Simon Fraser University  
School for International Studies  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
IS835/SA835/IS419: Social and Political Change in Latin America  
Fall 2017

Instructor: Gerardo Otero. E-mail: otero@sfu.ca. Office: 7246 Harbour Centre (HC).  
Course Location: HC 7356. Fridays 9:30 a.m.-1:20 p.m.  
Office Hours: Thursdays: 2:30-3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

Course Description:

This graduate seminar aims to familiarize students with the key characteristics of contemporary Latin American politics and society and to situate the rise of the left historically. Readings analyze a wide range of countries and draw from several disciplines in the social sciences. The course begins with an overview of Latin American development, its pervasive inequality and armed insurrection. We will then focus on social and political change since the neoliberal turn in the 1980s, from agrarian structures and the impact of biotechnology, to rising social movements and the electoral left. Since the 1990s, new political forces coming from a broadly-defined “left” have won political office or exercised hefty influence from civil society and tried to transcend the neoliberal model with varying degrees of success. New centre-left governments talk of a post-neoliberal development model, but they have also introduced a new impetus in promoting foreign direct investment in the extractive industries. To what extent is neo-extractivism a route to sustainable development or to a new form of imperialism? Is participatory democracy as practiced in some Brazilian cities conducive to both deepening democracy and ameliorating inequality? These are some of the key questions addressed in our readings. Students will be expected to do heavy weekly readings and be prepared for seminar discussion. Written assignments include five discussion papers (500-700 words) in as many weeks throughout the term, alternating with five responses in other weeks, and a review essay (4,000-6,000 words) focused on one of the core readings and the debate surrounding its topic. Students will also make a public presentation of a draft of their review essay on the last day of class.

Required Texts: (plus some articles, see below)


Learning Goals:

This seminar has several learning goals beyond the substantive topic of its title, as follows:

Critical synthesis. One of the main abilities that any university student must acquire is to gather, classify, analyze and synthesize large amounts of information. Information is usually abundant, so what you need to develop is the ability to process it in a coherent way. For graduate students, this ability will become critical when writing their theses or dissertations. Undergraduate students will also greatly benefit from this exercise, whether they are planning to do graduate studies or move straight into the world of work. Most assignments in this course are geared to enhance the ability for critical synthesis, which is essential in the knowledge economy or in further study.

Participation and group interaction. Most settings in the world of work will involve discussion, dialogue, debate and group interaction. Fruitfully interacting with other students is a skill to be learned or developed, and so is moderation of group discussion. Our group discussions will also involve that each student will take different roles in each seminar, which shall be rotated weekly among group members: moderator, chooses questions, introduces readings, and coordinates discussion, making sure that no two people speak at one time and that everyone gets a fair share of time to contribute; timekeeper, makes sure that discussion is flowing at an adequate pace to finish the assignment on time; participation encourager, makes sure that everyone in the group contributes in some way to the discussion; concept clarifier, checks the readings as needed to make sure that the group is properly understanding the key concepts under discussion; and reporter to class, records the names of group participants and keeps minutes of the discussion with a view to give a summary of conclusions to the entire class, and hand in an outline of the group’s discussion with the names of participants to professor. When a group must function with four people only, the roles of moderator and timekeeper will be merged.

Presentation skills. A presentation of about 7 minutes using power point with no more than about 7 slides, assuming that you take a minute per slide, will be done in the last class. Technical guidelines: Each slide should not contain much more than 3-5 lines, with not more than 3-4 words per line, always using a 36-point font in the main text and 44 points for slide titles. If you use pictures or images, then shorten text within those slides or leave them without a text. Refrain from attempting to show dense figures or charts with too much content and small fonts: your audience will not be able to read them, so it is futile and would only make your presentation look bad. Feel free to send me a draft ppt at least 24 hours prior to the presentation for feedback. Content guidelines: (1) Introduce your topic, why you were interested in the book you chose to focus on, its relevance, and how it relates to your thesis or dissertation’s research question, if applicable. This should not take more than 3 minutes. (2) Go over the main theoretical positions in which the book is inserted and what is the author’s position in the debate. What is your own position in this debate and with respect to the book’s author (3-5 minutes). (3) Briefly describe the empirical evidence used by the author as it relates to the debate and/or to your own stance (3-5 min.) (4) Finally, what are your main conclusions and ideas for your future research? (2-3 min.) This exercise will help prepare you for your thesis or dissertation defense.

