POLISCI 268:
THE US & LATIN AMERICA FROM THE COLONIAL ERA TO THE PRESENT:
A CRITICAL SURVEY
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-10:45am, Ingraham 222
Office Hours: Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, or by appointment
8121 Social Science, barrett@wisc.edu, tel: 608.262.0854

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course provides a critical examination of US-Latin American relations from the colonial era to the present, tracing the emergence and evolution of the United States as a hemispheric and global power and its political and economic impact on Latin America. It analyses the place of the Western Hemisphere and the rise of US hegemony in the context of the long-term global competition for power that predates the conquest of the New World by European imperial powers. The seminar proceeds chronologically, highlighting major episodes in the evolving relationship between the United States and the Western Hemisphere, weaving in a discussion of developments at the global level as well as internal to the US. These episodes include the imperial scramble for the New World leading up to independence, the westward and southern expansion of the US following independence, the emergence of the US as a regional and world power in the late nineteenth century, its rise to global dominance by the mid-twentieth century, the Cold War era, and the post-Cold War era through the present. During the latter period, particular attention will be devoted to such issues as the ascendency of neoliberalism, migration, and the drug trade. Throughout, primary attention will be focused on US relations with Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, but other Latin American countries will figure prominently during certain episodes.

COURSE GOALS:
1. Gain an understanding of the historical roots of US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere as part of a larger history of European imperial rivalry that began in the 15th century and its central importance to the eventual rise of the US as a global power in the 20th century.
2. Acquire an awareness of the complex interplay of domestic and international developments in the evolution of US relations with the Western Hemisphere, such as the expansion of slavery.
3. Understand the central role that race has played in US foreign policy toward Latin America and its impact on marginalized populations both in the US and Latin America, in particular the peoples of the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America and their descendants, as well as African slaves and their descendants.
4. Grasp the profound links between historical and contemporary social, political, and economic events, and in the process come to see oneself and others as both products and agents of history.
5. Develop the capacity and the disposition to view historical and contemporary events through a critical, analytical lens and thereby to investigate, interpret, and engage the complex world around us more effectively.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

1. **Credits:** 3. This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

2. **Read the syllabus:** The syllabus is deliberately very detailed in order to eliminate any confusion about course expectations, requirements, and assignments. Therefore, be sure to read it thoroughly and carefully, and refer to it regularly throughout the semester.

3. **Class Participation:** This seminar is designed to take advantage of a small class size to have what amounts to a semester-long conversation about the history of US-Latin American relations. Class will consist of a combination of lecture and group discussion. Active student participation is therefore a must. Given that for most students, this will be your first exposure to much of the material discussed in the course, no one is expected to be an expert, and should therefore not feel reluctant to speak up and participate. As explained in more detail below, students are expected to come prepared to participate actively in each class session.

4. **Reading:** This is a moderately reading-intensive course. Note, however, that you do not have a research paper requirement. Your key focus is therefore engagement with the assigned readings, on which all of your assignments will depend. In reading the material, it is essential that you take an active (as opposed to a passive) approach. In other words, while reading, ask yourself: what are the central points, claims, or arguments that the author is making. Take a cue from the title and introduction of the article or chapter, as well as the section subheadings, which you should review before starting to read. Well organized writing has a clearly stated thesis and is divided into sections and paragraphs so that it makes it easier for the reader to understand the author’s claims and arguments. Use these as an outline for your notes. Active reading is an essential skill. The memos (see below) should serve as a means to adopting this kind of active approach to reading, because the task of getting at the core of a reading will force you both to think about and articulate its essential points. The reading amounts to an average of 75 pages per week, although it will be weighted to Tuesday, since you will have more time to prepare for Tuesday than for Thursday.

5. **Electronic Devices:** Students will be asked to turn off their electronic devices, including laptops, ipads, and cell phones. There is now ample research demonstrating that students learn better in classes when they are not distracted by their cell phones, emails, social media accounts, etc. Therefore, you need to switch off or silence these devices. If you have an emergency that requires your attention, please get my attention first and then take the appropriate action. To take class notes please bring a note pad and a pen or pencil.
Research also demonstrates that students learn better taking notes in this manner than on a personal computer. Exceptions will be made for students who have a documented need to use electronic note-taking devices.

6. **Academic Integrity**: Finally, students are expected to uphold the core values of academic integrity, which include honesty, trust, fairness, respect & responsibility. A fuller explanation of the University’s policies on academic integrity and the Academic Misconduct Process is available here: http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
All of the course requirements are intended to be mutually reinforcing; that is, completing each one will make it easier to complete the others. Thus, the more you stay on top of the assignments, the easier and more rewarding you will find the course; conversely, the more you fall behind, the more difficult and frustrating and hence less enjoyable it will be for you and everyone else.

