

Government and Politics in Central America
POLSC-26300
Fall 2018
Monday/Wednesday, 7:00-8:15pm, Room HW1729

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Office: HW1742
Office Hours: Mondays, 6-7pm

Course Description

This course focuses on the seven countries of Central America – Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador. Although we will look at broader historical trends and questions, the course is structured to begin with the wave of democratization that swept the region in the late 70s and into the 80s. While democracy is usually considered to be a positive development, democratization is an incredibly difficult process. We will look closely at various outcomes and aftereffects of the wave of democratization, right up to events unfolding in the region today. For each topic addressed in the course, we will dedicate one class to an overview, and a second class to a closer case study.

Course Objectives

By actively participating in this course, you should expect to:

- Become familiar with recent scholarship and debates on: Central America, democratization, political conflict and resolution, political participation, crime and violence, economic and environmental policy, and U.S. foreign policy.
- Better understand the perspective of participants in politics in the region (as well as those excluded from politics), by reading first-hand accounts of their experiences, and connecting these to scholarly work.
- Improve your research, writing, revising, presenting, and critical thinking skills by completing a sequence of group discussions and writing assignments.
- Develop a nuanced understanding of a particular topic within the region, by working on a research project throughout the semester.

Assignments and Grading

3 x Reading Assignments = 3 x 10% = **30%**

Paper Proposal (due: October 31) = **15%**

Final Paper (due: December 9) = **30%**

Lightning Talk = **10%**

Participation = **15%**

Reading Assignments. Students should complete three reading assignments over the course of the semester. Each reading assignment should cover all of the readings for a single topic, and should be submitted on the first of the two days covering that topic. Assignments are only accepted in class – no emails, and no late assignments. In the assignment, you should briefly summarize each of the readings, and then offer a short critical comparison of the readings: in

what ways do they agree or disagree? Does one reading help you understand the others? Each assignment should be about one page long, single-spaced. It is completely up to you to decide which weeks you will write about; the only limitation is that everyone will be required to complete their first reading assignment by October 3, so I can get a sense of how you are thinking and writing.

Paper Proposal. The paper proposal is due on October 31. It should show your early thinking, provide an outline for your final paper topic. The proposal should be 3 pages long, double-spaced, and include a bibliography of at least 3 works that you will use (bibliography is not included in your page count). The proposal can either be a general summary of the final paper that you want to write, or it can be a rough draft of the introduction and first pages of your final paper. The proposal is due in class, with a penalty for every day that the proposal is late.

Final Paper. The final paper is due on December 9 at 11:59pm. It should be 10 to 12 pages long, double-spaced. The final paper should be submitted through TurnItIn, and there will be a penalty for every day that the paper is late. Specific instructions for the final paper, will be circulated and discussed in class.

Lightning Talk. Each student must complete one lightning talk during the semester; this can either be after submitting the paper proposal or the final paper. A lightning talk is a 3 minute presentation, with time to answer one question from the class. It should include a single PowerPoint slide. In the talk and on the slide, you should summarize your research, in the most concise terms possible.

Participation. You are expected to attend and actively participate in every class.

Course Expectations

- All readings will be posted to Blackboard. There are no required texts that you need to purchase for this course, but every text specified on the syllabus and posted on Blackboard is a required reading.
- Most readings will be posted on Blackboard, and I will use Blackboard as the main way to contact the class with any announcements or changes to this syllabus. Please make sure that you are checking your Hunter email, or whichever account you have linked to Blackboard. You will also need a Turnitin account, in order to submit the final paper.
- Arrive on time and prepared for each class. We'll be diving straight into a discussion at the start of each session. Those that have prepared a reading assignment for the particular class will be asked to take the lead in our discussion each week.
- Students are welcome to use whatever technology is helpful to them in class, but are asked not to do so in a way that will distract other students (or the instructor). Keep everything on silent, and keep the things on your screen relevant.
- An incomplete grade (INC) is only available under exceptional circumstances, and to students in good standing at the end of the semester (that means that you have been present, participating, and have completed all work to date).
- CR/NC is only available to students that have completed all assignments (that includes attendance and participation).

