PPHA 39750 Politics and Public Policy in Latin America

Spring 2023

Professor: María Angélica Bautista

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Time and Location: Thursdays 2:00 pm -4:50 pm - Keller Center 2112

Course materials: canvas.uchicago.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

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Office Hours: by appointment on ZOOM

Course Description

This course will cover the politics of policymaking in Latin America. The first part will focus on understanding the variation between public policies and how these are related to some of the problems of economic development in the region. It will address how and why Latin America is different by looking at its economic outcomes, economic and social policies, and political institutions. It will cover in detail how political institutions shape policy outcomes, and it will cover empirical examples and cases that will provide a practical perspective. The second part of the course will look into the interaction between the quality of democracy and how it shapes public policy. We will also cover the legacies of dictatorships in the region and we will explore how these historical factors persist, for example, how the legacy of authoritarianism shapes redistributive policies and how these historical foundations have created the Latin American states we see today. The third part of the course will look at how groups such as civil society or violent actors can also shape policymaking and welfare in this region.

Course Goals or Objectives: The aim of this course is for students to gain empirical knowledge of the region's 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 one required textbook and from a collection of 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.

I 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.

The first option is the implementation of a particular policy in one or more countries in the region or in local governments (states or cities). They should address the politics behind the adoption of the chosen policy and the lessons it leaves regarding its failure, success, or neutral outcome.

The second option is to do the same exercise even if the policy has not been implemented and they think it would be something that could benefit the country, region or community that they are studying. The students should address the political factors and conditions that they consider will deter or favor the implementation of the proposed policy. They should also think of how the political institutions, actors, and arenas will shape the outcomes of the proposed policy.

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 24th, 2023**
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: May 1st, 2023**

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 18th, 2023**

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: May 24th, 2023**

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/](https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/)

**Course outline, reading list, and remainders:**

**Introduction**

**Week 1 - Public Policy in Latin America in Comparative Perspective - March 23rd**

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

**The Politics of Policy**

**Week 2 – Political Economy of Policy: A Framework – March 30th**


The Politics of Policy: The Actors

Week 3 - Political Economy of Policy: The Bureaucracy - April 6th


• BBC News “Argentina’s parliament sacks 'gnocchi' phantom workers"


Political Economy of Policy: Subnational Governments

• Caballero, Maria Cristina (2004) “Academic turns city into a social experiment” The Harvard Gazette. March 11th 2004


Week 4 - Political Economy of Policy: The Judiciary - April 13th

Links to an external site.


What is Missing?
Week 5 – What is Missing? #1 – The Long Shadow of Dictatorship – April 20th

- Bautista, Maria, et. al. “The Geography of Repression and Support for Democracy” (working paper)

Optional Reading

- Bautista, Maria Angelica (2020) “Political Effects of State-led Repression: The Chilean Case” (working paper).

What is Missing? #2 – The Quality of Democracy – April 20th


Week 6 - What is Missing? #3 – Corruption – April 27th


https://eml.berkeley.edu/~ffinan/Finan_Audit.pdfLinks to an external site.


What is Missing? #4 – Inequality – April 27th
  

- 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)

- Claudio Ferraz, Frederico Finan and Monica Martinez-Bravo "Political Power, Elite Control, and Long-Run Development: Evidence from Brazil" NBER Working Paper No. w27456

Civil Society

Week 7 - Accountability and the Marginalized – May 4th


Crime and violence/Magical State

Week 8 – May 11th

- Nikita Melnikov, Carlos Schmidt-Padilla and María Micaela Sviatschi paper "Gangs, Labor Mobility, and Development" (2021)

Week 9 - Presentations and Final project - May 18th
In class student presentations and discussions of countries/policies cases where they apply the concepts and literature reviewed in the class.

**May 25th:** Final Written project is due today. Submit via Canvas.