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 ar-
ticles. 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 dis-
tinguish 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 oncampus 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, 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 nameplate/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:
• 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)
• 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:


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:


August 22, 2013

Lecture: Authoritarianism and Revolutionary Movements in Brazil
Film: Four Days in September (Brazil, 1997) Readings:

- 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:

• “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)


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:

• “A revolution’s aging children” The Economist. Jul 22nd 1999 (Via course website).