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Elizabethtown College
Fall Semester, 2009
Classroom: Nicarry 203
TTh: 11:00 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

PS 252 -- Latin American Society
(An Introduction to Latin American Studies)
4 credits

This syllabus is online in PDF with hyperlinks at <http://users.etown.edu/s/selchewa/home/PS252.pdf>.

Many *norteamericanos* still seem to regard Latin America largely through 20th century caricatures as an idyllic but violence-prone tropical paradise that was somehow to become the “Land of the Future,” but never did. It is a folkloric wellspring of colorful “native” costumes and occasional U.S. dance crazes, from the older bolero, tango, samba, and the cha-cha to the more recent lambada, salsa, bachata, and reggetón. Its inhabitants are of varying types, with the Frito Bandito, Pancho Villa, and would-be immigrants to the U.S. predominating in Mexico-- most of them with wide-brimmed *sombreros*. Banana republics and guerrillas appear in Central America, the eternally obstinate Fidel Castro still lives on in Cuba (and now the vituperative Hugo Chávez in Venezuela-- “¡ Ay, caramba!”), coffee-picker Juan Valdez and drug dealers populate Colombia (often misspelled Colum**bi**a), and the somber but environmentally conscious Indian piously follows nature’s rules in the Andes and the Amazon rain forest. Suspicious German immigrants, tango dancers, and *gauchos* thrive in the southern latitudes, and Carmen Miranda celebrates Carnival on Copacabana Beach in Rio. (A basket of fruit on her head, of course!) All have “hot blood” and eat hot food. (It stands to logic that these two facts must be related, right?) Somehow, the whole place “belongs” to the U.S., because it is our “backyard” and we have “responsibilities” there in our “sphere of influence.” Yet Latin America will always remain of lesser importance than the “real” countries we *gringos* actually care about elsewhere in the “more important” regions of the world, such as Europe, the Middle East, or Asia.

These outdated and negative stereotypes are becoming even more off the mark of reality as years go by. Yet the passing newspaper headlines and TV news sound bites of the moment on Latin America in the United States are very scarce and biased toward unrepresentative and sensationalist coverage as trends and events affect us. They provide little guidance to understanding the complicated and contradictory contrasts of a populous and vast region heavily weighed down by its past, yet pushed by quickening and multidimensional change. Even among lifelong scholars of the region, diverse and contradictory explanations for current problems contend for acceptance. Varied Latin American interpretations also compete with those of foreign observers from several other continents.

The first two sections of this course will examine the broad patterns of the past and present in the more than 30 independent countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, now with nearly 600 million inhabitants, twice the population of the U.S. This overview, with emphasis on Spanish America, will provide you with the opportunity to identify and analyze the major forces shaping Latin America as a whole, but also to begin to differentiate the situations of some of the countries as individual entities. Latin American society is the result of a blend over half a millennium of Hispanic, indigenous, African, and other immigrant ethnic and cultural heritages. Latin America differs considerably from the also diverse United States society. Comparison and contrast with the U.S. historical legacy, society, institutions, cultural values, issues, and worldview will be frequent during the semester, as will attention to the mutual effects of the United States and Latin America on each other. Both cultural areas have gone through hundreds of years of history in what was once called the “New World.”

Both cultural areas are offshoots of European societies and experienced colonization, independence, slavery, subjugation of indigenous inhabitants, assimilation of immigrants, ethnic issues, questions of national identity, and economic development under some form of capitalism. Why, then, have the two cultural areas developed so differently?

The final section of the course is devoted to an analysis of democracy in Latin America, which experienced its current “wave” of democratization in the mid to late 1980s and is now dealing with challenges to full consolidation of that form

of government. Many Latin Americans are seriously questioning whether democracy is the most suitable form of government for their countries. Because Latin America is the most Westernized and developed region of the “Third World” or “Global South,” those who seek the implantation of democracy in the Middle East or Afghanistan would do well to learn from its experiences. Further, Latin America (and especially Mexico) will influence the very nature of future American society far more than Iraq or Afghanistan will.

