LAH 4930, Section 1B23

The Latin American Cold War

Introduction: Beginning in 1948, the government of the United States dramatically shifted its justifications for what had been a long tradition of intervening militarily and diplomatically in Latin America. Until that point, US officials had sought to preserve a highly undemocratic political status quo throughout much of the region in order to protect and expand US business interests. However, US involvement in World War II had relieved the interventionist pressure on many countries most affected by US interests and repressive regimes, especially those of Central America and the Caribbean. There, citizens successfully ignited movements for change that resulted in reforms that were, while far from revolutionary, nothing short of radical: Guatemala held its first truly fair and democratic elections in 1944; protests and strikes achieved labor concessions from military dictators in Nicaragua and El Salvador; Cuba witnessed the most democratic, prosperous period of its history; Chile moved closer to achieving a consensus not only on the rights of urban workers but on the need to break up the great, semi-feudal estates responsible for the misery of the rural poor.

Undoubtedly, the potential of democratizing regimes and of protest movements to radically alter the rules for US businesses and the influence of the United States government over local policy-making proved vast. Across Latin America, the control over land that elites—small percentages of each country’s population—enjoyed was a clear historical legacy of Spanish colonialism. Control over land was often coupled with a political culture of entitlements that accrued to elites alone rather than the majority peasant, urban working-class and middle-class citizenry: this was a goal and a legacy of post-independence, early republican governments' unwillingness to challenge the racial/economic order of Latin American societies. Doing so would have turned the world upside-down, an outcome that both ruling elites under the Spanish nor post-colonial regimes and foreign investors of the 19th- and 20th-centuries dreaded. Not surprisingly, emerging reformers of the mid-to-late Twentieth Century saw the destruction of massive landed estates as a necessary first step toward reducing class inequality and empowering poor majorities to take a role in the national political process.

From the 1950s through the early 1990s, US officials and businessmen viewed reforms and pro-reform governments in Latin America as a dangerous, slippery slope toward a Communist take-over. Indeed, top US officials, their constituents, the media and even large swaths of the US public came to see any critique of private capital, the United States and/or private property as "anti-American", "Communist", "Communist-inspired" or an opportunity for the
Soviets to create a neo-colony or "Soviet satellite." Thus, long before the Cuban Revolution seemed to prove that the struggle for political autonomy from the United States was a zero-sum game in the early 1960s, the US was already establishing that very paradigm. Through its policies, its discourse and, most importantly, US commitment to providing even the most brutal Latin American regimes with virtually unconditional military support and training, the US signaled its willingness to back up the most conservative, often most authoritarian side of any national conflict, whatever the cost.

The results of this struggle for greater freedom in Latin America and the collaboration of local elites with the United States to repress unarmed and later, armed challenges to the historical status quo are the focus of this seminar. Looking especially at events and processes of the early 1970s through the 1990s, students will examine multiple case studies, often considered iconic of the Latin American experience of the Cold War, especially Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala. In particular, we will examine how the US alliance with authoritarian forces unleashed waves of state terror and violence against civilians as well as catalyzed the growth of armed guerrilla movements whose ranks were often filled by survivors of state terror. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, our readings will include studies of peasant strategies of response; journalistic accounts of how and why the world seemed to ignore the evidence of genocidal actions before them; activists' efforts to galvanize support for human rights; and the powerful role of collective memory in defeating the "official story" that so many of the worst state abusers crafted during the height of terror and after these conflicts had run their course.

**Objectives:** This course is designed to enable students to weigh the relative importance of different political, social, racial and economic factors in determining short- and long-term historical outcomes. Through the assigned readings, students will evaluate distinct forms of evidence, lines of argument, and counter-factual interpretations. In preparation for their own final research paper and presentation, students will also engage in the discovery and analysis of primary sources relevant to their topics, including microfilmed newspapers, archival collections, photographs, government documents, speeches, memoirs and other materials.

**Required readings:** There are seven required texts available for purchase from the University of Florida Bookstore as well as through an on-line retailer of your choice. All of these books have also been placed on library reserve but it is highly recommended that you acquire your own copies. Participation is 40% of the grade and being able to refer to your own highlighted, annotated and (hopefully dog-eared) text will facilitate the quality of your contributions to discussion. In order of assignment, required books are:


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<th>Grade Calculation</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
<th>Grade Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation 40% (weekly discussion plus oral research presentation)</td>
<td>100-93=A</td>
<td>A=4.0</td>
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<td>Short Response Papers 20%</td>
<td>92-90=A-</td>
<td>A-=3.67</td>
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<td>Paper Prospectus 10%</td>
<td>89-87=B+</td>
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<td>Final Paper 50%</td>
<td>86-83=B</td>
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**Participation 40% of Final Grade:** Participation grades are calculated based on the following criteria: weekly attendance; quantity and quality of contributions to class discussion; willingness to engage peers’ views and respond to them; organization, clarity and depth of research in each student's individual oral presentation of their final paper project. This oral presentation must consist of a
10-minute Power Point presentation of images and ideas that will help to structure the argument and case you want to analyze.

