

**Kenyon College**  
**Department of History**  
**History 121: Modern Latin America, 1810 to the Present**  
**Spring 2009 – MWF, 10:10-11:00**  
**William Suarez-Potts**

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Office Hours: MWF, 11-12  
Th, 3-5  
And by appointment

### **Description**

This course introduces the student to the history of contemporary Latin America. It begins with a brief review of the region's colonial antecedents, and then turns to an examination of how independent nation states evolved out of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. About a third of the course focuses on the nineteenth century, the remainder on the twentieth century. For the most part political events will provide the periodic framework of the course, but we shall also consider major economic, social and cultural developments that have produced the complex social formations that comprise contemporary Latin American societies across two continents. There are no pre-requisites for the class.

### **Requirements**

An important part of this course concerns the student's approach to the required readings. This class requires of the student that he or she read and comprehend critically the historians' works assigned. In addition, in class we shall sometimes examine closely primary documents. Lectures will alternate with discussions. It is therefore crucial that students attend all classes, and come to class prepared to discuss the relevant readings. (More than two unexcused absences by a student will affect negatively the student's final grade.) Normally the instructor will notify students what they should read before the next class meeting (the syllabus, too, indicates the weekly reading assignments, see below).

Class participation will account for 20% of the grade, and will be evaluated largely on the basis of student contributions to class discussions. Students will be expected to volunteer reasoned perspectives and reactions to the readings in class (and all reasonable perspectives and contributions are welcomed!), participate during in-class exercises, and discuss their reaction papers; students will be called on for their thoughtful reactions to the issues posed in the course.

Two reaction papers of approximately 3-4 pages in length will be due on, as designated below. Each reaction paper is worth 7.5% of the total grade. Too, there will be four reading comprehension quizzes scheduled throughout the term (see below). Each quiz is worth 5% of the semester grade, and will be based solely on the reading assignments of the preceding weeks (not yet quizzed, but inclusive of the assignment for

the week in which the quiz is given). There will also be one map quiz, also worth 5% of the semester grade. Students must be present in class on the date that the quiz is given to be able to take it; only excused absences will be recognized (for purposes of a makeup).

Lastly, there will be a midterm and a final exam, both closed-book. The exams will ask the student to address relevant readings as well as issues raised in class. The midterm exam is worth 10% of the semester grade and the final exam 30%. The midterm will be given on February 27 and will occupy most of the hour. The final exam will be given on May 5, at 8:30 a.m., and will be designed to occupy students for about two hours. Students must sit for the exams at the designated time and place.

Any student with a disability requiring a special accommodation should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester, as well as the appropriate college officer (Erin Salva, x5453, or [salvae@kenyon.edu](mailto:salvae@kenyon.edu)), so that accommodations can be made.

## Grading

Class Participation: 20%  
Quizzes: 20%  
Map Quiz: 5%  
Two Reaction Papers: 15%  
Midterm Exam: 10%  
Final Exam: 30%

Grading will follow the formula below:

|         |    |        |    |        |    |        |   |
|---------|----|--------|----|--------|----|--------|---|
| 97-100% | A+ | 87-89% | B+ | 77-79% | C+ | 65-69% | D |
| 93-96%  | A  | 83-86% | B  | 73-76% | C  | < 65%  | F |
| 90-92%  | A- | 80-82% | B- | 70-72% | C- |        |   |

Although grades will not be apportioned pursuant to a curve, grading will be meaningful: e.g., in order to achieve an 85 or 90, you will need to submit good or excellent work. Late papers will be subject to a penalty. If for a valid reason a student needs an extension, the student should contact the instructor no later than a week before the deadline to request it; granting an extension is at the discretion of the instructor. Plagiarism will be sanctioned in accord with the applicable college policy.

## Course Books

The following books are required reading for the course, and have been ordered through the bookstore:

1. Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith, *Modern Latin America* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. Domingo Sarmiento, *Facundo or, Civilization and Barbarism* (Penguin Books, 1998).

3. John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution*, (Princeton University Press, 1989).
4. Louis A. Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2006).
5. Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).
6. Robin Kirk, *More Terrible than Death* (Public Affairs Group, 2004).
7. Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon, *Opening Mexico* (Straus & Giroux, 2004)

Supplemental readings (normally to be read in class) will be made available during the semester.