Theory and practice. Most of the books that we will be reading for this class will have theoretical, methodological and historical contents. Your task in small group discussion will be to put some of the main concepts to work, to illustrate the methodology, or update the
substantive historical content of each week’s readings. To do this, the weekly discussion may be supplemented with the reading of a current-news article published in a major newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times, The Guardian, The Globe and Mail*) in the 600-800 words range. I will likely be building an article bank and post it on Canvas for this purpose. Ideally, such article will be closely related to the week’s theme, preferably on the country discussed in the readings. The article will be posted on Canvas at least 24 hours before our class and you will be notified via an announcement. The small group will spend 5-10 minutes reading the news article and then 20 minutes establishing the relationship with major concepts and themes from the readings. We will then spend another 20 minutes in general class discussion to better understand both the substantive issues involved in the current-news article and the concepts used for their analysis.

**Grades** will be assigned based on the following formula:

- Five Discussion Papers (DPs) 25% (one every other week, 5% each)
- Responses 5% (alternate weeks to DPs)
- Essay Draft Presentation 10% (November 29)
- Participation: 15%
- Final Review Essay 45% (due December 4)

**Percentage-Letter Grade Equivalence:**
(Note that the grade range for graduate students does not include C- or D.)

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<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
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Discussion papers will be marked according to the following criteria:

- **POOR**
  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - Contains four *explicit* sections, as requested.

- **EXCELLENT**
  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - Introduces main topic and sets up clearly defined *agenda*.

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - Focuses on *core* arguments, concepts and perspectives (rather than a superficial summary or inventory of themes).

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - *Coherence* of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct (i.e. thorough on core points, yet stays within word limit).

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - Key terms and concepts are *defined and explained*.

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - Assertions and arguments supported with specific *cites* to required readings.

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  -Assertions and arguments supported with specific *quotes* from required readings.

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - *Reasoned* assessment of strengths and weaknesses (rather than merely opining, agreeing or disagreeing).

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - *Questions* help disentangle readings conceptually, referring back to text rather than eliciting opinion or application.

  - 1 2 3 4 5
  - *Depth* of coverage of required readings.
Discussion Papers (a total of five, one for every other week). Your student I.D. will determine in which week you should post DPs: e.g., odd-numbered weeks if the last digit of your I.D. is odd. These typewritten, single-spaced papers (400-600 words), in 12-point font are due no later than 12:00 noon on the Wednesday of the relevant week (i.e., one day before the class). Discussion papers (DPs) should be posted on Canvas so that all class members have access to them. Everyone should read at least the discussion questions raised by others. Please follow these guidelines when writing your discussion papers: (1) Include your name and week for which you are writing on the top line, using only one line for this information. (2) Do not include the full reference to the works you are writing about in discussion papers, except the author’s name. (3) The discussion papers should be written exclusively on the basis of required readings.

Discussion papers should include 4 explicit sections, using the following description as a model:

(1) **Introduction.** Write a paragraph raising a paradox or central question about the topic of the readings. You must then provide an outline or agenda for the rest of your essay (25-50 words). Having an explicit agenda or outline, however brief, is a crucial element in social-science writing, so it is important to compose a proper introduction.

(2) **Synthesis.** Provide a brief synthesis of what the author is saying. (250-350 words.) Identify the central questions, main points, concepts, and/or core arguments. Rather than analyzing all the ideas that the author presents, you should focus in depth on the most significant aspects of the text, always mentioning the key concepts used by the author. Brief definitions of such concepts would help, including a reference to a specific page number or providing the author’s most synthetic rendering of the concept(s) by using a textual quotation. A synthesis is not the same as a summary. The latter is an attempt to provide an inventory of the entire text. A synthesis is not as easy because it presupposes that the text has been understood, and focuses on the core, most central parts. A good synthesis of a text requires an awareness and knowledge of the author’s style of thinking, not just the particular facts that are presented to support an argument. Focus on interrogating the texts about their theory and/or methodology, whichever seems most relevant in a given text, as well as the core argument.

