura Perfecta

Unit 2 - A Country of Laws: Human Rights and Social Protest from Atenco to Ayotzinapa

January 25: The Dirty War that Never Ended

Reading: Selections from Linda Diebel, Betrayed: The Story of Digna Ochoa (p.1-46; 86-109; 117-139; 154-171; 183-232; 244-267) (180pp)

February 1: More than 43: Human Rights and Drug War Disappearances

Research Question and Annotated Bibliography Due

Reading: Selections from Binational Human Rights: The US-Mexico Experience, William Paul Simmons and Carol Mueller, eds. (Ch. 4 – 24pp); Alejandro Anaya Muñoz, “Transnational and Domestic Processes in the Definition of Human Rights Policies in Mexico”; Selections from Javier Valdez Cárdenas, The Taken (Intro to P27, Selection from Ch. 5 – Total 55pp),


Suggested Movies: The Violin
Unit 3 - Loyal Soldiers: Journalism and Media Across the Transition

February 8: Press Freedom Before and After Democracy
Reading: Selections from *Journalism, Satire, and Censorship in Modern Mexico* (Introduction, Ch. 12, Prologue, Epilogue) Paul Gillingham, Michael Lettieri, and Benjamin Smith, eds.

February 15: The Ultimate Censorship: Press in the Era of Narcos
*Prospectus Due*
Reading: Javier Valdez Cárdenas, *The Taken* Selection from Ch.4; “No justice in Veracruz, as journalist’s death is unsolved,” Associated Press; Patrick Timmons, “Every Journalist Mourns a Dead Journalist”


Suggested Movies: Come to Border Film Week at USD!

Unit 4 – Narcostates, Narcocultures: Drugs, Free Trade, and Democratization

February 22: Out of One, Many: A Brief History of the Rise of the Cartels
Reading: Selections from Ioan Grillo, *El Narco*; Valdez Cárdenas, *The Taken* Intro Pt.II

March 1: Grappling With Chronic Violence
Reading: Javier Valdez Cárdenas, *The Taken* Ch. 2-3

Supplemental Readings: Sandra Rodriguez Nieto, *The Story of Vicente, Who Murdered His Mother, His Father, and His Sister: Life and Death in Juárez*; John Gibler, *To Die in Mexico*; Sam Quinones, *Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic*

Suggested Movies: *Narcocultura, Cartel Land, Antes de que nos olviden, El Infierno*

`Unit 5 - Of Lines and Beasts: Immigration and the Border`

March 8: Dislocation and Displacement, Immigrants and Refugees
*Rough Draft Due*
Reading: Selections from Luis Alberto Urrea, *The Devil’s Highway*; Selections from Kimball Taylor, *The Coyote’s Bicycle*


March 15: Rough draft workshop and wrapup