



Stony Brook University

Department of Political Science

POL302

Politics of Latin America

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Course Description

An introduction to some of the most pressing political topics in Latin America, addressing a variety of political experiences, including political history, democratic development, social dynamics, current events, and political research about the region.

Learning Objectives

Latin America is the region of the developing world with the greatest experience with democracy. It has considerable experience with populist leaders, military rulers, and a few important revolutions. This course offers an introduction to politics in Latin America that addresses the variety of political experiences in the region.

Students will be able to:

- know concepts used in the study of politics around the world (e.g., democracy, military regimes, models of economic development);
- understand the main trends in Latin American politics and some of the key political challenges currently faced by the countries in the region;
- learn how these countries can be compared to each other, and how research is done in the region;
- create reports in the style of a brief on important contemporary topics in Latin American politics through an evaluation of fundamental concepts and academic research;
- apply their knowledge of the topics learned about the region when answering questions.

Course Material

The only *required textbook* for this course is **Munck, G. L., and Luna, J. P. (2022). *Latin American Politics and Society*. Cambridge University Press, 1st Edition.**

Lectures

The lecture slides and extra readings will be posted on Brightspace on the days listed below, under Course Schedule.

Class “pods”

You will be assigned to a group of up to 4 students, your “pod,” for the duration of the course. I hope this will provide you with some of the **social joy** and **accountability**

that come with taking a class with others. Together, you will be a team. Your pod will be the first people you should talk to when you have questions about the material: help one another understand the studies and concepts we cover. I encourage you to work together to understand the material and to create a shared document of course notes and resources. You will work on projects together as a pod throughout the semester.

All members of the pod are expected to contribute to the projects, and you should agree on each member's responsibilities for each project. If a student is struggling to meet their responsibilities, I encourage you to address it within the group first. If the issue cannot be resolved, please inform me.

Exceptions will be made to the pod grade policy if it is pretty clear that there is a free-riding situation. **Free-riding is unacceptable, and members of a pod are entitled to request the removal of one or more members at any time, provided the decision is unanimous and reasonable.** If you are asked to exit your pod due to free-riding, you will have to complete all group assignments individually, with the same requirements and no extensions.

You can also request to exit a pod (no reason is needed), but you are responsible for finding another one to join, and the members of the pod you wish to join must all agree.

Late and make-up policy

Late assignments will get an hourly "grade discount". That is, for each hour that an assignment is overdue, your grade will be deducted by 10% of the total possible points on that assignment. Unless something extraordinary happens, there will be no deadline extensions or make-up assignments/quizzes.

Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

- Article Deep Dives (4) – 20%
- Quizzes (4) – 40%
- In-Class Group Discussions (5) – 15%
- Research Idea – 25%
 - Presentation – 5%
 - Research Report – 20%

The grading scale is as follows:

A = 95-100	C+ = 75-78
A- = 90-94	C = 71-74
B+ = 86-89	C- = 67-70
B = 83-85	D+ = 62-66
B- = 79-82	D = 58-61
	F = 0-57

Quizzes

There will be four quizzes. Some will be in class and others on Brightspace, distributed throughout the course content, to check in on your reading and learning. They are worth 40% of your overall grade. These will be taken and graded individually, each out of 10. See dates of each quiz under Course Schedule.

There will be no make-up quizzes. If a quiz was administered in person, in class, and you could not make it to class that day due to something extraordinary, you can request that your next quiz is worth double the credit. There is no option to make up for the last quiz; if you miss it, you miss it.

In-Class Group Discussion

Five classes per semester will be designated for in-class group discussion. You and your pod will be asked to answer three discussion questions, each with a minimum of 50 words, and to share your conclusions in class. Together, the 5 in-class discussions are worth 15% of your overall grade. Each will be graded out of 3, based on the combination of the quality of your written responses and your in-class contributions.

You are expected to have read the assigned class readings in advance and to be prepared to discuss the questions with your group. You will not be able to access any electronic device. Bring a pencil!

Even though you will be evaluated and graded as a group, group members who are not physically present in class for the discussion will not receive credit for this assignment.

Article Deep Dives

You will put together a poster that summarizes a scientific article in a clear and engaging way. Further instructions and explanations will be in a separate document on Brightspace. Together, the 4 deep dives are worth 20% of your overall grade. Each will be graded out of 5.

Research Idea

This is a pod project in which you will design a researchable idea about Latin American politics and present preliminary descriptive evidence using online analysis tools. You will deliver a presentation of the idea and a short written report that motivates the question, summarizes relevant literature, explains your data and method, and interprets your findings.

You will **present your research idea** and results to the class. This 5- to 10-minute presentation will be graded out of 5, and you will receive a grade for your group. The evaluation will assess how clear, accurate, and thoughtfully considered your presentation's content is. You will then write a **research idea report**, which will be graded out of 20, the report must be at least *2000 words*.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Class 1 - Monday, August 24

- Syllabus and introduction

Class 2 - Wednesday, August 26

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 1: "The State and State Capacity".

Week 2

Class 3 - Monday, August 31

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 2: "Nation Building, Race, and Ethnicity".

Class 4 - Wednesday, September 2

- Read: Hooker, J. (2005). [Indigenous Inclusion/Black Exclusion: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Citizenship in Latin America](#). *Journal of Latin American Studies*.
- Watch: Latin America Tried To Eliminate Black People — And Failed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zF5UovmW18>)
- Watch: What it means to be Black in Brazil (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jk1eTURC8sA>)

Week 3

Class 5 - Monday, September 7: NO CLASS - Labor Day

Class 6 - Wednesday, September 9

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 3: "Political Regimes and Democracy".
- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION - Bonus Point**
- Wolf, S. (2024). [El Salvador under Nayib Bukele: the turn to electoral authoritarianism](#). *Revista de Ciencia Política*, 44(2).

