

[J. Pablo Silva](#)

Fall Semester 2020

Modern Latin America: Description and Learning Goals

Description

A survey of the modern history of Latin America. The course covers the Independence period (1810-1826), the post-independence period of nation building (1825-75), the subsequent age of export booms and busts (1860-1930), Latin America's experiments with national development during the crisis in the global system (1920-1955), and Latin America in the Cold War (1947-1989).

In the course, we will focus on the difficulty Latin American countries have had in creating liberal political systems. As a result we will cover issues such as the rule of law, free trade, democracy and individual rights. Three major themes will recur through the course:

- Political Instability
- Problems of Economic Development
- Power Relations Across Divisions of Race and Class

Although every Latin American country has its own history, this course will emphasize the similarities more than the differences. These countries are blessed (and cursed) with complex, multicultural societies. We cannot look at every facet of such complex cultures nor account for all the changes that have taken place. The major themes will simply provide a road map for understanding the problems and turning points of modern Latin American history. With this road map, students will be prepared to understand the particular history of individual Latin American nations should they choose to undertake further study of the region.

The course will be taught remotely, primarily through discussion on the Webex platform. As a student in the course, you will be placed into one of two discussion groups scheduled daily at either 1 pm or 2 pm. You are responsible for doing the reading ahead of class and preparing responses to the discussion questions. Since the discussion groups should be small enough to allow extensive participation, you should expect to contribute in every class session.

About the Instructor

Instructor: Mr. J. Pablo Silva (he/him/his)

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:30

Thursdays 11-12 (and by appointment)

Virtual Office: [Webex Room 927 264 243](#)

Email: silvajp@grinnell.edu

Phone: [\(641\) 269-4886](tel:(641)269-4886)

Learning Goals For the Course

Learning Related to Latin America. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

Explain the basic periodization of Modern Latin American History

Explain how and why conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives affected Latin American nations during the nineteenth century

Explain how the Transportation Revolution, the Great Depression, and the Cold War affected Latin America

Skills Related to Historical Analysis. By the end of the semester, you should have refined your ability to:

Examine primary sources critically and in context in order to use them to provide evidence for arguments

Identify how historical arguments are framed within an existing historiography

Evaluate historical arguments, how they make use of evidence and make their case

Writing Skills. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

Create an argument in response to an historical debate

Structure an introduction for a longer paper

Assemble a longer paper out of shorter segments

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Modern Latin America: Syllabus of Readings

Week 1. Introduction and Overview

Monday, 31 August

What is Latin America?

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Welcome" and "Encounter."

Tuesday, 1 September

How was Latin America colonized and how did it become independent?

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Colonial Crucible" and "Independence."

Wednesday, 2 September

What are the contours of Latin America's 19th Century?

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Postcolonial Blues" and "Progress."

Thursday, 3 September

What are the contours of Latin America's 20th Century?

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Neocolonialism" and "Nationalism."

Friday, 4 September

What are the contours of Latin America's 20th Century?

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, "Revolution" and "Reaction."

Sunday, 6 September

Research Paper Project: [Debate Assignment](#) Due at noon.

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Week 2. Independence and the Problem of Recreating Order

Monday, 7 September

How Did Latin American Independence Happen? One View:

Andrews, "[Spanish American Independence.](#)"

Tuesday, 8 September

How Did Latin American Independence Happen? Another View:

Rodriguez, "The Process of Spanish American Independence," on e-reserve.

Wednesday, 9 September

How did Independence give rise to the age of Caudillos? Mexico

Wasserman, 3-90.

Thursday, 10 September

Why was the Liberal/Conservative division so hard to bridge?

Documents on Mexican Liberals and Conservatives, on e-reserve.

Friday, 11 September

How did the turmoil of the Post-Independence Period change Liberalism in Latin America?

Excerpts from Sarmiento and Alberdi on Blackboard

Sunday, 13 September

Research Paper Project: [Second Debate Assignment](#) Due at noon.

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Week 3. Export Booms and the Rise of Liberal Oligarchies

Monday, 14 September

MAP QUIZ

How did Mexico Recover?

Wasserman, pp. 93-157.

Tuesday, 15 September

How did Mexico Boom?

Wasserman, pp. 161-232.

Wednesday, 16 September

How did Latin America Boom?

Glade, on e-reserve.

Skim Chasteen, "Progress."

Thursday, 17 September

What was the Downside? I

Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, Chaps. 1-4.

Skim Chasteen, "Neocolonialism."

Friday, 18 September

What was the Downside? II

Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, Chaps. 5-7.

Sunday, 20 September

Research Paper Project: [Bibliography Assignment](#) Due at noon.

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Week 4. The Emergence of Nationalism

Monday, 21 September

MIDTERM

Tuesday, 22 September

How and Why did Latin America Change Direction? New Racial Thinking, I

Walsh, "[Creole Eugenics.](#)"

Skim Chasteen, "Nationalism."

