

Policy and Politics in Latin America

Spring 2024

Professors:

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Time and Location: Tuesdays 2:00 pm -4:50 pm - Keller 0021

Course materials: canvas.uchicago.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Email:

Office Hours: by appointment on ZOOM

Course Description

This course will cover the historical roots of inequality, violence, political and economic outcomes we observe in contemporary Latin America. We will give a brief introduction of how Latin America is different from other regions in the world and analyze the historical roots of these differences. It will also examine the variation between the countries that are part of this region and we will compare their economic and social policies, and political institutions. We will cover in depth the following topics: inequality; the state and the consequences of the absence of the state - violence and community building. We will also cover the legacies of dictatorships in the region and we will explore how these historical factors persist contrasted with the quality of democracy (clientelism and corruption) that we observe in the region.

Course Goals or Objectives: The aim of this course is for students to gain empirical knowledge of the region's historical roots of its politics and policies as well as a practical understanding of political factors that shape policy outcomes. Students will have a better understanding of how politics are the underlying reason for the success or failure of policymaking in Latin America.

Course Requirements:

All students are expected to have completed the relevant readings before the class meeting each week. The course is not taught from a single textbook. Instead, weekly readings will be

drawn from articles and book chapters (whenever possible, these readings will be posted on the UChicago Canvas course site). You should aim to critically evaluate the theoretical argument, and the evidence advanced in each reading. Some of the readings contain sections that contain econometrics.

We will regularly update the syllabus online and mark the required readings at least two weeks in advance of each respective lecture. Check the course site in Canvas before every lecture for announcements of updated versions of the required readings and the syllabus.

Grading:

1) Policy and Politics Project (85%)

Students should develop a project whose final outcome is a presentation followed by a written paper.

You may develop a research paper on a particular topic, or you can evaluate the implementation of a particular policy in one or more countries in the region or in local governments (states or cities). In both cases, the paper should address the politics behind the adoption of the chosen policy and the lessons it leaves regarding its failure, success, or neutral outcome. They should also think of how the political institutions, actors, and arenas will shape the outcomes of the policy or the research question.

This assignment can be done in couples or individually.

85% of the project should be completed through the following:

1. Defining groups and topics(10%): By the second week, each group or individual should inform the TA about their partnership. On week 3, we will hold office hours and discuss your ideas for the final project. For this meeting, you must have at least one paragraph describing the policy you will study (motivation, background, and research question). You may bring more than one idea, and we can decide which would best fit this class. This meeting is mandatory, and we will open several slots for you to sign in.
2. The first part of the project (20%): Each group should submit a first draft of the paper (5-7 pages) applying the concepts and readings covered in the first 5 weeks. **Deadline: April 16th, 2024**
3. Anonymous Peer Review (5%): Your group will be assigned a draft from another group for you to provide feedback. Be critical BUT constructive and positive (1 page). **Deadline:, April 23rd 2024**
4. Presentation (15%): Each group should present their analysis of the chosen policy, and the audience is expected to participate actively, making suggestions on things to consider. The presentation will take place on the last day of class. You must upload your slides the day before the presentation. **May 14th, 2024**
5. Final Written Project (35%): Each group should submit a paper (10-15 pages) containing the mentioned analysis and including the comments obtained during the presentation. **Deadline: May20th, 2024**

2) Class Participation (15%): You are expected to participate actively during class.

ADA student accommodations: “Any student who believes they may need assistance should inform the Office of Student Disability Services by the end of the first week of class. Once you have received an accommodation letter, it should be presented to the course instructor immediately.” <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

Course outline, reading list, and remainders:

Introduction

Week 1- Latin America in Comparative Perspective - March 19th

- Introduction with some facts about how Latin America is different.

We will present a preview of some outcomes, similarities and differences of different aspects that are remarkable about the region. Next, we will proceed with the historical roots of why Latin America presents the particular dynamics.

- Engerman, S. L. & Sokoloff, K. L., (2000). “History Lessons: Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14(3), 217-232.

Week 2 – Historical Roots of Inequality – March 26th

- Dell, M. (2010). “The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita”, *Econometrica*, 78(6), 1863- 1903.
- Galan, J.S., (2024). “The Legal Origins of Economic Development in Mexico”, Working Paper.
- Galan, J.S., (2021). “Tied to the Land? Intergenerational Mobility and Agrarian Reform in Colombia”, Working Paper.

