POL20: LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos
History and Politics Tripos
2024-25

July 2024 Version: *There will be significant updates before the start of term, please refer to a newer version from October 2024*

COORDINATOR
Pedro Mendes Loureiro (PML47@cam.ac.uk)

LECTURERS
Carsten-Andreas Schulz (cas245@cam.ac.uk)
Graham Denyer Willis (gdw27@cam.ac.uk)
Pedro Mendes Loureiro (PML47@cam.ac.uk)

GUEST LECTURERS
Ana Lucía Pelaez Echeverria (alp77@cam.ac.uk)
Beatriz Santos Barreto (bs656@cam.ac.uk)
Rafael Shimabukuro Cabrera (ras242@cam.ac.uk)

DESCRIPTION
This paper introduces students to the politics of Latin America, past and present. How do historical legacies influence democracy today? What explains the persistence of political violence in the region? Why has corruption been so difficult to overcome and what does it have to do with organised crime? How have Latin Americans used international norms and institutions to advance their rights and hold the powerful to account? How are social movements reshaping the political landscape? How has the region conceptualised and implemented development projects, and with what results? What do its economies and political regimes reveal about the enduring forces of colonialism, racialisation, and capitalism? These are some of the questions that the paper aims to explore, drawing on a wide range of scholarship and approaches from across the human, social, and political sciences.

OUTLINE
The paper is organised in five thematic sections dealing with (I) state-society relations, (II) political institutions, (III) international relations, (IV) political economy, and (V) society, governance, and democracy.

SUPERVISIONS
Supervisions are scheduled for the Michaelmas and Lent terms. Students are expected to write six essays for this paper, each not exceeding 2,500 words. All essays should be word-processed, paginated, and include a bibliography citing all sources referenced at the end of the essay. While there is no mandated citation style, it is essential to maintain uniformity within each essay, using only one style, whether it be footnotes or in-text citations. See the Cambridge Libraries’ subject guide for further information on referencing and citation style: https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/POLIS/referencing
PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism involves the unacknowledged use of others’ ideas and information, including verbatim and paraphrased material and content generated using artificial intelligence. Plagiarism is a serious breach of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. For further resources and information on how to avoid plagiarism, see https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/.
ASSESSMENT
There will be a one three-hour written examination in Eastern term. Students will be required to answer three questions, at least one from each of two sections. The first has cross-cutting questions that straddle the different sections of the paper, the second addresses more specific issues. For this reason, as well as for general learning and understanding, students are highly encouraged to attend all lectures and not to overspecialise in their choice of supervision topics.

Mock Exam
You must answer three questions, at least one from each section.

Section A
1. What is the relationship between race and political power in Latin America?
2. How does informality shape the political arena in Latin America?
3. What hinders Latin America’s institutional political system from effectively channelling social grievances?
4. Why are social inequalities so enduring in Latin America?
5. Was neoliberalisation a domestic political choice across Latin America?
6. Is ‘hyperpresidentialism’ a threat to democracy in Latin America?

Section B
7. Does democracy prevent anti-extractivist platforms from being successful in Latin America?
8. Why was there a growth of social movements in Latin America since the 1990s?
9. Did the left-of-centre governments of the 2000s in Latin America (the ‘Pink Tide’) break with neoliberalism?
10. Did neoliberalism weaken state capacities in Latin America?
11. What explains organised crime groups’ success in infiltrating state institutions?
12. To what extent do domestic interests in the United States shape its government’s foreign policy towards Latin America?
13. Have international institutions equipped Latin American countries with ‘weapons of the weak’?
14. What are the limitations of war-centric approaches to understanding state formation in Latin America?
15. What explains the rise of ‘ethno-populism’ in Latin America?
## LECTURE TIMETABLE OVERVIEW

### TBC

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<th>Section</th>
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* CAS: Carsten-Andreas Schulz; GDW: Graham Denyer Willis; PML: Pedro Mendes Loureiro; RSC: Rafael Shimabukuro Cabrera; ALP: Ana Lucia Pelaez Echevarria; BSB: Beatriz Santos Barreto
LECTURE AND READING GUIDE

SECTION I

1. The Problem of Persistence (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: How do colonial legacies continue to shape the political landscape in Latin America?

**Required reading**


**Further reading**


2. State formation (Mendes Loureiro)

Lecture: Monday, 9 October

Essay question: Without the state, there would be no nations in Latin America. Discuss this statement.