Participation and Inclusion

As the course instructor, I am committed to creating an environment in which every enrolled student feels comfortable and confident to participate fully. If you have any specific requests or suggestions for ways in which I can make the course more accessible to you – these might include preferred names, preferred prefixes, matters of access to the classroom, access to resources, or anything else – please contact me. This course digs into some confronting material, so please review the syllabus ahead of time and speak with me if you anticipate any difficulties with the topics covered. It isn't always possible to see difficult situations coming, so if any aspect of class becomes particularly troubling, you are welcome to take a break from participation. If you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about such issues. In speaking with me (about any matter), we can make a plan for how you will best be able to participate in class. You will never have to disclose anything that you consider private, and I treat all communication as confidential.

Resources

Every week we will dedicate some time, usually on Monday, to discussing current events in Central America (if 2018 so far is any indication, there will be a lot to discuss). With this in mind, please do your best to follow the news on Central America, and arrive in class ready to share ideas and questions.

Each of these sites offers a free regular or semi-regular newsletter on Latin American topics. You can sign up on the homepage of each site.

- NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) is an excellent overall resource. <https://nacla.org/>
- Insight Crime focuses on crime and justice, and offer broad political analysis. <https://www.insightcrime.org/>
- WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America) focuses on human rights. <https://www.wola.org/>
- The Wilson Center is not only focused on Latin America, but they do a lot of work on the region. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

Schedule

Week 1. Introduction

August 27: Course Overview

- No readings, but please bring a copy of this syllabus to class.

August 29: Background on Central America and Democratization

- Lehoucq, Fabrice. 2012. *The Politics of Modern Central America: Civil War, Democratization, and Underdevelopment*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 “Central America on the Eve of the 1980s.”

Week 2. Democracy & Dictatorship (I)

September 3: (no class)

September 5: Overview (Monday schedule)

- Karl, Terry. 1990. "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America." *Comparative Politics* 23, 1: 1-21.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1993. "On the State, Democratization, and Some Conceptual Problems." Kellogg Institute Working Paper.

Week 3. Democracy & Dictatorship (II)September 10: (no class)September 12: Panama

- Gellhorn, Martha. 1990. "The Invasion of Panama." *Granta*, 32.
- Anderson, Jon Lee. 2017. "Manuel Noriega, A Thug of a Different Era." *The New Yorker*. Or listen to the podcast version of this story: "Jon Lee Anderson Visits Manuel Noriega in Prison." <https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/political-scene/jon-lee-anderson-visits-manuel-noriega-in-prison>

Week 4.September 17: (class cancelled)September 19: (no class)**Week 5. Revolution & Counterrevolution**September 24: Overview

- Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. 1992. *Guerrillas and Revolutions in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2 "Who Are the Guerrillas?" and Chapter 3 "The Social and Political Origins of the Guerrilla Movements."
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2001. "The Power of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador." *Ethnography* 2, 1: 5-34.

September 26: Nicaragua

- Cabezas, Omar. 1985. *Fire from the Mountain: The Making of a Sandinista*. Crown Publishers. "Leaving for the Mountain" and "Loneliness at the Mountain's Heart."

Week 6. Civil War (I)October 1: (class cancelled)October 3: Overview

- Wood, Elisabeth. *Forging Democracy From Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1 "From Civil War to Democracy."
- Stoll, David. 1993. *Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 3 "Violence Comes to Ixil Country" and Chapter 10 "Let the Dead Bury the Dead?"

Week 7. Civil War (II)October 8: (no class)October 10: El Salvador

- Bourgois, Philip. 1982. "Running for my Life in El Salvador." *Washington Post*.

- Malkin, Elisabeth. 2018. "Survivors of Massacre Ask: "Why Did They Have to Kill Those Children?" *New York Times*.

Week 8. Peacebuilding & Transitional Justice

October 15: Overview

- Arnson, Cynthia. 1999. *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press. Chapter 1 "Introduction."
- Rothenberg Daniel, ed. 2012 *Memory of Silence: The Guatemalan Truth Commission Report*. Palgrave Macmillan. Prologue and Chapter 12 "The Tragedy of the Armed Confrontation."

October 17: Guatemala

- Crosby, Alison & M. Brinton Lykes. 2011. "Mayan Women Survivors Speak: The Gendered Relations of Truth Telling in Postwar Guatemala." *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5: 456-476.
- Menchu, Rigoberta. 1984. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Translated by Ann Wright. Verso. Chapter 1 "The Family" and Chapter 6 "An Eight-Year-Old Agricultural Worker."