### **Weekly Themes and Reading Assignments**

#### **Week 1 – Introduction**

Monday, Jan. 12: Introduction to the History of Latin America

Wednesday, Jan. 14: Principal Themes

Friday, Jan. 16: Colonial Social Formations

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 13-28

#### **Week 2 – Independence**

Monday, Jan. 19: Antecedents of Independence (and **Map Quiz**)

Wednesday, Jan. 21: The Struggle for Independence

Friday, Jan. 23: Discussion

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 29-36; Tutino, Chapters 3-5

#### **Week 3 – Post-Independence Instability, 1825-1850**

Monday, Jan. 26: Mexico

Wednesday, Jan. 28: Buenos Aires and the Fragmentation of the Rio de la Plata

Friday, Jan. 30: **Quiz 1**; and Discussion of Readings

Reading Assignment: Tutino, Chapter 6; Sarmiento, Chapters 1-5

#### **Week 4 – Consolidation of New States, 1850-1880**

Monday, Feb. 2: The Organization of Government, and New Economic Developments

Wednesday, Feb. 4: Political Changes in Mexico, Argentina and Brazil

Friday, Feb. 6: Discussion

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 139-53; Tutino, Chapter 7; Sarmiento, Chapters 6-12.

*First Reaction Paper is due on Feb. 6 at the beginning of class.*

### **Week 5 – A Neocolonial Order, 1880-1910?**

Monday, Feb. 9: The Atlantic Economy and Latin American Export Economies

Wednesday, Feb. 11: Liberalism and Oligarchic Rule

Friday, Feb. 13: **Quiz 2**; and the Cuban War of Independence

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 42-51; and Pérez, selections.

### **Week 6 – The Mexican Revolution, Depression and World Wars**

Monday, Feb. 16: The Mexican Revolution

Wednesday, Feb. 18: The Consequences of Depression and World War in Latin America

Friday, Feb. 20: Discussion of Readings

Reading Assignment: Tutino, Chapters 8-9; Skidmore and Smith, selections.

### **Week 7 – Possibilities after World War II**

Monday, February 23: Post-War Aspirations and Populists

Wednesday, February 25: Argentina and Brazil

Friday, February 27: **Midterm**

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, selections from Chapters 3 and 5.

### **[Spring Vacation]**

### **Week 8 – The Cold War and the Cuban Revolution**

Monday, March 16: The Cold War in the 1950s

Wednesday, March 18: The Cuban Revolution

Friday, March 20: **Quiz 3**; and Discussion (Reactions to the Cuban Revolution)

Reading Assignment: Pérez, Chapters 10, 11 and 12.

**Week 9 – Southern Cone Repression, 1964-1985**

Monday, March 23: The Brazilian Military Coup of 1964

Wednesday, March 25: The Chilean Military Coup of 1973

Friday, March 27: The Argentinean “Dirty War”

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 171-74; Wright, selections.

**Week 10 – The 1980s: Central American Civil Wars**

Monday, March 30: The Sandinista Revolution, the Contras, and the Peace Process

Wednesday, April 1: Civil War in El Salvador

Friday, April 3: Discussion

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, Chapter 11.

**Week 11 –The 1980s: the Lost Years**

Monday, April 6: Debt Crises and Economic Stagnation in Latin America

Wednesday, April 8: Andean Developments in the 1980s

Friday, April 10: Discussion

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, selections from Chapter 6 and 7; Kirk, selections.

**Week 12 – The Turn Away from Military Rule, 1983-2000**

Monday, April 13: The Argentinean Case

Wednesday, April 15: Brazilian and Chilean Transitions to Civilian Rule

Friday, April 17: **Quiz 4**; Discussion

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 175-79; Wright, selections

**Week 13 – The Post Cold-War Era**

Monday, April 20: The Mexican Transition to Democracy?

Wednesday, April 22: Colombia

Friday, April 24; Discussion of Reading

Reading Assignment: Skidmore and Smith, 274-295; Preston and Dillon, selections; and Kirk, selections

*Second Reaction Paper is due on April 24 at the beginning of class*

**Week 14 – Assessing Contemporary Latin America**

Monday, April 27: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since the Cold War

Wednesday, April 29: A Turn to the Left in Latin America?

Friday, May 1: Summation and Review

Reading Assignment: Preston and Dillon, selections