International History

Academic year 2019-2020

Authoritarianism and Democracy in Latin America: From Independence to the 2010s

HI124 - Spring - 3 ECTS

Tuesday 12h15 - 14h00

Course Description

The goal of this course is to identify and analyse the alternation between authoritarianism and democracy in Latin America from the end of the colonial rule to our time. By doing so, we seek to uncover broad patterns of structural change over time in the region.

After achieving independence, most Latin American countries found themselves plagued by social disparities which translated into institutional inequalities which, in turn, created a fertile soil for authoritarian governments. The course will begin by analysing Latin America on the cusp between independence and the early independent period, a time when the region was characterised by the constitutionalism of political leaders and the personal power of Caudillos. The most relevant elements of Latin America’s political history will be analysed throughout the course: from inter-war nationalism to the military rule of the 1960s and 1970s to the democratisation wave of the 1980s to the return of populism.

Given the current political context in Latin America, where populism and authoritarianism, are making a decisive comeback, this course will not only serve to shed light on the region’s past but also provide students with the necessary critical tools to decipher future challenges looming on the region’s horizon.

PROFESSOR

Carlo Edoardo Altamura
edoardo.altamura@graduateinstitute.ch
Office: MdP P2-519
Office hours
Wednesdays: 11-12 (P2-519) or by appointment

ASSISTANT

Frank Afari
Frank.afari@graduateinstitute.ch
Office hours
Syllabus

This course is a comparative examination of the political and economic evolution of Latin America during the last two centuries.

The active participation of students in class discussion is expected, and will be an important element in the determination of their final grade.

The main course assignment is an individual research paper which will count for 50% of the grade. The term paper should be maximum 8'000 words long (Garamond, 12-point font, double-spaced), with proper citations and a bibliography (not included in the word count). The paper should put forth a cogent argument or examine analytically an issue, rather than summarize the literature. The paper may discuss any particular aspect of the course themes. The topic of the research paper should be thematic. If the student opts for a case-study, the paper must nonetheless cast the analysis against thematic questions and comparatively in relation to other instances.

Please make an appointment with me by email if you have questions or would like to discuss research topics.

The completed term paper is due 10 days after the course’s last session (29.05.2020).

Finally, each student shall submit two reaction papers (1’000 words max., Garamond, 12-point font, double spaced) for any classes of the students choosing. The paper is due before each class. In the first part of the paper the student shall summarise the literature while, in the second part, they shall critically evaluate some specific aspects.

Assessment

The overall grade received in this class will be distributed as follows:

- Research paper: 50%
- Reaction papers (2): 30%
- Class participation: 20%

Readings

For each session, there will be a set of required readings. Students are expected to familiarize themselves ahead of the class with all the readings and be prepared to discuss them critically in the context of the session’s scheduled issues and the course’s overall themes.
18.02: Session One_ Introduction to the Course: Democratic and Authoritarian Traditions in Latin America

Issues:
• Why addressing Latin American authoritarianism?
• What role has the colonial heritage played in Latin American authoritarianism?
• What are the characteristics of authoritarianism and democracy in Latin America?

Readings:

03.03: Session Two_ Independence, State Building and Caudillismo

Issues:
• What are the characteristics of state building in Latin America?
• What is Caudillismo and what role have Caudillos played in Latin American post-independence years?
• What accounts for the persistence of authoritarianism in Latin America in the 19th century?

Readings:
• Hillel David Soifer, State Building in Latin America, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, Chapter 1.

17.03: Session Three_ Response to External Shocks: Nationalism During the Interwar Period

Issues:
• How did domestic political structures react to external shocks?
• How the Great Depression affected economic structures in Latin America?
• Which regional similarities and differences can be identified?

Readings:
31.03: Session Four_ The New Golden Age of Authoritarianism (1960s, 1970s)

Issues:
• What caused the rise of authoritarian regimes in the 1960s and 1970s?
• What were the characteristics of newly-formed authoritarian regimes?
• How did the Cold War affect the political (in)stability of the region?

Readings:

21.04: Session Five_ International Finance, Human Rights and Authoritarian Regimes

Issues:
• What attitude did the international financial community have towards the new regimes?
• How did private actors react to human rights violations?
• Should private actor be held accountable for human right violations?

Readings:

05.05: Session Six_ Economic Crisis, Democratisation and Liberalisation

Issues:
• What are the reasons behind the crisis of 1982?
• How did authoritarian regimes respond to the crisis?
• What role did the crisis play in the third wave of democratisation?

Readings:
• Chappell Lawson, “Mexico’s Unfinished Transition: Democratization and Authoritarian Enclaves in Mexico”, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 16 (2), 2000, 267-287.

19.05: Session Seven_ From Chavez to Bolsonaro

Issues:
• What is the “Pink Tide” and under which conditions did it emerge?
• What is the legacy of left-wing politics in the region?
• Which political and economic dynamics are currently at play in Latin America?

Readings:

Selected Bibliography (Contact me for further suggestions)