

HIST 399, Winter 2015

United States and Latin America: History, Myths, Stereotypes, and Challenges

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Course description

Hemispheric relations are a central aspect of economic, political, military, and foreign policies for both United States and Latin America. With varying levels of intensity those relations have been frequently conflictive, sometimes even violent. Terms such as imperialism, neo-colonialism, interventionism, dependency, and the like have been used to describe United States presence in Latin America. Recent political changes in Latin America (most notable, the spread of populist and left-leaning administrations) have signaled a new era of growing independence vis-à-vis the US; on the other hand, quite recent changes in US policies towards immigrants and the announcement of a new era of diplomatic and possibly commercial relations with Cuba may signal the beginning of a new relationship based on collaboration rather than conflict. Other issues (poverty, environmental degradation, trade inequality, drug traffic, and so forth) continue to affect this relationship, reinforcing patterns of confrontation, mutual suspicion, and antagonistic political agendas.

This course explores the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of the relationship between Latin America and the US from the early nineteenth century to the present. It seeks to analyze the motivations behind the different forms of US intervention in Latin America, the varied responses that such intervention has generated among different sectors of the Latin American population, the increasing and ambiguous forms of cultural interaction between the two regions, and the interplay between local, regional, and global factors in the development of intra-hemispheric relations.

Course policies

- Students are expected to attend lectures consistently. A passing grade will be hard to achieve without regular attendance. Students must also consistently read the assigned materials. Quizzes and exams will include questions from lectures and readings.
- The instructor will hold regular office hours every week. Students are encouraged to visit him to discuss pertinent issues or to get additional information about the course's themes, policies, and grades.
- A common form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Students must become familiar with the University of Oregon rules about this issue. More information will be offered at the appropriate time.

- A classroom atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and fairness will be enforced by the instructor. Students must behave in ways proper to an academic environment –thus, no eating, chatting, text-messaging, or newspaper reading are allowed during class. The use of electronic devices is not allowed during class. The only exception will be the use of a laptop computer or tablet to take lecture notes. If you plan to bring one you must seat in the front row and may not engage in internet browsing during class time. Failure to comply with this policy will force the instructor to ban the use of laptop computers and tablets in the classroom.
- Course incompletes will be granted only in cases of extreme need and only to those students that have an acceptable record of class attendance and get at least a C in the mid-term. Students that need an “incomplete” grade must make arrangements with the instructor on or before the last week of classes.
- The final exam is scheduled for March 19. **DO NOT MAKE PLANS FOR AN EARLY DEPARTURE FOR SPRING BREAK. THERE WILL BE NO EARLY FINAL EXAM FOR THIS COURSE.**

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A basic knowledge of the history of the relations between the United States and Latin America, including key social and political processes such as US intervention, economic imperialism, Latin American nationalism, the Cold War, immigration, and others.
- How to think about history in terms of the political, economic, social, and cultural forces that shape its course
- Some of the most important controversies surrounding the history of US and Latin America during the period under study
- How to interpret primary sources
- How to formulate historical problems and avoid simplistic explanations to complex historical processes

Requirements

Attendance and participation are central components of the course. Students are expected to attend lectures, read the required materials, and participate in class discussions. Writing exercises will also constitute important elements of this seminar.

Participation: 10% of the final grade will be determined by the student’s attendance and his/her degree and quality of participation in class, particularly during discussion sessions.

Reaction papers: Students will write 3 short essays (2-3 pages each) that will consist of contextualized analyses of one or more documents related to our course topics. These papers will be used as a basis for class- and group-discussion sessions (as listed on the schedule below). More details will be offered later. Each of these papers will be worth 10% of the final grade (30% total).

Midterm exam: 20% of the final grade

Final exam: 40% of the final grade. The final exam will include all the topics and materials covered in the class.

Required Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the UO Bookstore. They are also on reserve at Knight Library:

Don Coerver and Linda Hall, *Tangled Destinies. Latin America & the United States* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote* (Vintage, 1994).

In addition, a number of primary sources and other materials are posted on Blackboard (marked below as BB).

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week 1

January 5 Introduction: Myths and Stereotypes in US and Latin America relations.
January 7 Video: “Gringo in Mañanaland”

Week 2

January 12 The Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny
January 14 The Mexican American War

Readings: Coerver and Hall, ch. 1; docs. 1 (“The Monroe Doctrine”), 2 (“Texas, Mexico and Manifest Destiny”), 3 (“President Polk’s War Message to Congress”), and 4 (“The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” (BB)

Week 3

January 19 No class. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday
January 21 Cuba, the US, and the Spanish-American War

Readings: Perez, *The War of 1898*, all; docs. 5 (“The Character of the United States”) and 6 (“The Decision to Act against Spain”) (BB)

Week 4

January 26 Dollar diplomacy and Banana Republics
 January 28 First reaction paper due. Discussion.

Readings: Coerver and Hall, chs. 2 and 3; docs. 7 (“The Platt Amendment”), 8 (“I Took Final Action in 1903”), and 9 (“The Roosevelt Corollary and the Monroe Doctrine”) (BB)

Week 4

February 2 Latin American Responses: Nationalism and anti-Imperialism (1900-1930)
 February 4 Good Neighbors? The Roosevelt Administration, Latin America, and World War II

Readings: Coerver and Hall, ch. 4; docs. 10 (“A Latin American Doctrine of Anti-Imperialism”), 11 (“With Sandino in Nicaragua”), and 12 (“The Good Neighbor Policy”) (BB)

Week 5

February 9 The Cold War in Latin America. Reform and intervention in Guatemala.
 February 11 Midterm exam.

Readings: Coerver and Hall, pp. 106-116; docs. 13 (“The Rio Treaty”), 14 (“The Menace of Communism”), and 15 (“A Realist View of Latin America”) (BB)

Week 6

February 16 The Cuban Revolution and the US, part I
 February 18 The Cuban Revolution and the US, part II

Readings: Coerver and Hall, pp. 116-128; Perez, “Fear and Loathing of Fidel Castro” (BB)

Week 7

February 23 Containing Communism: Alliance for Progress, Military Alliances, and CIA intervention. Second reaction paper due.

February 25 From Allende’s Socialism to Pinochet Dictatorship: US intervention in Chile. Guest lecture by Professor Reuben Zahler

Readings: Coerver and Hall, pp. 129-142; Kornbluh, “Destabilizing Democracy” (BB); docs. 16 (“The Alliance for Progress”), and 17 (“The United States and Human Rights in Chile”) (BB)

Week 8

March 2 US in Central America: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the 1970s and 1980s
 March 4 Video and discussion

Readings: Coerver and Hall, pp. 142-176; Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote*, all.

Week 9

March 9 Third reaction paper due. Discussion of Danner.
 March 11 NAFTA and beyond: free trade, drugs, immigration, and the challenges of democracy

Readings: Coerver and Hall, chs. 7, 8, 9; docs. 18 (“The North American Free Trade Agreement”), and 19 (“The Drug War: ‘Plan Colombia’”) (BB)

Week 10

March 16 The Obama administration: a new era for hemispheric relations?

Readings: Docs. 20 (“Remarks by President Obama in Santiago de Chile, March 2011”) and 21 (“Remarks on Cuba Policy Changes, December 2014”) (BB)

March 18 Review for final exam.

Final Exam: Thursday, March 19, 14:45