

GOV 337M (38670)/LAS 337M (40210)

## **DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA**

Spring 2012 – Garrison 0.120  
Prof. Henry Dietz  
Office: Batts 3.124  
Office hours: M and W 11-12, 1-2

This course deals with a vital aspect of current Latin American politics: the onset since 1980 of the widespread emergence of political parties, elections and procedural democracy throughout the area. Much of the course will be concerned with what democracy is and how it can be defined; measured/observed, with the differences between democratic transition and democratic consolidation, and with how democracy might (or might not) be sustained in the region.

The course assumes no prior knowledge of Latin American politics, and for that reason begins with a quick reading of a standard text on the subject. The idea is to provide everyone with a minimally level playing field. The course requires no reading knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese, although anyone who can read either language will find a wealth of materials available.

The course has as its major requirement a term paper of about 15 pages. To write such a paper successfully, we shall proceed in stages, each of which you will be graded on. These stages are as follows:

- hand into me no later than **1 March a proposal, outline and working bibliography** of your paper that contains your theoretical argument as well as your case study. I will grade this assignment on the basis of your clarity of your overall argument, the appropriateness of your case study, and the completeness of your bibliography. **About 20% of your grade.**
- hand into me no later than **29 March the first draft** of your paper. I will grade this draft for content as well as writing and return it to you. **About 20% of your grade.**
- hand into me **your final paper 9 May. About 40% of your grade.**
- the remaining **20% of your grade will come from your overall class participation and your oral presentation.**

Pluses and minuses will be used for course grades. Students with disabilities may request appropriate assistance from SSD 471-6259. There are no exams.

## **Overall Class Involvement and Requirements**

Everyone should come to each session prepared to facilitate discussion of the readings, meaning that you should be prepared to lead discussion if called upon to do so by having some questions ready when you come to class. I may ask at any time to see such questions. They can concern clarification (what you don't understand), disagreement (what strikes you as wrong factually or interpretively), or confusion (an earlier reading said A but this says B). As we progress, combining the readings on democracy with the case studies will become increasingly important.

**All class members should be prepared to discuss the readings in these ways.**

The readings for the class are of two types. The first (Dahl) are theoretical or analytical materials that deal with democracy as a means of governing and as a procedure for acquiring power. The second (Blake and Smith) are readings that deal with specific countries and/or the processes of establishing and maintaining democracy in those countries.

**The main goal of the research paper is to combine these two types of readings by taking some theoretical aspect of democracy and examining it within one or more specific Latin American nation(s).**

The course is not a lecture course. Rather, we shall discuss the materials together, building throughout the semester so that we can begin to see how Latin American nations have tried to devise ways of creating and maintaining democracy, and why some attempts have been more successful than others.

In-class participation is therefore an essential part of the course. You should attend and involve yourself in what goes on. If you miss classes, I'll ask why; if you don't participate, I'll ask why and probably see to it that you do. If you miss without an excuse more than once or twice, your grade could be affected.

Your paper can consider any number of topics: conditions favorable to democracy; definitions of democracy; the structure and behavior of political parties; the roles of elites; a specific election and how and why it turned out as it did; the ability of democracy to improve (or not) the welfare of its citizens; the conditions under which democracy is most apt to succeed or fail.

Since UT has one of the finest Latin American libraries in the country and the world, I expect you to take full advantage of it. On-line sources are fine, but they're only a place to start, not to finish.

In the end, the overall success of the seminar and of each student rests on your willingness to contribute to the course.

Books required for purchase:

Charles Blake, *Politics in Latin America*  
 Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy*  
 Peter Smith, *Democracy in Latin America*

There may be additional readings; if there are I'll post them or distribute them in class.

### Reading Assignments

Readings should be done by the time the class meets for the beginning of each topic.

**Bring Dahl and whatever else is assigned to each class.**

17 January – **Introduction to the course**

Begin reading Blake. The Blake book is intended to serve as an introduction to three basic challenges – development, liberty, and governance – that confront today's rulers of democratic Latin America. As you go through the book, examine how these three themes overlap with one another and how and why it is that advances on one or two may not necessarily be met with advances on the other(s).

Also: in Blake you will find all sorts of concepts discussed (e.g., delegative democracy), generally in **bold print**. Note or highlight these; they can be very useful informing the theoretical part of your paper. For example, as you read an account of what happened in Country X, was it an example of one or more of these concepts? Why or why not?

Finally, look in Blake for something that interests you. Blake might spend a paragraph describing an election somewhere; do you want to expand on that description and make that your case for your paper?

Finally (again), many countries in LA are not in Blake, so feel free to find an account of such a country (Colombia? Uruguay? Bolivia?) and read about it as you read Blake, making sure to apply some of Blake's concepts and ideas you as read.

19,24, 26 January – **Latin American politics**

Read Blake, complete.

31 January to 1 March – **Understanding democracy**

Robert Dahl is one of the outstanding democratic theorists of the second half of the twentieth century, and *Polyarchy* is one of his best-known works. Dahl does not deal with Latin America in particular in his book, so one of y/our goals will be to see how well his general arguments about democracy work or can be applied to Latin America and its individual countries.

When you come to class to discuss Dahl, be assured that we will read *Polyarchy* exegetically (look it up), so prepare yourselves accordingly. Look for and be aware of propositions and hypotheses as well as concepts and definitions and compare them with Blake.

Also: be aware that *Polyarchy* was written forty years ago, but is still one of the most commonly-referred to books on the topic of democracy written since World War II. Thus while some of his references may be dated, his basic arguments and logics are still compelling.

We will read Dahl not so much chapter by chapter, but rather page by page, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, line by line, and not infrequently word by word. So read it according – or better yet, read a chapter through once, and then go back into it more carefully.

Also: while *Polyarchy* is a major work, it is (as noted earlier) not a book about Latin America. So as you start to develop your own case, think about whether your case tends to **support**, **modify**, or perhaps **reject** Dahl. After all, just because Dahl wrote it doesn't make it always true or complete or accurate.

As I explained earlier, your essential task is to extract an argument from Dahl and then apply it to a specific case – an event, an institution, an episode in a specific country – and see to what extent Dahl is useful in explaining your case. We'll talk a good deal in class about how to do all of this.

31 January – 2 February - **Defining democracy**

Dahl, chapters 1, 2, 3

7-9 February – **Democracy and economics**

Dahl, chapters 4, 5

14-16 February – **Democracy and social structures**

Dahl, chapters 6, 7

28 February – 1 March – **Democracy and elites**

Dahl, chapter 8

**PAPER PROPOSALS DUE 1 MARCH – NO EXCEPTIONS!**

8 – 10 March – **Democracy and external factors and actors**

Dahl, chapters 9, 10 and Postscript

14-18 March – **Spring break**

Weeks of 3, 10, 17, 24 April – **In-class presentations**

**ALL PAPERS DUE 9 MAY – NO EXCEPTIONS!**