Students are responsible for completing the assigned readings and exercises before each class, and coming to class ready to discuss the topics. For these reasons, your regular class attendance and careful preparation before class will both maximize everybody’s learning and increase your own class response rate and participation grade. Do come to class prepared to respond to and discuss the topic of the day. Those who fall behind in assignments and cut class too often usually find that both their grade and their enjoyment of the course suffer. **More than three unexcused absences from class per semester will be considered excessive and will reduce your class participation grade.**

You are expected to abide by the **Elizabethtown College Pledge of Integrity** in all of your work, in and out of class. Do your own work. The pledge is online at <http://www.etown.edu/web/policies/academicPolicies.html#pledge>. **Plagiarism or copying from any source without quotation marks and citation will not be tolerated.** Be especially cautious about “following your sources too closely,” i.e., lifting occasional sentences, long phrases, or even whole paragraphs from your sources and using them as if they were your own, without quotation marks. This amounts to “academic shoplifting.” Please consult the booklet “Academic Integrity at Elizabethtown College” for further detailed information on the problems of plagiarism and how to avoid them. This booklet is the standard reference on the use of sources at Elizabethtown College, is used in all First Year Seminars, and is available in the Office of the Dean of College Life.

I edit and maintain a large Internet directory site in international studies that will help you in this and the other international courses you may take on campus-- the WWW Virtual Library: International Affairs Resources at <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/>. It is part of the global WWW Virtual Library system, is widely used and referenced around the world, and is very highly ranked on Google. You can find tips on doing quality academic research on the Internet at the top of the “Starter Tips for Internet Research” page at <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/starter.html>. Many sources for online research on contemporary Latin America are found at <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/latamer.html>, <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/countgen.html>, and <http://www2.etown.edu/vl/newsourc.html>, among many other pages.

Each student must attend one program on a Latin American topic during the semester on this campus (or perhaps elsewhere, if you wish), and write a one-page, typed, single-spaced, one-inch margined personal reaction sheet on the event attended. In this reaction sheet, discuss the event, its significance to and place in Latin American affairs generally, your own reactions to it, and what you learned and why from attending or participating. Turn in this sheet **within two weeks** after you attend the event, or it will not be valid for class credit! Note: If you attend additional events about Latin America and write them up, you can earn extra credit toward your class participation grade.

If you have a documented disability and need reasonable accommodations to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements, you must:

- 1.) Contact the Director of Disability Services, Dr. Kristin Sagun, in the Center for Student Success, BSC room 228 by calling 361-1227.
- 2.) Meet with me (the instructor) within two weeks of receiving a copy of the accommodation letter from Disability Services to discuss your accommodation needs and their implementation.

System of Grading:

First Exam	25%
Second Exam	25
Final Exam (<u>partially</u> comprehensive)	25
Reaction papers	15
Class participation	<u>10</u>
	100%

Texts

Richard S. Hillman, ed. Understanding Contemporary Latin America. 3rd edition. Lynn Rienner. 2005.
William Beezley and Colin MacLachlan. Latin America: The Peoples and their History. Thomson Wadsworth. 2nd edition. 2007.
Howard J. Wiarda. Dilemmas of Democracy in Latin America: Crises and Opportunity. Rowman & Littlefield. 2005.

NOTE: Handouts, Reaction Papers, and Websites will be assigned through the semester as relevant to our progress and to the flow of current events. Also **watch your e-mail** for suggestions and for short readings from me as topical online sources become available. Most of these messages will have hyperlinks that you can open directly if your e-mail client is enabled for HTML. It would be helpful to create an e-mail folder for this course.

Assignment Schedule

September 1 Introduction to the course and to each other

A Regional Overview, With Emphasis on Spanish America

September 3 Introduction to the region and its geography
Hillman— Chapters 1 and 2
Beezley and MacLachlan—Introduction and pp. 5 to 10
Wikipedia entry on Latin America http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_America

September 8, 10, 15, 17 The legacy of history
Hillman— Chapter 3
Beezley and MacLachlan—p.10 to end of Chapter 1

September 22, 24 Politics and the military
Hillman— Chapters 4 and 5
Beezley and MacLachlan—Chapter 2

September 29;
October 1 Economics
Hillman— Chapter 6
Beezley and MacLachlan—Chapters 3 and 4

October 6 FIRST EXAM

October 13 Latin America's international relations
Hillman— Chapter 7
Beezley and MacLachlan—Chapter 10

October 15, 20 Environment, population, and urbanization
Hillman— Chapter 8
Beezley and MacLachlan—Chapters 8 and 9

October 22, 27 Race, ethnicity, class, and nationalism
Hillman— Chapter 9
Beezley and MacLachlan—Chapter 5 to p. 127

D---- Denotes a greatly limited mastery of the subject matter, below acceptable standards and seriously flawed by poor organization, coverage suffering from large gaps and vague notions, few and/or weak sources, and poor writing and form.

F---- Indicates severely inadequate and unsatisfactory work that does not acceptably fulfill the minimum standards of the assignment, or work that has been plagiarized.