

# Latin American Politics

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Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

**Course prefix:** INTA

**Course number:** 3241

**Section:** a

**CRN (you may add up to five):**

35116 30415

**Instructor First Name:** Kirk

**Instructor Last Name:** Bowman

**Semester:** Spring

**Academic year:** 2026

**Course description:**

Latin America is an exciting, diverse, and dynamic region that has considerable variation in economic success, political stability, culture, sustainability, and development. The purpose of this course is to learn the historical, cultural, political, and economic foundations of the region. We will use a variety of methods and sources to give you a flavor of Latin America. We will also follow contemporary events in the region through readings from current news sources. Our special focus will be on narcotics and how those shape politics, economics, society, and international relations. We will also follow important 2026 Latin American elections.

This is an advanced undergraduate course suitable for serious undergraduate students of any year and graduate students. It is reading intensive and you are expected to carefully read the assignments before class and not merely skim them. If you do not like to read, this is possibly not the class for you.

**Course learning outcomes:**

**Learning Outcomes:**

*Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.*

*Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence the global system.*

*Students will demonstrate mastery of Latin American geography and be able to describe how geography shapes societal and political outcomes*

*Cultural and ethical awareness. Students will become more aware of the diversity of cultural and ethical systems in the world. Able to understand key issues with respect for a range of different variables.*

*Effective communication skills. Students will be able to express their arguments clearly and effectively both in written reports and in their research and oral presentations.*

## **Required course materials:**

Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. 1997 Edition. Monthly Review Press. PDF in Files in Canvas. Don't buy.

Gregory Weeks, *Understanding Latin American Politics*. 2015 edition. PDF in Files in Canvas. Creative Commons book. Don't buy.

Benjamin T. Smith, *The Dope: The Real History of the Mexican Drug Trade*. Norton.

## **Grading policy:**

## Assignments and grades:

It is important that students come prepared for discussion. There will be no quizzes, but class will include a heavy dose of discussion based in part on discussion questions.

Discussion questions will be turned in at the beginning of class in 7 random class periods (at 9:40). 5 of those will count for 10 percent of your grade. Late discussion questions will not receive credit. Your grade can be enhanced with solid preparation and engaging and constructive participation.

**You must meet me in office hours or by appointment to discuss your novel-based TedX Talk. If you do not meet with me once during the semester before March 15, you will lose 10 percent of your final grade.**

**TedX Talk** 15

## Discussion questions 10

Midterm 35

Final 40

## **Attendance policy:**

## Attendance Policy

There will be no attendance taken in class. However, 10 percent of your grade will come from 7 random discussion question submissions that will be collected in class at 9:40 am sharp. A significant portion of the exams will come from information shared in class that is in addition to the readings. Students with consistently thoughtful and informed

participation can receive a boost in their grade.

**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.

**Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):**

**Core Impacts:**

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion