Welcome to the course

In the 1970s, most countries in Latin America were either under authoritarian regimes or engaged in civil wars. By 1990, most counties in the region were electoral democracies and no longer involved in official internal wars. Yet aspects of former authoritarian regimes persist and new forms violence have emerged. Many countries in the region are trying to reconcile with the past while simultaneously fighting rising crime, drug trafficking, gangs, vigilantism, corruption, and police violence. In this way, the study of Latin American politics today forces us to rethink simplistic understandings of democracy and authoritarianism.

This course offers the opportunity to understand the politics of this region through a critical examination of democracy and authoritarianism. Building on first and second year courses (particularly Poli 103, 217, and 210), the lens of democracy and authoritarianism is used to analyze the history, governments and political actors of Latin America. Theory is complemented with an examination of politics in selected countries. The countries we will discuss in the course include: Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil. You have the opportunity to explore an additional country, or issue that emerges from the course, in your final paper.

About the Instructor

Latin American politics is my area of expertise and my passion. It is an area of study within the political science sub-field of comparative politics that, at the graduate level and beyond, often involves travelling and conducting many in-depth interviews with fascinating people. I have had the opportunity to spend significant periods of time in a number of Latin American countries to interview politicians, journalists, social movement activists, police, government administrators, political party members, ex-guerrillas, ex-political prisoners, and other academics. I have published four books and many articles that present some of what I have found through this work. My book, *Policing Protest in Argentina and Chile*, won the Canadian Political Science
Association’s 2015-2016 Comparative Politics Book Award and was also published in Spanish. If you would like to know more about me you can check out my website: http://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/politicalscience/people/directory/bonnermichelle.php

Course Goals and Objectives

To Prepare You for Upper Level and Graduate Courses. By the end of this course you will understand and be able to analyze both the diversity of politics within the region and some of the common challenges these countries face. The course builds on your knowledge of some of the components of politics addressed in Poli 103, 217 & 210 (such as democracy, authoritarianism, social movements, political parties) by applying and analyzing them in the context of Latin America. This will provide you with regional knowledge and context that will be useful for 4th year courses and graduate level courses in comparative politics or Latin American Studies.

To Develop and Share Your Country Specific Interest and Knowledge. Many students take Latin American politics because they want to know more about politics in every country in the region or, other times, a particular country in the region. In the lectures I will draw on examples from countries throughout Latin America and, in the second half of the course, we will focus on a select number of case studies. However, it is impossible to cover every country in the region in one course. You will be given the opportunity to explore a Latin American country of your choice. You will develop your knowledge and analysis of politics in that country through the course paper. You are encouraged to use what you learn to provide examples of how the material we are discussing in class relates or does not relate to your chosen country. Sharing your growing knowledge in class will contribute to all students learning more about the similarities and differences in politics throughout the region. Through a map quiz on Jan. 9, the course will ensure that you have a basic familiarity of the geography of the region before going into country specific depth.

To Develop Research and Analytical Skills. Facts are often learned and then forgotten. Analytical skills, once learned, are rarely forgotten and can constantly be improved. Many employers seek students with undergraduate degrees in the social sciences because of the students’ strong writing, research and analytical skills. This course will help you to develop your analytical skills through an exam that tests not just for information but your ability to contextualize and analyze. Your term paper will give you the opportunity to build independent research skills and develop a longer argument supported by analysis. The paper proposal aims to get you started writing early and have the opportunity to receive feedback so you can improve your writing on the final paper. If you have not taken comparative politics before, you will come away from this course with a good understanding of how to write a comparative politics paper.

For those of you with strong writing skills, I encourage you to aim beyond the course and write a paper that could be submitted for publication in an undergraduate academic journal such as Undercurrent (http://www.undercurrentjournal.ca/submissions/) or On Politics (http://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/onpolitics/index).

To Develop Participation, Presentation and Group Work Skills. Many jobs as well as 4th year seminars and graduate courses require presentation, communication, and group work skills. This course gives you the opportunity to engage with the course material through classroom discussions and in-class group work. There will be informal opportunities for practicing presentation skills. I encourage you to participate in group and classroom discussions not only to
develop your participation skills but also to assist you in processing the material you are learning.

