International Relations 466:

Contemporary Issues in Latin American Politics

Fall 2006

When: Tu & Th 12:30-1:50
Where: WPH 107
Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30

Professor Gerardo Munck
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1. Course Description

The course focuses on current politics in Latin America. We will first consider recent and upcoming elections and debates about the direction of Latin American politics. Then we will sequentially address a range of themes: electoral democracy, citizenship, political inclusion, human rights, corruption, economic inequality, and the role of the US in the region. The discussion will touch on most of the countries in Latin America.

2. Requirements

The basic requirements include five quizzes (20 % of the overall grade), a 15-page research paper, to be presented in class (20 %), an in-class mid-term (25 %), and an in-class final exam (25 %). Class participation, which will be an essential part of the course, will be worth 10 % of the total grade.

With regard to the quizzes, I have included provisional dates in the syllabus, but these may change slightly. The exact dates will be announced in class. Of the five quizzes, I will drop the lowest one and thus compute grades on the basis of your best four quizzes.

With regard to your research papers, you are supposed to define your own topic of study. The only requirement concerning topic selection is that it must be related to the issues discussed in the course and that it must be based upon scholarly literature, that is, academic books, articles in professional journals, etc. A brief description of your topic, on a sheet of paper or by email is due on October 12, and the papers themselves are due in class when you make your presentation the last week of class.

3. Readings

All the readings are accessible through the Blackboard, under “Course Documents.” Some of the electronic files include other materials, which do not need to be read. The specific chapters are clearly listed below.
1. Current Latin American Politics

**Introduction and an Overview of Elections** (Meetings 1, 2 & 3: August 22, 24 & 29)

“Year of Elections,” *ReVista* (Spring/Summer 2006). Read pp. 4-17 (articles by Poire, Jones, Navia, King, Lehoucq), and pp. 21-37 (articles by Vargas Llosa, Crisp and Botero, Benton, Desposato, Dunbar-Ortiz, Alvarez and Acosta).

**Interpretations and Arguments** (Meetings 4, 5 & 6: August 31, September 5 & 7)


-Quiz # 1 (9/7)

2. Electoral Democracy

**ELECTING REPRESENTATIVES** (Meetings 7, 8 & 9: September 12, 14 & 19)


**Serving Electoral Terms** (Meetings 10, 11 & 12: September 21, 26 & 28)


-Quiz # 2 (9/28)
3. Democracy and Citizenship

The State of Citizenship Rights (Meetings 13 & 14: October 3 & 5)


Meeting 15: October 10

*** In-Class Mid-Term Exam: October 10 ***

4. Political Inclusion

Gender, Ethnicity and Race (Meetings 16 & 17: October 12 & 17)


-Quiz # 3 (10/17)

5. Human Rights

Prisons, Torture, Impunity and Other Issues (Meetings 18 & 19: October 19 & 24)


-Quiz # 4 (10/24)
6. Corruption and Economic Inequality

Corruption (Meetings 20 & 21: October 26 & 31)


Economic Inequality (Meetings 22 & 23: November 2 & 7)


Brazil as a Case Study (Meetings 24 & 25: November 9 & 14)


-Quiz # 5 (11/14)

7. The US and Latin America

The Bush Years (Meetings 26 & 27: November 16 & 21)


*** Thanksgiving Holiday: November 23 ***

Meetings 28 & 29: November 28 & 30: Class Presentations

*** Final Exam: Tuesday, December 12, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m ***