



CEL 394 – Latin American Political Thought Spring 2025

Course Information:

CEL 394 (Latin American Political Thought)

Meetings: MW 10:30 am– 11:45 am

Meeting Place: Tempe ED 236

Professor Information:

Dr. Eduardo Schmidt Passos

Office: Coor Hall

Office Hours: MW 12:00 – 1:15 PM (or by appointment)

Email: eschmid32@asu.edu

Course Description:

This course will engage students in a fascinating intellectual journey into the history of political thought in Latin America. The class will explore the colonial debate on the legal status of the natives (Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda), Latin American Founding Fathers' struggle for liberty and stability (Simón Bolívar, José Martí, and José Bonifácio), the post-independence liberalism and the abolition of slavery (Joaquim Nabuco and Domingo Sarmiento), the early 20th-century quest for identity in mixed-race societies and race theory (José Vasconcelos), and, finally, debate on modernization (Sérgio Buarque), Marxism, dependence theory liberation theology and its critiques, and the Latin American contribution to contemporary political ideas.

Course Objectives:

Latin America was the first part of the New World to be integrated into European-led globalization. However, the work of Latin American thinkers remains marginal to the canon of political thought. From this peripheral position, this course provides a historical overview of the various philosophical traditions in Latin American political thought in order to understand how they answered the perennial questions of human existence in society. It examines the response Latin American intellectuals provided for the fundamental problems of political theory and how their unique political reality shaped their answers. From the Colonial Period, the course addresses the debate on the political, religious, and legal consequences of the Conquest. Was the Conquest a just war? What is the legal status of the defeated natives? What is justice? What is human nature? During Latin American Independence, it emphasizes the Latin American Founding Fathers' struggle for liberty, unity, and stability. Why should Latin America dissolve its political ties with Europe? Which form of government should it adopt? How to avoid anarchy and ensure stability? After Independence, the leading intellectual concern was adapting European and American liberalism to a continent surrounded by disorder and injustice. How to balance liberal institutions with *caudillismo*? How could a limited government battle against historical

injustices such as slavery? What should be the relationship between religion and politics in the new nations? From the early 20th century, the class discusses the Latin American quest for identity and its unique contribution to political and race theory. How did Latin American thinkers theorize race? How did they overcome European and American “scientific racism” and developed a unique interpretation of their interracial identity? Finally, the students will also have the opportunity to learn about some 20th-century debates in Latin America, such as the influence of American constitutionalism, the impact of Marxism, the liberation theology and its critiques, the tension between its colonial roots and modernization. The course will engage the students in a fascinating intellectual journey into the history of political thought in Latin America to ask the following questions: To what extent does the Latin American Catholic colonial experience distinct from the American Protestant one? How its different intellectual roots shaped Latin American political thought? To what extent can we say that there is a Latin American tradition of political thought? What are the central problematics that animate this tradition? How does it participate or depart from the Western canon of political thought?

Global Communities, Societies and Individuals (GCSI)

This course fulfills the ASU **Global Communities, Societies and Individuals** General Studies requirement. Students completing a Social and Behavioral Sciences course will be able to:

1. describe historical, contemporary or transforming global issues through the perspective of specific individuals, communities or societies
2. analyze the interactions among social, political, economic or cultural systems across local, regional and global scales or spaces
3. articulate ways in which dimensions of difference such as race, gender, socio-economic status, religion, language or citizenship separately and together affect individuals and communities
4. communicate coherent arguments using evidence drawn from qualitative or quantitative sources

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand key debates in Latin American political thought from the colonial period, independence movements, and modern times.
2. Critically analyze the influence of European-led globalization on Latin America and its thinkers.
3. Explore the intersection of political theory and social issues, such as race, gender, identity, and justice in Latin American ideas.
4. Develop informed perspectives on political, religious, and social issues unique to Latin America's colonial and post-colonial experiences.
5. Critically engage with textual and contextual analysis of the readings, comparing and contrasting the influence of Western political thought on Latin America and the originality of Latin American thinkers.

Required Books for Purchase:

1) Bartolomé de las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, trans. Stafford Poole (Northern Illinois University Press, 1992). [ISBN-10: 0875805566 | ISBN-13: 978-0875805566]

2) Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization or Barbarism*, trans. Kathleen Ross (University of California Press: 2004). [ISBN-10: 0520239806 | ISBN-13: 978-0520239807]

3) José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race: a bilingual edition*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (The Johns Hopkins University, 1997). [ISBN-10: 9780801856556 | ISBN-13: 978-0801856556]

4) Sergio Buarque de Holanda, *Roots of Brazil*, trans. G. Harvey Summ (University of Notre Dame Press, 2012). [ISBN-10: 0268026130 | ISBN-13: 978-0268026134]

5) Pope Francis, *Praise be to You [Laudato Si']: On the Care for Our Common Home* (Ignatius Press, 2015). [ISBN-10: 1621640817 | ISBN-13: 978-1621640813]

Additional Readings will be provided on Canvas/Files/Readings.

