

HIST 483, Winter 2022

Revolutions in Modern Latin America

Instructor: Carlos Aguirre

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Remote office hours (via zoom, appointment needed): Thursdays, 10-12 am.

Description of the course

Social revolutions constitute exceptional and dramatic events in human history. They bring about radical and sweeping transformations of the existing political, social, economic, and cultural orders. The three most conspicuous Latin American revolutions of the 20th century (Mexico 1910, Cuba 1959, and Nicaragua 1979) had a tremendous impact not just within those countries and the Latin American region, but on hemispheric relations and world politics as well. Using a comparative perspective, this course will discuss the causes, course, actors, and outcome of those three Latin American revolutions, seeking to highlight their peculiarities and paying close attention to the political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of revolutionary transformation. In addition, we will also study the case of Peru, including the “peculiar” military Revolution of 1968 and the failed project of a Maoist revolution carried on by the Shining Path, trying to understand the reasons behind its emergence and ultimate failure. As a way of conclusion, we will address the role and legacy of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence in twentieth-century Latin America.

What you can expect to learn in this course

- A historical and comparative understanding of the nature and effects of revolutions
- An in-depth knowledge about the origins, development, and outcome of the three most important revolutionary experiences in twentieth-century Latin America (Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua)
- How to think about revolutions in history in terms of the political, economic, ideological, social, and cultural forces that shape them
- The construction of revolutionary myths and narratives and the way they shape our understanding of revolutions
- The role of violence in the shaping of Latin American societies
- Some of the most important controversies surrounding the study of revolutions in Latin American history

Requirements

1. Attendance and participation: 10%.
2. Three in-class primary source analysis exercises (10% each, 30% total). More information will be offered in class.
3. One book review (10%). More information will be offered in class.

4. Midterm exam: 20%.
5. Final exam: 30%

Course policies

Note: Due to the current situation related to the Covid-19 pandemic, every effort will be made to keep a consistent but flexible approach in enforcing these rules.

1. Class attendance is very important. A passing grade will be difficult to achieve without attending lectures. 10% of the grade will be based on the student's record of attendance and participation in class discussions.
2. Students must read the assigned materials and come to class prepared to participate in discussions.
3. Late assignments will be penalized with one letter grade per day.
4. Office hours will be held remotely, using zoom. Students may, in addition, send email to the instructor for very specific questions.
5. 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.
6. An atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and fairness will be enforced during our class meetings. Students must behave in ways proper to an academic environment.
7. Course incompletes will be granted only in cases of extreme need. Students that need an "incomplete" grade must make arrangements with the instructor on or before the last week of classes.
8. Students must follow UO rules regarding the Covid pandemic.

Required Readings

All required readings will be available electronically through Canvas

Outline of lectures

Week 1

01/03 Introduction

01/05 Theorizing Revolutions. Latin American Revolutions in Comparative Perspective

Reading:

Tiruneh, "Social Revolutions: Their Causes, Patterns, and Phases."

Week 2

01/10 Pre-Revolutionary Mexico: Land, Capitalist Development, and Authoritarian Rule

01/12 The Revolutionary Decade (1910-1920)

Readings:
 Gilly, "Capitalism Development."
 Knight, "Revolutionary Project."
 Document 1, "Plan de Ayala."

Week 3

01/17 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Day. No class.
 01/19 The Post-Revolutionary Period: Institutionalization and Consolidation (1920-1940)
 / Primary Source Analysis # 1

Readings:
 Knight, "Cardenismo."
 Benjamin, "La Revolución."

Week 4

01/24 José Carlos Mariátegui and Socialist Revolution in Peru
 01/26 Pre-Revolutionary Cuba: Social Inequalities, US domination, and the Batista dictatorship

Readings:
 Mariátegui, "Selected Writings."
 Perez, "The Eclipse of Old Cuba."

Week 5

01/31 The Making of a Revolution: Ideology, Actors, and Armed Struggle
 02/02 Socialism or Death: The Revolution in Power, 1959-1970

Readings:
 Sweig, "Inside the Cuban Revolution."
 Chomsky, "Experiments with Socialism."
 Document 2, "Cuba is a Socialist Nation"

Week 6

02/07 Midterm exam
 02/09 The Revolution Survives, 1970 to the Present

Reading:
 Gordy, "What Would Che Say?"

Week 7

02/14 Che Guevara and the Theory of Guerrilla Warfare

02/16 Somoza Rule, Popular Mobilization, and the Sandinista Victory in Nicaragua /
Primary Source Analysis # 2

Readings:

Document 3, Che Guevara, "Guerrilla Warfare. A Method."

Childs, "Che Guevara's Foco Theory."

Zimmermann, *Sandinista*, all

Week 8

02/21 The US, the Contras, and the Demise of the Sandinista Revolution

02/22 The "Peculiar Revolution" in Peru (1968-1975)

Readings:

Document 4, "The Fear of Communism in Central America."

Klaren, "The Military Revolution of 1968."

Week 9

02/28 Maoism in the Andes: The Origins of the Shining Path.

03/02 Time of Fear: Violence and Repression in Peru during Shining Path's "People's War" / Primary Source Analysis # 3

Readings:

Carlos Iván Degregori, *How Difficult It Is to Be God*, all.

Document 5, "The People's War"

Week 10

03/07 / Documentary, "Peru, State of Fear" / Book review due.

03/09 Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Violence in Twentieth-Century Latin America: Balance and Discussion / Review for Final Exam

Reading:

Grandin, "Living in Revolutionary Time."

Final exam: Thursday, March 17, 10:15-12:15