

**Political Science 261/261W**  
**Latin American Politics**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 - 1:45**  
**Harkness Hall 329**

Professor Gretchen Helmke  
Office: 331 Harkness Hall  
Office hours: Wednesdays, 11:00am-12:00pm or by appointment  
Email: [gretchen.helmke@rochester.edu](mailto:gretchen.helmke@rochester.edu)

This upper-level undergraduate seminar focuses on the twin processes of democratization and democratic erosion in contemporary Latin America. The first part of the class covers the region's experiences with regime instability, coups, and different varieties of autocracy, as well as introduces students to competing theories of democratization. The second half of the course concentrates on the performance and functioning of key democratic processes and institutions. The course then concludes by examining countries that have experienced protracted episodes of democratic backsliding, including Peru, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

**Organization and Course Requirements**

For students registered to take the class without a writing credit, grades will be based on the following assignments:

Participation: 20%  
Midterm Exam: 40 %  
Final Exam: 40%

For students registered with a "W," grades will be based on the following assignments:

Participation: 20%  
First Midterm Exam: 25%  
Second Midterm Exam: 25%  
Research Paper 30%

**Participation**

Participation makes up a significant part of your grade for this course. This class is a discussion seminar, not a lecture course. It is essential that students be prepared to discuss all of the readings each and every class. Many of the works that we will read are intellectually demanding; be sure to leave yourself enough time to do all of the readings carefully.

Student responsibilities include being prepared each week to discuss news from the *Latin American Weekly Reports* at the beginning of each class. PDF versions of the *Latin American Weekly Report* will be put into the Dropbox on the Friday before the next week's class. To analyze the *Latin American Weekly Reports*, please consider the

following democratic principles contained in Bright Line Watch's public and expert surveys on democratic erosion.

In addition, each student will sign up to present at least one of the weekly readings during the semester. The student should prepare a 10-15 minute presentation that briefly summarizes the argument and raises important questions and criticisms for discussion. Each student is responsible for approximately 2 readings during the semester. A Google sign-up sheet is available.

### Exams

There will be two in-class midterms (February 2, April 26). Both exams will be based on the assigned readings and class discussion.

### Absences and Make-Up Policy

Make-up exams and assignments will be given only under the most exceptional circumstances. Exams will not be re-scheduled to accommodate other courses. Missed exams or assignments due to illness require a doctor's note.

When in-person classes resume, you are expected to attend each and every class in-person. However, if you are ill, we will make every attempt to allow you to participate in the class remotely.

### Term Paper (Only for Students Taking the Course for "W")

Each student will choose a country and topic on which they will write a 10-12 page research paper. **To qualify for a W, you must meet each deadline:**

- 2/1** 2-3 paragraph statement of your research topic. Please include the question(s) that you want to focus on, the materials that you anticipate using, and your working hypotheses.
- 3/1** 1-2 page annotated bibliography. Please begin with a statement of your research topic and hypotheses and then briefly describe how each of the sources on your bibliography will contribute to your paper.
- 3/31** Last day to turn in required drafts.
- 4/26** Research Papers Due at the beginning of Class- **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

### Books

The following three books are required and available for purchase on Amazon. Chapters from additional books will be photocopied and available in the Dropbox.

Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Susan C. Stokes. 2001. *Mandates and Democracies: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Helmke, Gretchen. 2017. *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

### Articles

All articles are available via Dropbox for this course.

## **Weekly Class Schedule:**

### **Week 1: Course Introduction (short class)**

#### **Thursday, January 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Course Introduction and Presentation Assignments

Skidmore, Thomas and Peter Smith. 2005. "The Transformation of Modern Latin America: 1880's-1990's" in *Modern Latin America*. pages 42-68.

### **Week 2: Conceptualizing Democracy and Democratic Erosion**

#### **Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Lupu, Noam and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. "The Pulse of Democracy in 2021." *LAPOP AmericasBarometer*. 2021.

#### **Thursday, January 20<sup>th</sup>:**

Przeworski, Adam. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge university press, 1991. Chapter 1.

Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. *How Democracies Die*. Broadway Books, 2018. Chapters 4-5.

#### *Additional Readings:*

Weingast, Barry R. "The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law." *American Political Science Review* 91.2 (1997): 245-263.

"Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Compilation of Selected Indices." *Congressional Research Service*. 2021.

"Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy under Siege." *Freedom House*. 2021.

"Regional Report on Latin America." *OpenData Barometer*. 2021.

"The State of Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean." Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate. March 24, 2021.

Zechmeister, Elizabeth J. and Noam Lupu. 2019. "The 2018/19 AmericasBarometer." *AmericasBarometer*. LAPOP.

### **Week 3: Coups and Democratic Breakdowns**

#### **Tuesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1973. "An Impossible 'Game': Party Competition in Argentina, 1955-1966" in *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*. Berkeley: IIS Publ.

#### **Thursday, January 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Valenzuela, Arturo. 1978. "The Move to a Socialist Society and the Erosion of the Political Center" in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 4.

