

Government, Politics and Society of Latin America

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: INTA

Course number: 2241

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
35617

Instructor First Name: Felipe

Instructor Last Name: Ribeiro

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

In this course, we will explore the relationships between governments and citizens in Latin America through several themes. We will examine key themes that shape political life across the region, such as state capacity, social movements and collective action, violence and security, technology's role in politics, identity-based representation, and democratic quality.

We will ask: How do weak states create opportunities for criminal governance? How are social movements surprisingly resilient in unstable democratic countries? Why has identity forged political participation in some countries and not others? Does technology affect state repression and popular mobilization in the region? Is the democratic backslide real? And if so, why?

I hope that through a comparative analysis of cases across Latin America, we will become familiar with the region's contemporary political challenges. The course will emphasize both theoretical approaches and empirical evidence, drawing on political science, sociology, and economics, while also touching on music and culture across Latin America.

Course learning outcomes:

- Understand the relationship between state capacity and governance outcomes in Latin America. At the end of the course, students should be able to explain the high variation in Latin America's political outcomes.
- Compare patterns of social mobilization across different types of political movements.
- Analyze variation in political violence across Latin American countries, focusing on the tension of international peace and internal turmoil.

- Evaluate threats to democratic quality in the region, including personalism, authoritarianism, corruption, and informal politics.
- Develop research capabilities, including both quantitative and qualitative skills.
- Conduct comparative analyses of political events across Latin American countries, identifying similarities, differences, and explanatory factors.
- Assess the impact of economic models on state-society relations and citizen well-being.

Required course materials:

No required material.

Grading policy:

1. Midterm Exam (30 Points)

The exam will include multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and comparative analysis essays covering material from Weeks 1-7.

2. Research Paper or Policy Brief (40 Points)

Students will produce either an academic research paper (12-15 pages) or a policy brief (8-10 pages) examining a significant political issue in Latin America through a comparative lens. The project must engage with course readings and analyze the issue across at least two countries or contexts.

Deliverables:

- Topic proposal (5 points) - Due Week 10
- Annotated bibliography (5 points) - Due Week 12
- Outline and draft (10 points) - Due Week 14
- Final paper (20 points) - Due Finals Week

Final presentation (5 minutes) - Week 15

3. In-Class Activities (20 Points)

Regular participation in discussions, group exercises, case study analyses, and media response papers.

4. Participation (10 Points)

Regular attendance, active engagement in discussions, thoughtful contributions to class debates, and peer collaboration. Students who prefer to demonstrate engagement through writing may do so.

Attendance policy:

Mandatory.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.