1. **Attendance** (10%): Together with the reading, class attendance is key to your success in this course. The class will largely follow a loose lecture format, which will include information beyond that covered in the reading. I will also be asking lots of questions drawn from the reading. You will be allowed one missed class during the semester without it affecting your attendance grade. You are also required to be in class on time. Persistent tardiness will be counted as an absence.

2. **General Participation** (10%): Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion. Here, it bears repeating that you should not feel reluctant to speak up and participate, including – if not especially – when you are confused or have questions about the material. Indeed, questions are of enormous help to both other students as well as the teacher, because they offer an opportunity to stimulate discussion as well as to gauge the class’ understanding of the material. As mentioned above, you should also come prepared to answer the questions that I will be raising. Below are more specific participation guidelines and their corresponding grades.

**Participation Grade Guidelines:**
- **A**: This student never misses class, always completes assigned readings, and comes to class prepared to answer all questions, think carefully, and seriously engage the reading and other materials, making connections between readings and across topics. The student is willing to pose interesting questions of his or her own or take risks by answering difficult questions. The student avoids dominating discussion, instead participating mindfully in discussion with other students, considering their ideas and responding thoughtfully and respectfully. The student helps to create a sense of a shared conversation in the group as a whole.
- **AB**: This student does most of what an A student does, but may be slightly deficient or less consistent than an A student in one or more of the areas mentioned above.
- **B**: This student participates often, but even less consistently or effectively than the AB student. The student may attend every class and do all the readings but remains silent on more than a few occasions.
- **BC**: This student may be a frequent but superficial discussion participant. The student may let shyness keep him/her from participating as fully as s/he should.
At times the student may seem not to have done the readings, though s/he usually comes prepared.
e. **C**: This student is intermittently prepared for class, sometimes showing serious engagement with or understanding of the material, but more often remaining silent or offering a superficial understanding.
f. **D**: This student very rarely participates, and only in superficial ways, and/or has missed numerous classes.
g. **F**: This student has missed quite a few classes and/or attends most classes but never participates.

3. **Memos** (27.5%): You are required to write short memos (½ page in length, typed, single-spaced, 12-point font, Times, 1” margins) on the readings for each class session. The memos represent more than a quarter of your final grade. They should reflect a serious analytical engagement with the reading by zeroing in on the central issues it raises and/or claims it makes. More specifically, the memos should address the following questions: (a) what is the main take-home lesson, claim, or argument of the reading?; (b) what evidence does the author use to support her/his claim or argument?; (c) what connections can you draw between the reading and the events, themes, or concepts addressed earlier in the course? The memos will not only enable you to engage the reading in an active and purposeful manner; they will also discipline you to keep up and help you to prepare for class discussion and the exams. The memos are to be submitted by email to me at barrett@wisc.edu by 10pm the evening before each class. The memos will be graded for both content and composition and late assignments will not receive credit.

4. **Three Take-home Essay Exams** (17.5%; 17.5%; 17.5%): The aim of the exams is to measure your grasp of the driving forces behind US policy toward the Western Hemisphere and its impact on Latin America. The exams will ask you to write one essay (5 pages in length) chosen from 1-3 possible questions. Essays should be submitted by email to me at barrett@wisc.edu by the dates and times indicated below. Late exams will be docked a full letter grade for each day that they are late.

GRADING SCALE: A (93-100); AB (88-92); B (83-87); BC (78-82); C (70-77); D (60-69); F (59 or lower)

REQUIRED READINGS:
- For purchase:
  - Loveman, Brian, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776*
- Readings posted at Learn@UW

COURSE SCHEDULE:

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW
Thursday, 9/6
THE EUROPEAN CONQUEST OF THE AMERICAS
Tuesday, 9/11
Required Reading:
• Bender, Thomas, *A Nation among Nations: America’s Place in the World*, chapter 1, pp.15-45, 53-60 [skim pp.45-53]
Required film:

THE AGE OF REVOLUTION & THE MONROE DOCTRINE
Thursday, 9/13
Required Reading:
• Bender, Thomas, *A Nation among Nations*, pp.61-93.
Required Film:
• “The Birth, Spread, and Culmination of Imperialism in North America”
Further Reading:

THE MONROE DOCTRINE, MANIFEST DESTINY & POST-CIVIL WAR EXPANSION
Tuesday, 9/18
Required Reading:

Thursday, 9/20
Required Reading:
• Loveman, Brian, *No Higher Law*, pp.65-86.
Further reading:

Tuesday, 9/25
Required Reading:
• Loveman, Brian, *No Higher Law*, pp.91-92, 97-116, 118-119, 121-149 [skim remainder]

Thursday, 9/27
Required Reading:

U.S. INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN AFTER 1898
Tuesday, 10/2
Required Reading:
• Loveman, Brian, *No Higher Law*, pp. 181-200, 207-221, 227-252 [skim remainder]
Further reading:
• LaFeber, Walter, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective*, pp.3-45.