**Short response papers 25% of Final Grade:** Students will write 3 short response papers of 3-4 pages each on a reading of their choice; however, two of the 3 short papers must engage the readings assigned in class. The other reading may be one drawn from the research bibliography that each student is constructing for the final research paper/honors thesis to which the class is devoted. **Students will sign up and commit to the two readings on which they will write response papers at the second class meeting.** The third short paper must analyze and discuss a specific document or primary source that you will use in your final research paper; a copy of the document discussed should be included unless it is too long. Papers are due at the start of class on the day that a particular reading is to be discussed. Specific due dates for the papers on the reading assigned are up to the students; the due date of the paper on a primary source is given in the class calendar below.

**Paper prospectus and bibliography. 5% of Final Grade:** This document consists of a full or almost completed bibliography of sources for the final paper as well as a one-page abstract discussing the topic, the research questions you will ask of your sources as well as the potential "answers" or argument that you expect to craft from these sources. The richer the material and the more sophisticated the sources involved, the better the evaluation will be: thus, a good historian casts his/her net widely, seeking multiple kinds of sources, not just the easiest to find or simplest to understand. **In order to ensure a successful prospectus, all students will be required to submit a draft prospectus on October 4th.** This will consist of a topic, preliminary bibliography, and research questions. **The final prospectus is due on October 27th, a Thursday, to me or my office by 4 PM.**

**Final Research Paper. 30% of Final Grade:** For students writing honors' theses, papers will represent a foundational part of the project. For non-thesis writing students, the paper offers an opportunity to craft a piece of original thought and writing that can serve as your calling card and writing sample in the future. **You will be required to present your research in its draft but close-to-finished form before your peers in an in-class oral presentation, either on November 22nd or November 29th. You will sign up for 15-minute time slots earlier in the semester.** In the past, this presentation has contributed greatly to the quality of the final paper. There is nothing like the kind of feedback your peers can provide nor the kind of inspiration that they also provide by sharing their work with you. **NOTE: Final research papers should be a minimum of 20 pages long, as per history department requirements. They are due no later than Thursday, December 8th to me or my office by 4 PM.**

- **Research tips to jumpstart the selection of a topic for your final paper:** Since the Clinton years, hundreds of thousands of US government
documents revealing the nature of US intelligence activity, objectives and outcomes have been declassified. In addition, the United Nations sponsored and oversaw the creation of "truth commissions" in countries where the greatest abuses by government forces were committed: these reports are available, often on-line, and were published in multiple languages.

- Great ways to start thinking about a topic and exploring its viability should include:
  - consulting with a research librarian in the area of Latin American Studies at Smathers Library (especially Margarita Vargas-Betancourt or Paul Losch)
  - searching the collections of on-line, declassified documents at the website for the National Security Archive (particularly rich for Chile and Cuba)
  - searching government documents databases that will lead you to review the transcripts of Congressional hearings and debates in Congress held to discuss events in a particular country and US policy in relation to them; meeting with the government documents librarian
  - WAIT! CONSULTING WITH YOUR OWN PROFESSOR! What a great idea! Office hours are posted on every page of this syllabus. Make an appointment for deeper discussions. Prof. Guerra loves meeting with students for real discussions. Tip: have a topic prepared and do some preliminary research on its viability.

- A visit to UF Special Collections and review of primary sources on the Cold War in Latin America will also take place as part of one of regular classroom sessions on Tuesday, November 1st at our usual class time. The head of the Caribbean collections, Margarita Vargas-Betancourt and Professor Guerra will select and lead discussion on a variety of primary sources related to the clandestine movement against the Batista dictatorship in Cuba in the 1950s, comic books, US propaganda aimed at children, the Soviet magazine called Sputnik, published in Cuba, and modeled on Reader’s Digest as well as other primary sources.