**Requirements and Evaluation**

**Map Quiz:** This gives you an opportunity to reflect on the size and location of the various countries in the region. You will be given a blank version of the political map of Latin America (next to page 1 in your textbook) at the beginning of class on Jan. 9 and you will be required to identify 5 randomly chosen countries. **Value: 5%**

**Paper proposal:** This is a mini-version of your final essay that will give you an opportunity to receive feedback from me before you write the final paper. It should include: 1) a title page with a title and the research question; 2) one single-spaced page (paragraph format) explaining the proposed essay. The page should include an introductory paragraph with the thesis statement and an explanation of how the thesis statement will be defended; 3) a bibliography with at least 8 academic sources including at least one book. I will provide more information in class during the first week of classes. An accompanying hand-out is available on the CourseSpaces site. **Due: Feb. 26** (I will accept proposals with a late penalty only until Feb. 28) **Value: 15%**

**Mid-Term Exam** (optional): Some students like to have the opportunity to review concepts before the final exam and receive feedback from me on exam writing. For those students, I provide the option of writing a mid-term exam. The exam will be held March 1 and will cover the first half of course (prior to the case studies). For those students choosing this option, the mid-term exam will be worth 15% and the final exam 20%.

**Final Paper (8-10 pages):** This essay will allow you to showcase the country knowledge you have gained as well as your writing and analytical skills. Essays should be in 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with normal (1.25 inch) margins. Essays should include a title page, page numbers and bibliography, with essay checklist and graded paper proposals attached. I will provide more details in class during the first week of class and when I return the paper proposal. An accompanying hand-out is available on the CourseSpaces site. **Due: March 27** (I will accept final papers with a late penalty only until March 29) **Value: 35%**

**Final Exam:** The final exam will give you an opportunity to review all the key concepts from the course and how they apply comparatively to the countries addressed in the course readings and lectures. Answers will require you to use both your analytical and writing skills. The final exam covers the entire course. I will hold a review for the final exam on April 5. The final exam will be held during the university exam schedule April 8-27. **Value: 35%**

**Participation:** Participation in class provides you an opportunity to practice and improve your verbal communications skills. Participation in class will be evaluated based on the quality of your participation in class activities, class discussions, and attendance. Quality participation is constructive, shows you have done the course reading, and is respectful of other students in the class. Attendance will be taken randomly. **Value: 10%**
Grading and Late Penalties

I do not want you to miss important class time in order to finish an assignment. Moreover, arriving to class late with a rushed assignment can disrupt the learning of other students. Please come to class the day the written assignment is due and arrive on time. Submit the assignments to me at the beginning of class the day they are due. If yours is not ready, you can complete it after class, though all assignments not received at the beginning of class will have a late penalty imposed (the same as if submitted the next day).

In many jobs, deadlines can be very important with high penalties if they are not met. If you have trouble with time management skills please see the resources listed at the end of the syllabus for assistance. University is a great opportunity to work on developing these skills before entering the workforce. The late penalty for written assignments in this class is \textit{4\% per day late} (weekends count as one day, e.g. if due on Friday and handed in on Monday -8\% will be deducted), unless there is evidence (e.g., a doctor’s note) of significant medical or personal reasons preventing submission on time. You should not delay consulting me regarding late or missed assignments. I will accept only hard copies.

To achieve the goals outlined in this syllabus, you must complete all assignments for this course. According to university policy, failure to complete one or more of the assignments will result in a grade of ‘N’ (incomplete) for the course and a numeric grade of 49\% or lower.

Required Texts

I have chosen the Vanden and Prevost textbook in part because it is written by two political scientists. However, more importantly it provides a rich overview of the political history of both state and society in Latin America. It also offers a good bibliography on each subject to help you get started on your term papers. Finally, the text suggests films you might want to watch if you have a particular interest in that week’s topic. The textbook is available for purchase at the university bookstore.


Other required readings are available at the library on reserve. They are all available in electronic format. Go to My Page, then the library website, click on course reserves, and then click on Poli 372. The reserve readings complement the text by giving you an opportunity to read non-textbook academic work on Latin American politics. Use these sources not just for information but also for seeing how they put together an argument.

Recommended Text

This text is an excellent guide for essay writing and exam taking. It is highly recommended for this course and any other course you take in the social sciences. It is available for purchase at the university bookstore.

All texts are available at the University Bookstore.

**Keeping in Touch**

*e-mails to me (for quick individual questions or setting up appointments)* Like you, I receive a lot of e-mails every day but it is very important to me not to miss e-mail questions from participants in this course. Please put Poli 372 in the subject heading so I know this is a priority e-mail. Please also take a moment before e-mailing me to ask yourself 3 questions: 1) is the answer to the question on the syllabus?; 2) can the question wait until next class so others in the class can benefit from the answer? (It is unlikely you are the only one with the question); 3) can the question wait until my office hours? (Office hours are a great opportunity for me to get to know you one-on-one and have an extended conversation about your work). If your answer is ‘no’ to all these questions then please e-mail me.

**CourseSpaces** This course has a CourseSpaces site. You can find it at: coursespaces.uvic.ca On the site you will find a copy of the course syllabus and weekly outlines to help you study. You also will find hand-outs explaining details on all the class assignments. To access the site, you will need a Netlink ID if you don’t have one already.

Please come and see me I enjoy getting to know you one-on-one and helping you in a more individualized manner with your assignments. Do not be shy about using my office hours or setting up an appointment.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Part I: Introductory Session**

**Week 1 (Jan. 8 & 9)**

**Map Quiz Jan. 9**

By the end of the week you should be able to:

- Be clear regarding the goals of the course and the steps that will be taken to achieve these goals.
- Question some of the stereotypes of Latin America.
- Identify the location of all Latin American countries on a map.
- Understand the meaning and some of the variations in the meaning of “democracy” and “authoritarianism”
- Understand how to write a comparative politics paper for this course.

Vanden & Prevost Ch.1.

**Recommended:** Northey and McKibbin chapters 1, 2, and other chapters of interest.
Part II  *Historical Context*

**Week 2 (Jan. 11, 15, 16 & 18): Pre-Columbian History, Independence and Beyond**

By the end of the week you should be able to:
- Analyze the historical context of democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America.
- Analyze the authoritarian nature of colonialism in relation to theories of modernization.
- Identify the major civilizations that existed in Latin America when the Europeans arrived and some of the distinguishing features of these civilizations.

Vanden & Prevost, Ch.2., Ch.3 (p.43-50 only), Ch.4 (“Contemporary Struggles of the Indigenous People” p.96-109)

**Part III  *The Major Political Actors in Latin America***

**Week 3 (Jan. 22, 23 & 25): International Economic Actors**

By the end of the week you should be able to:
- Identify the major international financial institutions involved in Latin America and be able to explain how they have been involved.
- Analyze the impact of the debt crisis and neoliberalism on democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America.
- Identify how different state and civil society actors in Latin America have worked with or resisted the policies of the international financial institutions.

Vanden & Prevost, Ch.7.


You should have begun research for your paper proposal. If you are having problems please see me during my office hours.

**Week 4 (Jan. 29, 30 & Feb. 1): The United States (and Canada)**

By the end of the week you should be able to:
- Identify the major way in which the U.S. has been involved in Latin America.
- Analyze the impact of U.S. involvement in the region on democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America.
- Identify how different state and civil society actors in Latin America have worked with or resisted U.S. involvement.
- Identify some of the ways in which Canada has been involved in Latin America.

Vanden & Prevost, Ch. 11

Film: “School of Assassins: School of the Americas” (1995) 13 min. [in class]

Continue researching and start writing your paper proposal. Please see me during my office hours if you encounter any problems.

**Week 5 (Feb. 5, 6 & 8): Authoritarianism and Democracy**

By the end of the week you should be able to:
- Understand what is meant by a pendulum pattern of democracy and authoritarianism in Latin America.
- Understand the stages of a transition from authoritarianism to democracy as outlined by O’Donnell and Schmitter.
- Identify the possibilities and limitations for democratic consolidation in Latin America.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.8.


**Week 6 (Feb. 12 & 13): The State**

By the end of the week you should be able to:
- Identify some of the key forms authoritarian, populist, and democratic states have taken in Latin America.
- Analyze the different meanings of populism.
- Analyze the role of the military in Latin American politics.

Vanden & Prevost Ch.9.


**Week 7 (Feb. 15, 26, & 27): Civil Society**

**READING BREAK: Feb. 18-22**
Paper proposal due Feb. 26

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Identify and distinguish different types of civil society organizations.
• Analyze the challenges and possibilities for civil society organizing in Latin America.
• Analyze the contribution of civil society organizations to democracy in Latin America.

Vanden & Prevost Ch.10.


March 1: OPTIONAL MID-TERM EXAM

Part IV Regional Analysis

Week 8 (March 5, 6 & 8): Mexico

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Understand the significance of defining events in Mexican political history.
• Analyze the historical struggles between authoritarianism and democracy in Mexico.
• Analyze the country’s prospects and challenges for democracy and democratization.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.13 and ch.4 (p.100-104 only)


Week 9 (March 12, 13 & 15): Colombia

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Understand the significance of defining events in Colombian political history.
• Analyze the historical struggles between authoritarianism and democracy in Colombia.
• Analyze the country’s prospects and challenges for democracy and democratization.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.16


Week 10 (March 19, 20 & 22): Nicaragua

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Understand the significance of defining events in Nicaraguan political history.
• Analyze the historical struggles between authoritarianism and democracy in Nicaragua.
• Analyze the country’s prospects and challenges for democracy and democratization.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.21


Week 11 (March 26, 27 & 29): Argentina

March 27 Final paper due (graded paper proposal and completed essay checklist attached)

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Understand the significance of defining events in Argentine political history.
• Analyze the historical struggles between authoritarianism and democracy in Argentina.
• Analyze the country’s prospects and challenges for democracy and democratization.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.13


Film March 29: “Las Madres: the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo” (1985) 63 min.

Week 12 (April 2 & 3): Brazil

By the end of the week you should be able to:
• Understand the significance of defining events in Brazilian political history.
• Analyze the historical struggles between authoritarianism and democracy in Brazil.
• Analyze the country’s prospects and challenges for democracy and democratization.

Vanden & Prevost, ch.14


Course Conclusion  April 5

By the end of the class you should be able to:
• Understand what to expect and how to prepare for the final test.

Your relationship to colleagues in the course
The relationship to your colleagues in this course should be collegial, non-competitive, and supportive. In this sense, the course is like any other professional environment. Since there will be a variety of levels of student experience in this course, please be prepared to be patient with colleagues who know more, or less, than you do. Our collective goal should be that all students who participate fully in the course regardless of level of experience with Political Science or Latin American Studies will have come away with a solid understanding of some of the key issues in Latin American politics by the end of the term.

**Technology in the Classroom**

Studies have shown that students, and those sitting near them in class, do better in courses when they use old fashioned pen and paper to take notes. In part, this is due to the distractions of texting, email, Facebook etc. and flipping between screens. It is also because taking notes by hand is slower and so forces you to synthesize (and thereby retain) what is being discussed. I encourage you to use pen and paper and give yourself a restful break from your digital screen.

**Resources to Assist You**

*The Centre for Academic Communication.* The Centre for Academic Communication (formerly the writing centre) is used by everyone -- undergraduate students, graduate students and professors. It is not remedial. You can visit them up to a couple of times a week to get assistance with current or past assignments. They can make a huge difference in your confidence and skill with writing. I have seen students receive their first ‘A’s’ as a result of visiting the Centre for Academic Communication.

[http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc.php](http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/twc.php)

*Time Management.* Time management is a key skill that makes a huge difference in how well you do at university. It is also a skill that is very valuable in any job you might have after university. If you know you have trouble organizing your time to finish, for example, 3 papers due the same day, then contact study solutions through the library. They offer excellent courses and provide one-on-one assistance:


*Personal Challenges.* You may also want to contact a counselor if delays in your coursework completion are due to personal challenges you face over the semester: [http://coun.uvic.ca](http://coun.uvic.ca) You can also find a separate link there for resources for students who have a disability.

**Course Experience Survey (CES)**

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey you will receive an email inviting you to do so. You will need to use your UVic netlink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

**PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

**The responsibility of the institution** - Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

**The responsibility of the student** - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student’s transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found in the undergraduate calendar.

**PERCENTAGE GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grades</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| F               | 0                 | 0 – 49     | Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental. |
| N               | 0                 | 0 – 49     | Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental. |

1. The percentage grading scale applies to all Faculties at the University of Victoria.
2. The percentage grades should be associated with a letter grading schema.
3. A percentage grade for an N grade should be assigned in the following manner:
   - **N GRADE**: If a student has not completed the exam, or has not completed the course requirements, but has submitted course requirements that total more than 49% of the total grade for a course, an instructor will assign a percentage grade of 49%. 