HAND OUT: FIRST TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM (DUE: TUESDAY, 10/16, 5:00 PM)
THE COLD WAR & LATIN AMERICA
Thursday, 10/4
Required Reading:
- Loveman, Brian, No Higher Law, pp.253-283.

Required Film:
- Film on Guatemala: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gi4cG_DhD4k

Further reading:
- Benjamin, Jules, The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution, pp.118-166.

Tuesday, 10/9
Required Reading:
- Benjamin, Jules, The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution, chapter 8, pp.188-211.

Further reading:

COLD WAR IN LATIN AMERICA: CHILE
Thursday, 10/11
Required Reading:
- Kornbluh, Peter, The Pinochet File, chapter 1, pp.1-35.

Further reading:
- Kornbluh, Peter, The Pinochet File, Intro, pp.xi-xx

Tuesday, 10/16
Required Reading:
- Kornbluh, Peter, The Pinochet File, chapter 2, pp. 79-115.

Further reading:

5:00PM: FIRST TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM DUE
Thursday, 10/18
Required Reading:
- Kornbluh, Peter, The Pinochet File, chapter 4, pp.201-233.

Required Film:
- Film on Operation Condor

Further reading:
- Kornbluh, Peter, The Pinochet File, chapter 7 and Epilogue.

COLD WAR IN LATIN AMERICA: REVOLUTION & REACTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA
Tuesday, 10/23
Required Reading:

**Further reading:**

**Thursday, 10/25**

**Required Reading:**

**Required Film:**
- Film on El Salvador

**Further reading:**

**Tuesday, 10/30**

**Required Reading:**
- Grandin, Greg, *Empire’s Workshop*, pp.121-158.

**Further reading:**

**Recommended:**
- Film: “Sir, No Sir!”

**HAND OUT: SECOND TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM (DUE: TUESDAY, 11/13, 5:00 PM)**

**THE RISE OF NEOLIBERALISM**

**Thursday, 11/1**

**Required Reading:**
- Harvey, David, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Chapter 1, pp.5-38.

**Tuesday, 11/6**

**Required Reading:**

**Thursday, 11/8**

**Required Reading:**

**Tuesday, 11/13**

**Required Reading:**

**Further reading:**
- Biegon, Rubrick, “Trump’s ‘War on Trade’ in the Americas,” *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 05/25/2017

5:00PM: SECOND TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM DUE

MIGRATION
Thursday, 11/15
Required Reading:

Tuesday, 11/20
Required Reading:
- Bacon, David, Illegal People, pp.51-81.

THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)
Tuesday, 11/27
Required Reading:
- Bacon, David, Illegal People, pp.83-118.

Further reading:

DRUGS, SECURITY & REMILITARIZATION
Thursday, 11/29
Required Reading:
- Loveman, Brian, No Higher Law, pp.345-368.

Tuesday, 12/4
Required Reading:
- Stokes, Doug, America’s Other War: Terrorizing Colombia, chapters 4-5, pp. 57-79, 84-113.

Thursday, 12/6
Required Reading [subject to change]:
- Stokes, Doug, America’s Other War: Terrorizing Colombia, chapter 6, pp.122-134.
- Lesley Gill, “Another Chance for Peace in Colombia?”
- Renata Segura and Sabrina Stein, “One Year On, How is the Colombia Peace Process? Slow, With Lurking Spoilers”

Further reading:
• Maher, David, and Andrew Thomson, “The terror that underpins the ‘peace’: the political economy of Colombia’s paramilitary demobilisation process.” Critical Studies on Terrorism, 4:1, April 2011, pp.95-113.
• Peter Watt, “Obama, Calderón and the Mérida Initiative: Narcotrafficking and Neoliberalism in Mexico”

HAND OUT: FINAL TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM (DUE: THURSDAY, 12/20, 5:00 PM)

WRAP UP
Tuesday, 12/11
Required Reading:
• Loveman, Brian, No Higher Law, pp.369-404.
• Christy Thornton, “An Empire Upside Down,” NACLA Report on the Americas, 8/25/2017