Grading Scale:

A: 93 – 100

AB: 87 – 92

B: 82 – 86

BC: 77 – 82

C: 70 – 76

D: 60 – 69

F: 59 > below

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Final Paper: 50%
 - a. Abstract: 5%
 - b. Commented Bibliography: 10%
 - c. Final Paper: 35%
2. Short Paper (4 total) 20%
3. Forum Posts: 20%
4. Attendance 10%

1) Final Paper (50% total):

The Term Paper consists of a **10 pages essay** (double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font), where you will have the opportunity to apply and discuss the theories and ideas learned in class to historical or contemporary issues. A paper prompt will be distributed halfway through the semester, and we will discuss your paper topic in class. This assignment will be completed in three parts:

a) Paper Abstract (5%): You must submit the paper abstract with at least 300 and a list of five relevant bibliographical references. The abstract should clearly state a research question (see due date on the reading schedule).

b) Commented Bibliography (10%): You must submit a commented bibliography. The commented bibliography consists of one paragraph (at least 100 words) for every reference explaining why this reference will help you to answer your research question (see due date on the reading schedule).

c) Final Paper (35%): your final paper (see due date on the reading schedule)

The final paper must be in 12-point Times New Roman font with double-spaced lines. You should use the Chicago citation style.

2) Short Papers (4):

The 4 Short Papers consist of 2-4 pages analytic essays focusing on the class reading and the topics covered in class; no research other than from assigned course materials will be required. You should focus on one topic or idea discussed in the readings and discuss it. In the week before the due date, the professor will post the prompt on Canvas. Any plagiarized papers will be given a zero on the assignment and that score will be included in the final grade.

3) Forum Posts (20%):

Before every meeting, the students will have to post and comment on the “Forums” section on “Canvas.” These forum posts are designed to check your readings and engagement in class, and you have to submit your forum post every day. However, **I will exclude your three lowest forum post grades.** They should be at least 200 words in length and address the following items substantively: a) choose and post a passage from the say’s readings; b) write a comment on your selected passage and explain why this quotation was interesting for you and how it relates to the readings overall argument; c) Based on your passage, formulate a question to your colleague that will serve to stimulate class discussion. Details are posted on “Forum Posts.”

Grading Scale for Forums:

A = Excellent (100): Is over 200 words, quotes a substantial passage, explains quote’s relevance for the overall argument of the book/article, justifies with solid reasoning why this passage was relevant to you, and uses grammatically correct sentences.

B = Good (90): One of the following guidelines for an "A" is missing.

C = Satisfactory (80): Two of the following guidelines for an "A" is missing.

D = Unsatisfactory (70): Misses three of four criteria for an "A."

F = Failing (50): Misses all four of the criteria for an "A."

4) Attendance (10%):

Attendance will be scored proportionally. For example, this course has 29 class sessions and Student Y was absent for 4 class sessions. Student Y will be marked “Present” for 25 out of 29 class sessions. Student A’s attendance grade is calculated: $25/29 = 86.2$.

Late Work:

Failure to hand in work by the due date may result in your grade being dropped by a full letter. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to hand in a paper on time, contact your professor immediately.

Class Policies

Expected Classroom Behavior:

Disruptive actions, including talking out of turn, texting, passing notes, sleeping, listening to music, having headphones on, not paying attention, etc. will not be tolerated. Be attentive and courteous to your professor and fellow classmates. Do not arrive late or leave class early, unless there is a pressing or urgent matter.

Electronics:

Laptops, phones, I-Pads, e-readers, and other electronics, however ancient, may not be used unless they are for either the purpose of taking notes or using these devices to download and view the assigned books.

Food and Drink:

Do not eat in class. A discrete drink is fine.

General Absence Policy:

Attendance is mandatory and part of your final grade (10%). However, some absences may be excused without penalty to your grade. Please notify me **in advance** if it is necessary to miss all or part of a class meeting. When applicable, submit documentation for excused absences due to (1) university-sanctioned activities in accordance with [ACD 304-02](#); (2) religious observances/practices in accordance with [ACD 304-04](#); (3) work performed in the line of military duty in accordance with [SSM 201-18](#); and (4) illness, quarantine, or self-isolation related to illness or exposure as documented by a health professional.

