

Latin American in the XXI century: from the “left turn” to Maduro’s abduction

General overview of the course

In the first decade of the 21st century, Latin America experienced various changes in several aspects of its reality. In the political dimension, parties and candidates identified with the left came to power in different countries within a very short period of time, in all cases by electoral means. This trend had no similar precedent in the region and was identified as the “pink tide”. On the economic side, the emergence of China as a global power and the so-called “commodity boom” that it brought as a result, had a direct impact on most Latin American economies. South American countries, in particular, experienced continuous economic growth in both exports and Gross Domestic Product since 2003. This economic boom led to improvements in the quality of life of the population while generating resources that were channeled from the State into extensive social programs. As a result, a significant portion of the population that had previously lived in poverty was able to move up the ladder and become part of a thriving middle class.

During this course we will study in detail these transformations, their reasons, consequences and effects. In addition, we will discuss how several of these trends have been reversed in recent years: in many countries the right returned to power and the region's economic growth has declined. At the same time, the population's distrust of the political class has been on the rise and in some countries has even led to social outbursts with profound consequences and/or a drop-in support for democracy. Finally, to conclude, we will address some of the challenges posed to the region by the coronavirus pandemic and the emergence of a new radical right represented by leaders such as Bolsonaro, Bukele and Milei. In addition, we will discuss the implications of the new relationship between Latin America and the United States during the second Trump administration.

Evaluation

The final grade will be the result of three main components.

- Class participation: 20% of the final grade
- Final essay's outline: 30% of the final grade
- Final essay: 50% of the final grade

Class participation: students are expected to attend sessions and take part in the discussions about the topics and assigned readings.

Final essay's outline: around the middle of the course, students are expected to submit a two pages outline of their final essay. In the piece, they should describe the topic they will write about and the main points to be discussed in the document.

Final essay: At the end of the course, students should submit a final essay on a topic covered during the sessions. In the document, students should make reference to assigned readings and can include extra material. The final essay will be no longer than 8-10 pages (letter 12, 1.5 space) and should be sent by email to the professor the last day of classes before the final session.

Personal appointments

The professor is open to see students if they want to discuss topics covered during the course, have questions about the readings and/or want to discuss the topic of their final essay. Please send me an email or see me before or after class to make an appointment.

Main topics and assigned readings.

I. Latin American political and economic trends during the XX century, a general overview.

Session 1

No reading assigned

II. Latin American politics since the beginning of the XXI century:

Session 2

- Understanding the Left Turn

Cleary, Matthew (2006) "Explaining the Left's Resurgence" in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 4 pp. 35-49

Levitsky, Steven and Kenneth Roberts (eds.) (2011) *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. Leer "Introduction: Latin America's Left Turn: A framework for analysis" y "Conclusion: Democracy, Development, and the Left"

Session 3

- The left, populism and democracy

Castañeda, J. (2006) "Latin America's Left Turn" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, N°3, May-June.

Roberts, Kenneth (2007) "Latin America's populist revival" *SAIS Review*, Vol XXVII (1) pp 3-15

Session 4

Gray Molina, George (2010) "The Challenge of progressive change under Evo Morales" in Kurt Weyland, Raúl Madrid and Wendy Hunter (eds) *Leftist governments in Latin America*.

Success and shortcomings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellner, Steve (2010) *Rethinking Venezuelan Politics. Class, conflict, and the Chávez Phenomenon*. Boulder, CO: Rienner. Please read Chapter 1 "Introduction" y Chapter 5 "The four stages of the Chávez presidency".

III. Economic transformations in the region in the first decades of the XX century

Session 5

- The Commodity boom and economic growth.

ECLAC (2013) *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean 2013: Three decades of uneven and unstable growth*. Santiago de Chile. Please Read Chapter 1- Section II.

Moreno-Brid, Juan Carlos, e Igor Paunovic (2008) "What is New and what is Left of the

Economic Policies of the New Left Governments of Latin America?" in *International Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 37, N° 3, pp. 82-108.

Session 6

Svampa, Maristella (2018) "Latin American Development: perspectives and debates" in Tulia Falleti and Emilio Parrado (eds) *Latin America since the left turn*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

ECLAC (2015) *Latin America and the Caribbean and China. Towards a new era in economic cooperation*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations. Please read section III "Main features of trade and investments between Latin America and the Caribbean and China".

IV. Latin American (new?) society

Session 7

- Poverty reduction and the rise of middle class

Ferreira et. al. (2013) *Economic mobility and the rise of Latin American middle class*. Washington: World Bank. Please read "Overview"

Soares, Sergei (2012) "Bolsa Familia, its design, its impacts and possibilities for the future" Working paper N° 89. International Policy Centre for inclusive Growth.

V. The return of the right and the emergence of the extreme right

Session 8

Lupu, Noam (2016) "The end of the Kirchner era" in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 27, N° 2, p 35-49.

Avritzer, Leonardo (2017) "The Rousseff impeachment and the crisis of democracy in Brazil" in *Critical Policy Studies*. Vol 11, N° 3, p 352-357

Session 9

Torres Checa, Daniel (2024) "Who is the real Javier Milei" *Journal of Democracy*, online edition, October.

Oliveiros, Virginia and Emilia Simison (2023) "Why Did Argentina Just Elect a Radical Right-Wing Political Outsider?" *Journal of Democracy*, Election Watch, November.

Meléndez-Sánchez, Manuel (2021) "Latin America Erupts: Millennial Authoritarianism in El Salvador" *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 32, Number 3, July, pp. 19-32.

VI. The second Trump administration: the beginning of a new era?

Session 10

Maresca, Alberto (2026) "The impact of the second trump administration on Latin American foreign policy" *Gies Occasional Paper*

Mukharji, Aroop (2026) "The New Imperial Age. Trump, Venezuela, and a Century-Old Vision of American Power" *Foreign Affairs*, 9 of January