Alfred Stepan, "Political Leadership and Regime Breakdown: Brazil." In Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 110-137.

### **Week 4: Autocracy**

#### **Tuesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Kurt Weyland, *Revolution and Reaction: The Diffusion of Authoritarianism in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), Chapters 3 & 6.

*Additional Readings:*

Magaloni, Beatriz. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Vol. 296. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

#### **Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

Michael Albertus, *Autocracy and Redistribution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 142-189.

Negretto, Gabriel. "Authoritarian Constitution-Making: The Role of the Military in Latin America" *Constitutions in Authoritarian Regimes*. Edited by Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Sinsler. Cambridge University Press, 2014. pp. 83-110

### **Week 5: Transitions to Democracy I**

#### **Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter 1986. *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (Chapters 1-7)

**Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chapter 2 and 7.

**Week 6: Transitions to Democracy II**

**Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49: 155-83.

**Thursday, February 17<sup>th</sup>:**

Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapters 3-4.

Midterm Review

**Week 7, February 22 & 24: First Midterm Exam (Tuesday) & Documentary (Thursday)**

**Week 8: Accountability and the Rule of Law**

**Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Nino, Carlos Santiago. *Radical Evil on Trial*. Yale University Press, 1996. Selected Chapters TBD.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Vol. 4. University of Oklahoma press, 1993. Selections TBD.

**Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

Helmke, Gretchen, YeonKyung Jeong, Jae-Eun Kim, and Seda Ozturk. "Upending Impunity: Prosecuting Presidents in Contemporary Latin America."

## **Week 9, March 8 & 10: Spring Break**

## **Week 10: Accountability & Elections**

### **Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Matthew S. Winters and Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, "Lacking Information or Condoning Corruption? When do Voters Support Corrupt Politicians?" *Comparative Politics* 45, No. 4 (July 2013): 418-436.

### **Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup>:**

Stokes, Susan C. *Mandates and Democracy: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

## **Week 11: Poverty, Redistribution, and Clientelism**

### **Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Valeria Brusco, Marcelo Nazareno, and Susan C. Stokes. 2004. "Vote Buying in Argentina." *Latin American Research Review*, Vol 39, No.2.

### **Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>:**

Holland, Alisha C. "Forbearance." *American Political Science Review* 110.2 (2016): 232-246.

Ana De la O, *Crafting Policies to End Poverty in Latin America: The Quiet Transformation*. (Cambridge University Press, 2015), TBD.

## **Week 12: Political Parties**

### **Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, and Brandon Van Dyck, "Introduction: Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America." In Levitsky, et al. eds. *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 1-33.

Scott Mainwaring ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.17-23 (with Fernando Bizzarro and Ana Petrova); 57-63; 71-101.

**Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>:**

Noam Lupu, “Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America.” *World Politics* 66, No. 4 (October 2014).

Gingerich, Daniel W. *Political Institutions and Party-Directed Corruption in South America: Stealing for the Team*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. Chapter 5.

**Week 13: Presidential Systems**

**Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>:**

“W” Students Only: Papers are due the beginning of class today—NO EXCEPTIONS

*Latin American Weekly Report*

O’Donnell, Guillermo. “Delegative Democracy” *Journal of Democracy* 5(1):55-69.

Mainwaring, Scott. 1993. “Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination” *Comparative Political Studies* 26: 198-228.

**Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>:**

Valenzuela, Arturo. 2004. “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted” *Journal of Democracy* 15(4).

Pérez-Liñan, Aníbal. 2005. “Democratization and Constitutional Crises in Presidential Regimes: Toward Congressional Supremacy?” *Comparative Political Studies* 38(1): 51-74.

**Week 14: Democratic Erosion: Peru and Venezuela**

**Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Helmke, Gretchen. *Institutions on the Edge: the Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 2017. Chapters 4 & 5.

**Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Charles D. Kenney. 2004. “Fujimori versus Congress and the Coup.” *Fujimori’s Coup and the Breakdown of Democracy in Latin America*. Chapter 6.

Javier Corrales and Michael Penfold, *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chávez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela* (Brookings Institution Press, 2011), Pgs. 1-47.

Javier Corrales, “Authoritarian Survival: Why Maduro Hasn’t Fallen,” *Journal of Democracy* 31, No. 3 (July 2020): 39-53.



**Week 15, April 19 & 21: Democratic Erosion: Brazil, El Salvador, Nicaragua**

**Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>:**

*Latin American Weekly Report*

Wendy Hunter and Timothy J. Power, "Bolsonaro and Brazil's Illiberal Backlash," *Journal of Democracy* 30, No. 1 (January 2019): 68-82.

Frances Hagopian, "Brazil's Accountability Paradox." *Journal of Democracy* 27, No. 3 (July 2016): 119-128.

**Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>:**

Meléndez-Sánchez, Manuel. "Latin America Erupts: Millennial Authoritarianism in El Salvador." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 32 No. 3, 2021, p. 19-32.

Thaler, K. "Nicaragua: A Return to Caudillismo." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, no. 2, Apr. 2017, pp. 157-69.

**Week 16, April 26: Second Midterm**