Accommodation for Religious Practices:

The university community should, in all its activities, be sensitive to the religious practices of the various religious faiths represented in its student body and employees. Faculty are asked to recognize the obligations of their students who may be participating in the observance of religious holidays. Students should notify faculty at the beginning of the semester about the need to be absent from class due to religious observances. For more information, visit <https://public.powerdms.com/ASU/documents/1541225>

Missed Classes Due to University-Sanctioned Activities:

Students who participate in university-sanctioned activities that require classes to be missed, shall be given opportunities to make up examinations and other graded in-class work. Normally, the made-up work will be due on the class day after the immediately after the absence. Absence from class or examinations due to university-sanctioned activities does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of the absence. For more information, visit <https://public.powerdms.com/ASU/documents/1557490>

Plagiarism and Collusion:

This class has a zero-tolerance plagiarism and collusion policy. Possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss

Students guilty of plagiarism and collusion will face the proper authorities. In order to avoid either of these heinous academic sins, please make sure to cite your work carefully.

Disability Accommodation

If you are a student with a disability and have need of assistance or special accommodations, contact Student Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services (SAILS) <https://eoss.asu.edu/accessibility>. Students requesting accommodations for a disability must register with SAILS, and must submit appropriate documentation to the instructor from SAILS. For more information, please review the policy at <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/index.html#700>

Copyright:

Students must refrain from uploading to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the course instructor or other course forum, material that is not the student's original work, unless the students first comply with all applicable copyright laws; faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement. For more information, see the Computer, Internet, & Electronic Communications Policy at <https://public.powerdms.com/ASU/documents/1540286>

Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Reading Schedule

PART I – The Colonial Period

Week 1

M. 01/13 Introduction and Syllabus

W. 01/15 The Valladolid Debate (Las Casas' *In Defense of the Indians* [Preliminaries, pgs. 3-22] and Sepulveda's Argument – Canvas)

Week 2

M. 01/20 **MLK – No Class**

W. 01/22 Las Casas' *In Defense of the Indians* (Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

Week 3

M. 01/27 Las Casas' *In Defense of the Indians* (Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

W. 01/29 El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* (Canvas)

Week 4

M. 02/03 Sor Juana and Woman Rights in Colonial Mexico (*Response to Sor Filotea de la Cruz* – Canvas)

PART II – Latin American Political Thought During the Era of Independence

W. 02/05 Simón Bolívar and the Political Ideas of *El Libertador* ("Jamaica Letter," and "The Angostura Address," – Canvas)

Week 5

M. 02/10 José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva and the Brazilian Independence ("On Slavery" – Canvas)

W. 02/12 José Martí, the Cuban Struggle for Independence ("Our America," "My Race," "The Truth about the United States," – Canvas)

Week 6

M. 02/17 Sarmiento's *Facundo* and the Argentinian Civil War (Intro, Chap. I, II)

W. 02/19 Sarmiento's *Facundo* (Chap. III, IV, V)

Week 7

M. 02/24 Sarmiento's *Facundo* (Chap. XIII, XIV, XV)

W. 02/26 Joaquim Nabuco's *The Abolitionism* (Canvas)

Week 8

M. 03/03 Joaquim Nabuco's *The Abolitionism* (Canvas)

PART III – The Quest for Identity in the early 20th Century

W. 03/05 José Vasconcelos' *The Cosmic Race* and *Mestizaje* (Prol., Part I)

Week 9

M. 03/10 **Spring Break**

W. 03/12 **Spring Break**

Week 10

M. 03/17 José Vasconcelos' *The Cosmic Race* and *Mestizaje* (Part II)

W. 03/19 Sérgio Bourque's *Roots of Brazil* and Challenges of Modernization in a Patriarchal Society (Chapters 4 and 5)

Week 11

M. 03/24 Sérgio Bourque's *Roots of Brazil* and Challenges of Modernization in a Patriarchal Society (Chapters 6 and 7)

W. 03/26 José Carlos Mariátegui and LA Marxism (*The Problem of Land* – Canvas)

PART IV – Modern and Contemporary Latin American Political Thought

Week 12

M. 03/31 Gabriela Mistral's "On the Education of Women" (Canvas)

W. 04/02 Dependence Theory (Cardoso and Faletto' *Dependency and Development in LA* – Canvas)

Week 13

M. 04/07 Liberation Theology and the "Preferential Option for the Poor" (Leonardo Boff's *Introducing Liberation Theology* – Canvas)

W. 04/09 Nicolás Gómez Dávila (The Nietzsche from the Andes)

Week 14

M. 04/14 Nicolás Gómez Dávila (The Nietzsche from the Andes)

W. 04/16 Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*

Week 15

M. 04/21 Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*

W. 04/23 Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* on God and Man, Nature and Society

Week 16

M. 04/28 Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* on God and Man, Nature and Society

W. 04/30

Last Day of Class – Paper Presentation, Revision and Conclusion
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