Other Course Policies

Excused Absences: Students who will not be able to take an exam at the scheduled time, need an extension of the due date for a paper or were unable to attend class due to illness must provide medical documentation of their condition at the time. Students who have other conflicts that will prevent them from being able to complete an assignment on time must notify Professor Guerra in advance and discuss whether or not the extension or make-up exam is merited. Students must
Academic Honesty: Violations of academic honesty standards include but are not limited to cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of another's work as one's own, bribery, conspiracy and fabrication. The criteria for assessing whether student behavior meets one or more of these violations as well as the sanctions imposed may be reviewed at the website: http://www.aa.ufl.edu/aa/Rules/4017.htm

Students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to Professor Guerra when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resource Center through their website: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Make-up Policy and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit. There is no way to make-up for missing discussions of the weekly reading assignment. These will normally take place before or after lecture on Thursdays, unless otherwise noted below in the course schedule. Unexcused absences from discussion will result in a participation grade of zero for that week. Evaluation of oral participation in discussion is based on the criteria described immediately below this section.

Other Course Policies: All cell phones must be turned to vibrate at the beginning of class. Internet web-surfing, texting, checking of email, or other tasks unrelated to note-taking during discussion or other classroom activities is not permitted. Professor Guerra will confiscate the cell phone or laptop of any student found engaging in these activities during class and s/he may be asked to leave the classroom. A second violation will result in disciplinary sanction.

Course Calendar and Assignment Schedule

Aug 23. Introduction to Requirements, Themes & the Latin American Cold War

Aug 30. El Salvador. Historical Filmmaking and the Power of Persuasion: In-class viewing and discussion of "Romero" (1989). In-class sign up for the two readings on which each student will write response papers to assigned readings. These dates are firm. Students who write response papers on a particular reading are expected to "lead" discussion as Professor Guerra will engage them first. (Don't worry: I am a softie and really want you to love these readings and discussion, not fear them.)


- In-class documentary film viewing and discussion during second half of class: “Todos Santos: The Survivors” (1989)


- In-class documentary film viewing and discussion during second half of class: "Sacred Soil" (2009)


**NOTE:** *Draft prospectus on October 4th by 4:00 PM. Hard copies only.*

Oct. 11th. Chile. Oral History, Oral Activism and Historical Analysis. **Reading:** Steve J. Stern, Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet’s Chile, 1973-1988 (Duke University Press, 2006). *Read whole book for discussion. Remember Professor Stern is coming to our class on the 25th—so read well!*

- In-class documentary film viewing and discussion during second half of class: "Chile: Obstinate Memory" (1998)

Oct 18th. Chile. History versus Memory: Calculating the Distance and Why it Matters **Reading:** Steve J. Stern, Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006 (Duke University Press, 2006). *Read whole book for discussion. Remember Professor Stern is coming to our class on the 25th—so read well!*

**NOTE:** IN-CLASS SIGN UP FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS ON RESEARCH PROJECTS TO BE CONDUCTED ON THE 22ND AND 29TH OF NOVEMBER.

Oct 25th. Chile, the Cold War and Whatever Else Prof. Stern Wants to Discuss. Visit by Professor Steve J. Stern, Alberto Flores Galindo and Hilldale Professor of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison. *Please review Professor Stern’s personal profile page at [https://history.wisc.edu/faculty_ss.htm](https://history.wisc.edu/faculty_ss.htm)* AND his full curriculum vitae also available at the same site. Here is a brief introduction to this scholar. We are clearly privileged to host him—just us!—in our class:

Steve J. Stern is the Alberto Flores Galindo and Hilldale Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He researches Latin American history, and has recently published The Human Rights Paradox: Universality and Its Discontents (2014), co-edited with Scott Straus. His research spans five centuries, and multiple regions from Mexico to the Andes to Chile. His books include an award winning trilogy of books on the disputed facts, meanings, and memories of the famous military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and the consequences of that history for the making of human rights culture in the contemporary world.
Stern’s research has demonstrated the inventiveness of Latin American responses to unequal structures of power, with sometimes surprising impact on world history. Honors include election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; the Bolton-Johnson Prize for best book in Latin American history, for Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet’s Chile, 1973-1988; and research fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Program, the Institute for Research in the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Social Science Research Council. Stern is a founding editor, with Scott Straus, of the “Critical Human Rights” series at the University of Wisconsin Press, and has won a UW-Madison Distinguished Teaching Award.

NOTE: Thursday, October 27th, FINAL PROSPECTUS & BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE BY 4:00 PM. HARD COPIES ONLY.

Nov 1. Archive and Library Workshop on Cold War documents, cultural, political, and otherwise. Meet at Special Collections, Library East, Smathers, 2nd floor.

Nov 22th. Research presentations and peer review. THANKSGIVING BREAK BEGINS THE 23rd. NO ABSENCES ON THE 22ND ARE EXCUSED—NONE.

Nov 29th. Research presentations and peer review.

FINAL PAPERS DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8th NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM. HARD COPIES ONLY. NO DIGITAL COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.