Week 3 - A contemporary look to Inequality - April 2nd

- Oxfam Research Reports 2013. “Divide and Purchase - How land ownership is being concentrated in Colombia” Oxfam GB for Oxfam International.

https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/rr-divide-and-purchase-land-concentration-colombia-270913-en_0.pdf

- Zimmerman, Seth D. “Elite Colleges and Upward Mobility to Top Jobs and Top Incomes” *American Economic Review*. Vol. 109, No. 1, January 2019 (pp. 1-47)

Week 4 - The State: The Bureaucracy and Subnational Governments – April 9th

- Auyero, Javier (2011), *Patients of the State: An Ethnographic Account of Poor People's Waiting*. *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 46, No.1, 2011.

<http://javierauyero.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PatientsLARR.pdf>

- BBC News “Argentina's parliament sacks 'gnocchi' phantom workers”

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-42551997>

- Gibson, Edward (2005) “Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries,” *World Politics* 58, October 2005.
- Caballero, Maria Cristina (2004) “Academic turns city into a social experiment” *The Harvard Gazette*. March 11th 2004

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2004/03/academic-turns-city-into-a-social-experiment/>

Week 5 - The Absence of the State leads to Violence - April 16th

- Bautista, M. A., Galan, J. S., Robinson, J. A., & Torvik, R., (2024). “Fear and Dreams: Understanding the Social Sources of Leader Strategy”, Working Paper.
- Dell, M. (2015). “Trafficking Networks and the Mexican Drug War”, *American Economic Review*, 105, 6, 1738-1779.
- Sviatschi, M. (2022). “Making a Narco: Childhood Exposure to Illegal Labor Markets and Criminal Life Paths. *Econometrica*”, 90 (4), 1835–1878.

Week 6 - The Absence of the State opens spaces for Community - April 23th

- Galan, J.S., & Montero, E., (2024). “Resisting Social Death: African Origins of Development in the Colombian Pacific”, Working Paper.
- Molina, C., Robinson, J. A., & Zelaya, P., (2021). “The Return of Pachama: Coca and Power in Bolivia”, Mimeo.

Week 7 – Dictatorship and Democracy – April 30th

- [Bautista, M.A., González, F., Martínez, L.R., Muñoz, P. and Prem, M. \(2023\), "The Geography of Repression and Opposition to Autocracy". *American Journal of Political Science*, 67: 101-118.](#)
- Auyero, Javier (2000) “The Logic of Clientelism in Argentina: An Ethnographic Account” in *Latin American Research Review* Vol.36, No.1, pp.55-81.
- Hsieh, Chang-Tai, Ted Miguel, Daniel Ortega, and Francisco Rodriguez (2011) "The Price of Political Opposition: Evidence from Venezuela's Maisanta" *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 3: 196-214.
- Mcmillan, John and Pablo Zoido (2004) "How to Subvert Democracy: Montesinos in Peru," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, American Economic Association, vol. 18(4), pages 69-92, Fall. <http://pricetheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/McMillanZoido2004.pdf>

- Ferraz, Claudio and Frederico Finan (2008) “Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effect of Brazil’s Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(2): 703-745. https://eml.berkeley.edu/~ffinan/Finan_Audit.pdf

Optional Reading

- Menaldo, Victor and Michael Albertus (2014) “Gaming Democracy: Elite Dominance During Transition and Prospects for Redistribution.” *British Journal of Political Science*, Forthcoming.
- Falletti, Tulia G. (2011) “Varieties of Authoritarianism: The Organization of the Military State and its Effect on Federalism in Argentina and Brazil.” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 46 (2), 137-162.

Week 8 – Special Guest Lecture Professor James Robinson and Professor Jose Luis Falconi - May 7th

- Fernando Coronil (1997) “The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela” Chapters: TBD
- Falconi, José Luis and James Robinson (2020) “The Political Economy of Latin America: New Visions”

Week 9 – Presentations and Final project - May 14th

In class student presentations and discussions of countries/policies cases where they apply the concepts and literature reviewed in the class.

May 20th 2024: Final Written project is due today. Submit via Canvas. If you are graduating we should submit your grades by May 26th, if not on May 28th 2024.