**Required reading**


**Further reading**


**3. Patterns of power I: capitalism, authority, and colonisation (Denyer Willis)**

Essay question: What factors shaped political and/or racial order in amidst slavery?

**Key Resource**

Slave Voyages Database. [https://www.slavevoyages.org](https://www.slavevoyages.org).
Required reading


Further reading


4. Patterns of power II: Industrialisation, urban politics, and space (Denyer Willis)

Essay question: How is inequality present in processes of urbanisation and industrialisation?

Key resource


Required reading


Further reading


SECTION IV

5. Dependency and (under)development (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: Is dependency theory still a powerful approach to Latin America’s political economy – if it ever was – and why?

Required reading


Further reading


6. Neoliberalisation (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: To what extent do domestic versus international factors explain the neoliberalisation processes in Latin America?

*Required reading*


*Further reading*


7. Popular capitalism, popular neoliberalism (Shimabukuro Cabrera)

Essay question: To what extent is Latin American neoliberalism a process ‘from below’?

Required reading


Further reading


8. Welfare regimes in Latin America (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: In what ways do welfare regimes accentuate and attenuate inequalities in Latin America?

Required reading


Further reading


9. Social movements, NGOs, and distributive politics (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: Can social movements shift the political field in favour redistributive policies, and if so under what conditions?

Required reading


Further reading


SECTION V

10. Politics beyond the pale (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: What does the enduring presence of radical or extreme politics reveal about Latin America’s political economy?

Required reading


Further reading


11. Informality and bureaucracy (Denyer Willis)

Essay question: How do scholars describe the relationship between informality and political order?

Required reading


Further reading

Fischer, B. “Historicising Informal Governance in 20th Century Brazil.” Contemporary Social Science 17, no. 3 (2022): 205-221.

12. Policing inequality and the rise of criminal governance (Denyer Willis)

Essay question: ‘Criminal governance is a problem of criminal actors’. Assess this assertion.

Required reading

Further Reading


13. Conceptual challenges: envisioning democracy and development from Latin America (Mendes Loureiro)

Essay question: What is the legacy of Latin America’s experiments and frustrations with alternative political and economic forms?

Required reading


Further reading


14. **Contemporary Indigenous Resistance Movements (Pelaez Echevarria)**

Essay question: tbc

*Required reading*


SECTION II

15. Political Regimes (Schulz)

Essay question: What explains the fragility of democracy in Latin America?

Key resource

Required reading

Further reading
Mainwaring, Scott, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. “Why Regions of the World Are Important: Regional Specificities and Region-Wide Diffusion of Democracy.” In *Regimes and


16. Democracy and its Discontents (Schulz)

Essay question: To what extent does populism undermine democracy?

Required reading


Further reading


17. Gender, Race, and Representation (Schulz)

Essay question: Why has Latin America taken the lead in the expansion of minority rights? Discuss the advancement of either ethnic, sexual or gender-based rights in your answer.

Required reading


Further reading


Boas, Taylor C. “Expanding the Public Square: Evangelicals and Electoral Politics in Latin America.” In The Inclusionary Turn in Latin American Democracies, edited by Deborah
18. The politics of justice and human rights (Schulz)

Essay question: Why do Latin American countries not uniformly address past human rights violations?

**Key resource**


**Required reading**


Further reading


19. LGBTQ+ politics beyond same-sex marriage (Santos Barreto)

Essay question: How have gender and sexuality issues been connected to broader economic and political processes in Latin America?

*Required reading*


De la Dehesa, Rafael. 2010. *Queering the Public Sphere in Mexico and Brazil: Sexual Rights Movements in Emerging Democracies*. Durham: Duke University Press. [Introduction]


*Further reading*


SECTION III

20. Foreign policy making (Schulz)

Essay question: What role does the bureaucracy play in foreign policy making?

Required reading


Further reading


21. Multilateral cooperation: the politics of international norms and institutions (Schulz)

Essay question: What explains Latin American states’ longstanding commitment to regional cooperation? Has this commitment waned?

**Required reading**


**Further reading**


22. US-Latin American relations (Schulz)

Essay question: Under what conditions have Latin Americans succeeded in shaping US policy towards the region?

Required reading


Further reading


23. Latin America in a Changing International Order (Schulz)

Essay question: Does China’s growing presence in Latin America undermine democracy?

Required reading


**Further reading**


Malamud, Andrés, and Luis Schenoni. “Latin America Is Off the Global Stage, and That’s OK.” *Foreign Policy* 10 (2019):