Wednesday, 23 September

How and Why did Latin America Change Direction? Revolution
Knight, Mexican Revolution, 1-54.

Thursday, 24 September

How and Why did Latin America Change Direction? Urbanization & Mobilization
Knight, Mexican Revolution, 55-103.

Friday, 25 September

How and Why did Latin America Change Direction? New Racial Thinking, II
"The Cosmic Race," on blackboard

Sunday, 27 September

Research Paper Project: [Source Assignment](#) Due at noon.

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Week 5. The Great Depression and the Emergence of Populist Developmentalism

Monday, 28 September

How and Why did Latin America Change Direction? The Great Depression
Kindleberger, on e-reserve.
Diaz-Alejandro, on e-reserve.

Tuesday, 29 September

Why Was the End of the Boom Such a Problem Economically? The Problem with Resource Booms
Barham & Coomes, ["The Amazon Rubber Boom."](#)

Wednesday, 30 September

What Effects Did the Depression Have?
Vergara, ["Chilean Workers and the Great Depression."](#)

Thursday, 1 October

Who were the Populists?
Wolfe, "Populism and Developmentalism," on e-reserve.
Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 104-116.

Friday, 2 October

What was Populism's Appeal?
Peronism documents, on blackboard.

Sunday, 4 October

Research Paper Project: [Argument Summary](#) Due at noon.

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Week 6. Latin America and the Early Cold War

Monday, 5 October

How did the Cold War Change Things? Round 1.

Bethell & Roxborough, [“Between the Second World War and the Cold War.”](#)

Tuesday, 6 October

How did the Cold War Change Things? Round 2.

Grow, “Guatemala, 1954.” e-reserve.

Wednesday, 7 October

In this Context, how could Cuba go Communist?

Wright, *Latin America in the era ...*, pp. xiii-38.

Thursday, 8 October

What was the impact on Cuba?

Herman, [“An Army of Educators.”](#)

Friday, 9 October

What was the broader impact of the Cuban Revolution? Revolutionary Movements

Wright, *Latin America in the era ...*, pp. 41-117.

Review Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, “Revolution.”

Sunday, 11 October

Research Paper Project: [Draft Introduction](#) Due at noon.

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Week 7. Latin America at the End of the Cold War

Monday, 12 October

What was the broader impact of the Cuban Revolution? The Reaction

Wright, *Latin America in the era ...*, pp. 187-225.

Review Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire*, “Reaction.”

Tuesday, 13 October

What was the impact of the Cuban Revolution? The Reaction in Central America

Review Wright, *Latin America in the era ...*, pp. 209-225.

Danner, [The Truth of El Mozote](#)

Wednesday, 14 October

What has Happened Since?

Chasteen, “Neoliberalism and Beyond.”

Wright, “Major Political Trends Since 1990.”

Thursday, 15 October

How was Neoliberalism justified?

Mendoza, Montaner, and Vargas, *Guide to the Perfect Latin American Idiot*, excerpt on e-reserve

Packham and Ratliff, [“What Pinochet Did for Chile.”](#)

Friday, 16 October

What was the reaction to Neoliberalism?

Levitsky and Roberts, "[Latin America's 'Left Turn.'](#)"

We will also discuss preparation for the Final Exam.

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Tuesday, 20 October

Final Exam at 1 p.m.

Your Final Draft is due on 21 October. Remember to include a title page.

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Modern Latin America: Course Textbooks

Required Books

Burns, *The Poverty of Progress* (California, 1984)

Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire* (Norton, 2016)

Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (Oxford, 2016)

Wasserman, *Everyday Life in Mexico* (New Mexico, 2000)

Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Praeger, 2018)

Recommended Books

The Craft of Research (Chicago, Second or Third Edition)

Williams, *Style* (Chicago, 1995)

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Modern Latin America: Assignments

Map Quiz (14 September), Midterm (21 September), Final (20 October), a [Research Paper](#), and various short assignments/quizzes. Several of these assignments represent different stages of the paper.

Turn in assignments late at your own risk. If assignments are handed in late, they probably won't get reviewed in time to help you and that will make it that much harder to finish the next assignment. You know the due dates and assignments well ahead of time. Plan accordingly.

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Modern Latin America: Research Paper

Stage 1: Identify a debate for your paper assignment. I want you to write a research paper about a specific topic in Modern Latin American history. To do that, I first want you to identify a debate in the historical literature on Modern Latin American history that looks interesting to you. You will need to identify a debate that has multiple sources (at this stage, at least five) that are accessible to you. If you don't know where to start looking, **come see me as soon as possible.** This assignment will be due on 6 September. See [the assignment sheet](#).