(3) **Assessment.** Offer a brief assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the authors’ central arguments or concepts. (100-150 words.) Do the authors’ evidence or analysis support what they set out to do and their conclusions? How does their viewpoint color the interpretations they make? How well does the theory and method serve the author(s)? Rather than merely giving your opinions, say why you agree or disagree with their argument and conclusions. I encourage you to be contentious and take a risk by taking a strong stand that will get debate going in class, and be ready to defend your stance with relevant evidence and/or analysis. Refrain from pointing out what the authors did not do. Focus instead on what they actually did and the extent to which that conforms with their own agenda.

(4) **Questions.** Finally, provide two discussion questions related to the readings. (25-50 words.) One should be a lingering question whose answer would further clarify the readings for you, with a focus on theory. The other may be a question on methods or one that will promote class discussion on some central substantive issue.

The main task of discussion papers is to help understand the texts, a precondition to assess and discuss their applicability. I am looking for well-written papers which extract the main theoretical and methodological concepts and propositions, as well as the chief substantive points; critique the readings directly or support their arguments; and which draw in questions and issues that have been raised in other readings, lectures, and/or discussions from earlier in the course (25% for five papers, 5% each).
Note: Late discussion papers will not be marked or counted.

**Presentation.** Students will make a 7 minutes Power-Point presentation of a draft of their final review essay during the last session of the seminar, on December 1. Technical specifications (see further guidelines in Canvas): no more than seven slides, use 40-point font for titles and 36 point-font for other text, and no more than 3-4 lines of main text per slide. Images welcome. The idea is to give you a forum to practice the type of presentation for an M.A. or Ph.D. defence. While you cannot be exhaustive in articulating all the points of your essay (or thesis), you need to highlight the most central points and make it exciting and understandable for the audience beyond your committee (10%).

**Participation.** Everyone is expected and required to attend and participate in seminar discussion and questions. Participation will be assessed on the basis of how well students share thoughts, observations, and assessments during class time. Such sharing should be concise, precise and hard hitting. But it can also consist of asking a thoughtful question. My assumption, and I hope yours too, is that education is not a “banking” process whereby a professor “deposits” a bunch of information into the heads of passive receivers (students). Learning is a collaborative process in which information and knowledge is to be shared between the professor and students and among students.

Effective class participation requires that one keep up with assigned readings and lectures, and that one come prepared to speak thoughtfully about these materials. My goal in seminar discussions is to avoid the two extremes that one finds in most classes: the extroverted that are too eager to participate and the introverted that are too shy to speak their minds. In the world of work we all have to learn how to listen to others’ opinions and also how to give our own, so I want this course to contribute to this learning. In order to promote equitable participation in general class discussion, I will bring index cards with each of the students’ names. After shuffling the name cards, the student whose name is selected at random will either raise or respond a question. Two additional students will be allowed to voluntarily respond or comment on the previous intervention. Then, another name card will be drawn, and so on. It is thus essential to come to class well prepared to participate.

In deference to the entire class and to avoid disruptions, it is extremely important to **arrive to class on time.** Attendance will be taken at the start of class, after breaks, and/or at the end of class. Regular class attendance is expected of all students and is merely a precondition for active participation unless you have a documented emergency such a heavy sickness or a death in the family. I will have to be notified 24 hours in advance of the seminar. Class attendance is therefore required. You can earn up to 10 points out of 100 possible marks for the final grade for good participation. Yet, each absence will cause 5 points lost in participation. A two-point loss will also be incurred for late arrival, for leaving the class early, or for taking breaks longer than stipulated. Furthermore, three or more unjustified absences from this class will automatically trigger a final grade of “N”, which turns into an “F” the following term. (10%)

**Final Review Essay.** The **review essay** is intended for students to think through the various theoretical approaches, interpretations and methodologies around one of the course’s central themes in a comparative perspective. Please note that the “essay” part of this assignment should be taken seriously: the essay should engage the books and articles under consideration and you are also encouraged to make an original argument while discussing them. You are welcome to focus on a single central issue and support your arguments with citations or quotations from other readings. Each essay must reference and engage at least four of the required and/or supplementary readings for sustained discussion (3,000-6,000 words, double-spaced, 12-point
font, times roman) and no fewer than ten references in total. This is your chance to integrate your views on a central topic or country of your choice. Due at noon on December 5 at my office (HC 7140), under my door if I’m not there (50%).

