Political Science 561  
Latin American Politics  
Mondays, 2-4:40, Lattimore 212

Professor Gretchen Helmke  
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This seminar focuses on key questions facing scholars of contemporary Latin American politics: Under what conditions do democratic regimes emerge and endure? Under what conditions are politicians responsive to citizens? Does the choice of political institutions matter? What factors affect institutional instability and weakness? The first part of the seminar considers a variety of approaches to regime transition, including explanations based on class, culture, and individual preferences. The second part of the course begins with an analysis of the quality of democracy and representation in Latin America. To evaluate the impact of specific institutions on democracy, the course considers the advantages and drawbacks of presidential democracy. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding variation in inter-branch relations over time and across countries. The course concludes with a survey of emerging research on timely topics including indigenous movements, corruption, and institutional instability.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grades will be based on participation (35%) and completion of a research proposal (65%) on a topic relevant to the course. Students are expected to actively contribute to the discussion each and every week. This necessitates a careful reading of the material prior to the class. Student responsibilities include leading discussion of at least one of the readings in each seminar (there will be some flexibility about this depending on the size of the class and the readings for the week). Your objective should be to briefly summarize the readings and lay the groundwork for a broader discussion regarding the substantive, theoretical and methodological merits and limits of the material. A one–two page handout of notes should be provided.

In addition to weekly participation, students are expected to write a 10-12 page research proposal in which the main goal is to identify an important research question and to lay out a framework for answering it. The proposal should thus contain three elements: 1) a summary of the relevant literature and a discussion of why your question is important 2) a discussion of the research design 3) a discussion of the feasibility/practicality of implementing the proposed design (i.e. what data would you need, etc.). Papers are due Monday, December 11th at the beginning of class. Students will be asked to give 15-20 minute presentations of their proposals during the last class session.
REQUIRED READINGS

In this course, we read a combination of books, chapters and journal articles. Articles and book chapters that are not available on the web (through JSTOR, etc) will be made available for you to copy; they will be available in a box in the Political Science Lounge, Harkness 314. Please be sure to return these quickly, so that others can read them. The books listed below are available for purchase from Amazon or other internet sites.

Required Books


WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Sept 4): Organizational Meeting

Week 2 (Sept 11): Authoritarianism


**Week 3***(Sept 18): Regime Transitions I


Londregan, John and Keith Poole. 1990 “Poverty, the Coup Trap, and the Seizure of Executive Power.” *World Politics* 42: 151-83.


**Week 4***(Sept 25): Regime Transitions II


**Week 5***(Oct 2): Regime Transitions III

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science.*


**Week 6 (Oct 9): Regime Transitions IV**


**Week 7 (Oct 16): Accountability and Representation**


Samuels, David. 2004. “Presidentialism and Accountability for the Economy in Comparative Perspective” *American Political Science Review*


**Week 8 (Oct 23): Clientelism**


**Week 9 (Oct 30): Parties and Elections**


Additional readings to be announced

**Week 10** (Nov 6): Presidentialism


Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart 1997. Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11)

**Week 11** (Nov 13): Legislatures and Parties

Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif, eds 2002. Legislative Politics in Latin America. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 14, 15)


**Week 12** (Nov 20): Courts


Staton, Jeffrey K. 2004. “Judicial Policy Implementation in Mexico City and Mérida” Comparative Politics.


**Week 13 (Nov 27): Institutional Instability and Corruption**


Pérez-Liñan, Aníbal. Crises without Breakdown” Presidential Impeachment and the New Political Instability in Latin America Cambridge University Press (ms. forthcoming)


**Week 14 (Dec 4): Indigenous Movements and Ethnic Politics**


**Week 15 (Dec 11): Papers Due, Student Presentations**