Stage 2: Describe your debate a little more formally. At this point, you will need to look in more detail at some of your sources so that you can describe your debate more formally. In terms of concrete work for this stage, you only have to do one thing: write a paper that describes your topic and explains why it is worth a paper. Due Sunday, 13 September. See [the assignment sheet](#).

Stage 3: Bibliography. Describe the secondary and primary works that you currently believe are the most relevant to your topic. Explain why you think they are relevant. Your paper should be 2-3 pages in length and should be accompanied by a title page. It is due 20 September. See [the assignment sheet](#) for more details.

Stage 4: Source Analysis. Analyze one of the main arguments that scholars have made on your topic. Due 27 September. See [the assignment sheet](#) for more details.

Stage 5: Argument. In two pages, summarize your argument. What is your main claim and how can you support that claim? It is due 4 October. See [the assignment sheet](#) for more details.

Stage 6: Introduction. Write a clear introduction for your paper. See [the assignment sheet](#) for more details. Your introduction should be 1-2 pages in length and should be accompanied by a title page. It is due 11 October.

Stage 7: Final Draft. This might appear self-explanatory, but I want you to do some specific things. Your [final version](#) is due on October 21.

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Modern Latin America: Grading

I will determine grades on the basis of the paper, the midterm, the final, map quiz, class participation, and in-class quizzes. The approximate breakdown is as follows: paper (25%), the midterm (12%), the final(25%), map quiz (3%), class participation (30%), and in-class quizzes (5%).

These components will each receive a letter grade (on a 4-point scale) and then a weighted average of the grades will determine the final grade. Quizzes will initially be graded check/check+/check- and then a combined letter grade will be determined.

Note: I really do grade on class participation. After every class, I will try to complete a checklist indicating who made a substantive contribution, who did not, and who was absent. Bonus point are sometimes awarded for particularly incisive, evidence-based commentary, but you will not be rewarded simply for talking frequently and at length. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute. On the other hand, if you do not participate regularly, you will get a lower grade. If you are absent frequently, you will get a lower grade. To avoid letting absences affect your grade, you may turn in a 500 word essay on the day's assignment *before* the class meets. You might want to model that essay on the research paper [source assignment](#).

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Modern Latin America: Course Policies and Resources

Class Sessions

The course will be taught remotely, primarily through discussion on the Webex platform. As a student in the course, you will be placed into one of two discussion groups scheduled daily at either 1 pm or 2 pm. You are responsible for doing the reading ahead of class and preparing responses to the discussion questions. Since the discussion groups should be small enough to allow extensive participation, **you should expect to contribute in every class session.**

Many of our discussions will touch on issues of race, class, and power differentials. These subject matters can inspire strong reactions and it is always possible that one of us may say, or seem to say, something that may be offensive. We should all try to remember that this is a learning environment and should approach each other with generosity. For the same reason, it is important for us all to refrain from the use of language that is intended to demean or offend. Our shared goal is to advance our knowledge of Latin American history.

For that reason, I ask that you confine all recordings of class discussion to your personal academic use. To facilitate honest discussion, it is important that you and your classmates know that what is said in class is not going to be distributed for non-academic purposes.

Although it is highly recommended that you participate in each assigned session, it is understood that you may occasionally miss class. Two or three absences over the course of 35 sessions should not affect your grade. But if you know ahead of time that you will likely miss more than that, you may want to consult with me. Note that Grinnell College offers alternative options to complete academic work for students who observe religious holy days. Please contact me within the first three weeks of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you.

Academic Resources

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, John Hirschman, who can be reached at [641-269-3089](tel:641-269-3089), and discuss your needs. Students should then notify me within the first few days of class so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations. You can find more information [here](#).

For your research paper, it may be a good idea to schedule a one-on-one library lab appointment early. That is done by filling out [this form](#). Alternatively, I am looking in to scheduling some group library sessions, I will hopefully have information on that within the first few days of the term.

If you are experiencing tech issues, please let me know as soon as possible so that we might figure out how to resolve them or find a work-around.

Academic Conventions to be Observed

Follow University of Chicago (17th Edition) style citations in footnotes or endnotes for all assignments in this course, unless the assignment directs you explicitly to do something else. You may consult the Chicago Manual of Style online through the Grinnell College Library catalog here (you will need to log into the Library through its proxy server): <https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.grinnell.idm.oclc.org/book/ed17/frontmatter/toc.html>. I will also post a short style guide on Blackboard for quick reference.

Grinnell College's [Academic Honesty policy](#) is located in the online Student Handbook. It is the College's expectation that students be aware of and meet the expectations expressed in this policy. For the purposes of this class, it is fine to help each other out of class by reading each others research paper assignments. In addition, in this course, it is my expectation that students may collaborate on basic preparation for class sessions and preparation for quizzes and exams, but not on the actual quizzes and exams. If you have questions about how a particular assignment relates to the College's policy, I will gladly consult with you in advance of the assignment's due date.

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