Week 4

Class 7 - Monday, September 14

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 4: "Development Models and Socioeconomic Welfare".

Class 8 - Wednesday, September 16

- **QUIZ #1 - IN CLASS**
Based on the contents of weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4.
Open physical handwritten notes, no electronics or printed notes.

Week 5

Class 9 - Monday, September 21

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 5: "Democracy and the Quality of Democracy"

Class 10 - Wednesday, September 23

- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION #1**
- Hernández-Huerta, V., & Cantú, F. (2022). [Public distrust in disputed elections: Evidence from Latin America](#). *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 1923-1930.

ARTICLE DEEP DIVE #1 due - Thursday, September 24, 11:59 pm

- Please upload your poster file to Brightspace in PDF format only.

Week 6

Class 11 - Monday, September 28

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 6: "Political Inclusion and Institutional Innovations"

Class 12 - Wednesday, September 30: Political Parties

- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION #2**
- Funk, K. D., Hinojosa, M., & Piscopo, J. M. (2017). [Still left behind: gender, political parties, and Latin America's pink tide](#). *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 24(4), 399-424.

ARTICLE DEEP DIVE #2 due - Thursday, October 1, 11:59 pm

- Please upload your poster file to Brightspace in PDF format only.

Week 7

Class 13 - Monday, October 5

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 7: "Political Parties and the Citizen-Politician Link"
- Lupu, N. (2014). [Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America](#). *World Politics* 66(4):561

Class 14 - Wednesday, October 7

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 8: "The Protection of Civil Rights".

Week 8

Class 15 - Monday, October 12: NO CLASS - Fall break

Class 16 - Wednesday, October 14

- **QUIZ #2 - IN CLASS**

Based on the contents of weeks 5, 6, and 7.

Open physical handwritten notes, no electronics or printed notes.

Week 9

Class 17 - Monday, October 19

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 12: "Social Rights in Law and Reality".

Class 18 - Wednesday, October 21

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 13: "Sustainable Development and Neoextractivism".
- **Pods meet to discuss final project.**

Week 10

Class 19 - Monday, October 26

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 14: "Basic Social Inclusion and Social Policy".

Class 20 - Wednesday, October 28

- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION #3**
- Layton, M. L., & Smith, A. E. (2015). [Incorporating marginal citizens and voters: the conditional electoral effects of targeted social assistance in Latin America](#). *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(7), 854-881

ARTICLE DEEP DIVE #3 due - Thursday, October 29, 11:59 pm

- Please upload your poster file to Brightspace in PDF format only.

Week 11

Class 21 - Monday, November 2: Violence

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 9: "Transitional Justice: Responses to Past Human Rights Violations".

Class 22 - Wednesday, November 4: Violence

- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION #4**
- Balcells, L., V. Palanza, and E. Voytas (2022). [Do transitional justice museums persuade visitors? Evidence from a field experiment](#). *The Journal of Politics* 84.1: 496-510.

ARTICLE DEEP DIVE #4 due - Thursday, November 5, 11:59 pm

- Please upload your poster file to Brightspace in PDF format only.

Week 12

Class 23 - Monday, November 9

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 11: “The New Violence”.

Class 24 - Wednesday, November 11

- **IN-CLASS GROUP DISCUSSION #5**
- Trelles, A., & Carreras, M. (2012). [Bullets and Votes: Violence and Electoral Participation in Mexico](#). *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 4(2), 89-123.

Week 13

Class 25 - Monday, November 16

- **QUIZ #3 - IN CLASS**
Based on the contents of weeks 9, 10, 11, and 12.
Open physical handwritten notes, no electronics or printed notes.

Class 26 - Wednesday, November 18:

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 10: “High-Level Corruption”.
- Watch:
 - The Biggest Corruption Scandal in Latin America’s History (<https://youtu.be/uMXumMJZYI?si=QgS19gayD-7xWGEa>)
 - Leaked Brazil Archive Exposing Operation Car Wash (<https://youtu.be/vCnSJ5yDv1g?si=rU91pWIIIJonw1Qb>)
 - Mexico's State of Corruption (<https://youtu.be/Ko5pkDTyBjM?si=JPm4VxKpe0ZBadw5>)
 - Former Mexico President Implicated in Corruption Scandal (https://youtu.be/DC_pW4jYtZ8?si=G8TVitz6dDLqEtBc)
 - Why Guatemalans Rose Up Against Government Corruption (<https://youtu.be/joMc51CqRVg?si=CNI3yK7q8pLGiZKU>)
 - Guatemalan President Arrested for Corruption (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjujUTDUUEU>)

Week 14

Class 27 - Monday, November 23:

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 10: “High-Level Corruption”.

Class 28 - Wednesday, November 25: NO CLASS - Thanksgiving break

Week 15

Class 29 - Monday, November 30

- Munck & Luna (2022), Chapter 15: “Unequal Democracies”.
- **QUIZ #4 - ONLINE opens after class and closes at 11:59 pm.**
Based on the contents of weeks 13, 14, and 15.

Class 30 - Wednesday, December 2

- Presentations

Week 16

Class 31 - Monday, December 7

- Presentations

Research Idea Report Deadline - Wednesday, December 9, 11:59pm