Week 9. Political Inclusion & Participation

October 22: Overview

- Htun, Mala & Jennifer Piscopo. 2014. "Women in Politics and Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean." Social Science Research Council Working Paper.
- Granovsky-Larsen, Simon. 2017. "The Guatemalan Campesino Movement and the Postconflict Neoliberal State." *Latin American Perspectives* 44, 5: 53-73.

October 24: Honduras

- Grupo Asesor Internacional de Personas Expertas (GAIPE). 2017. *Dam Violence: The Plan That Killed Berta Cáceres*.

Week 10. Corruption & Accountability

October 29: Overview & Guatemala

- Carrera, Fernando. 2017. *Guatemala's International Commission Against Impunity: A Case Study on Institutions and Rule of Law*. The World Bank.
- Puerta, Felipe & Steven Dudley. 2018. "Guatemala Politics and the Patriotic Party's Theory of 'Eternal Return'." *Insight Crime*.

October 31: Lightning Talks.

Paper Proposal due: October 31, in class

Week 11. Security Policy & Reform

November 5: Overview

- Cruz, José Miguel. 2011. "Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, 4: 1-33.
- Paglen, Trevor. 2009. *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World*. Chapter 13 "Plains of Death" and chapter 14 "Anything You Need Anywhere."

November 7: Costa Rica

- Arias, Oscar. 2012. "The Costa Rica Consensus." Speech at the Newseum

Week 12. Crime

November 12: Overview

- Rodgers, Dennis. 2015. "The Moral Economy of Murder: Violence, Death, and Social Order in Nicaragua." In *Violence at the Urban Margins*, edited by Javier Auyero, Philippe Bourgois, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes. Oxford University Press.
- Martínez, Óscar. 2016. *A History of Violence: Living and Dying in Central America*. Translated by John Washington & Daniela Ugaz. Verso. Chapter 2 "The Lords of the Border" and Chapter 3 "Guatemala is Spelled With a Z."

November 14: MS-13

- Wolf, Sonja. 2017. "Distorting the MS-13 Threat." *NACLA*.

Week 13. Development & Globalization.

November 19: Overview

- McCleary, Rachel. 1999. "Postconflict Political Economy of Central America." In *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, edited by Cynthia Arnson. Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Zebich-Knos, Michele. 2008. "Ecotourism, Park Systems, and Environmental Justice in Latin America." In *Environmental Justice in Latin America*, edited by David Carruthers. The MIT Press.

November 21: Belize

- Duffy, Rosaleen. 2000. "Shadow Players: Ecotourism, Development, Corruption and State Politics in Belize." *Third World Quarterly* 21, 3: 549-565.

Week 14. Conservation, Land, Resources

November 26: Overview

- Sundberg, Juanita. 2008. "Tracing Race: Mapping Environmental Formations in Environmental Justice Research in Latin America." In *Environmental Justice in Latin America*, edited by David Carruthers. The MIT Press.
- Cuffe, Sandra. 2017. "A New Central American Alliance Against Mining" *NACLA*.

November 28: El Salvador

- Dougherty, Michael. 2017. "El Salvador Makes History." *NACLA*.
- Goodfriend, Hilary. 2017. "Water Wars in El Salvador: Tacuba Resists." *NACLA*.

Week 15. Migration

December 3: Overview

- Raderstorf, Ben, Carol J. Wilson, Elizabeth J. Zechmeister & Michael J. Camilleri. 2017. *Beneath the Violence: How Insecurity Shapes Daily Life and Emigration in Central America*. The Dialogue Rule of Law Working Paper.

December 5: On the Road

- Driver, Alice. 2018. "The Road to Asylum." *Longreads*.

Final Paper due: December 9, 11:59pm (via Turnitin)

Week 16. Conclusion

December 10: Lightning talks

December 12: Lightning talks

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. The Hunter Reading/Writing Center developed this handout on quoting, paraphrasing, and plagiarism:

<http://rwc.hunter.cuny.edu/reading-writing/on-line/qpp.html>.

American Disability Act Policy

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.
- CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:
<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

Syllabus Changes

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Any changes will be explained in class, and the updated version of the syllabus will be posted to Blackboard.