Submit a printed and an electronic version of your essay in Turnitin. Attach an essay-evaluation sheet to the printed version of the final review essay. See instructions below about how to open an account and upload your paper to Turnitin.com. This course’s I.D. and the student enrolment password will be provided in Canvas after the third week of class.

**Syllabus as contract.** During the first class the course syllabus is a contract proposal. For 30 minutes or so, we will have a discussion about its various components and percentage allocations. You are thus strongly encouraged to study the syllabus to learn all the ins and outs of the seminar's expectations. You can then ask for clarification about the seminar's rules and expectations and, if you like, make suggestions for changes. The first class is the only opportunity you will have for voicing these concerns. Once discussed and mutually agreed upon, the syllabus becomes an enforceable contract. Besides its pragmatic function of helping you familiarize yourselves with the seminar and allowing you to participate in its final shape, this discussion about the syllabus is also meant as a small exercise in participatory, deliberative democracy, even though the instructor ultimately holds final decision-making power.

**Tentative Class Schedule** (Note: online resources are at the SFU library, req. articles in Canvas)

**Week 1 (Sept. 8): Introduction and Course Overview**

Recommended Background Readings


**Week 2 (Sept. 15): Colonial Legacy and Import-Substitution Industrialization**
Week 3 (Sept. 22): Inequality, Cold War and Armed Insurrection
Required Reading: Wood, Elisabeth Jean (2003) In insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador. (Read as much as you can from Chs. 3-7 and the Epilogue.)

Guest Speaker: Katya Quintanilla, Recent MAIS Graduate with fieldwork in El Salvador.

Supplementary Readings

Week 4 (Sept. 29): Class and Inequality in Latin America
(Graduate students also read: Jeffrey R. Webber. 2017. “Contemporary Latin American Inequality: Class Struggle, Decolonization, and the Limits of Liberal Citizenship.” Latin American Research Review. 52(2):281-299.)

And ONE of the following two:

Supplementary Readings
David M. Deferranti et. al. 2003. Inequality in Latin America: Breaking with History? The
World Bank.


**Week 5 (Oct. 6) Neoliberalism, Green Revolution and Food in Latin America I**

Required Readings: Gerardo Otero, ed. 2008. *Food for the Few: Neoliberal Globalism and Biotechnology in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press. (Chs. 1-2, and at least another chapter from first half.) (This is an online resource, and I have a few copies for sale at author’s discount: $15.00)

Supplementary Readings:


**Week 6 (Oct. 13) Neoliberalism, Green Revolution and Food in Latin America II**

Required Readings: Gerardo Otero, ed. 2008. *Food for the Few: Neoliberal Globalism and Biotechnology in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press. (At least three chapters from second half.)

Supplementary Readings:

Week 7 (Oct. 20): Mining, Oil, Soybeans and Re-Primarization in Latin America I


Supplementary Readings


Week 8 (Oct. 27): Mining, Oil, Soybeans and Re-Primarization in Latin America II


Documentary: “Silence is Gold” (75 minutes)

Week 9 (Nov. 3): Indigenous Movements and the Left

Required Readings:


Supplementary Readings
Steve Ellner, ed. 2014. Latin America’s Radical Left: Challenges and Complexities of Political

**Week 10 (Nov. 10): Social Movements and Participatory Democracy: Argentina**


Supplementary Readings


**Week 11 (Nov. 17): Social Movements and Participatory Democracy: Brazil**


Supplementary Readings


**Week 12 (Nov. 24): Mexican Migrants in British Columbia Agriculture**

Required Readings:

READ ONE OF THESE:


AND ONE OF THESE:


Supplementary Readings


Leigh Binford. 2013. *Tomorrow We’re All Going to Harvest: Temporary Foreign Worker...*
**Programs and Neoliberal Political Economy.** Austin: University of Texas Press.


**Week 13 (Dec. 1): Presentations of Final Paper Draft**

**Book-Review Essay Due on Monday, December 5, 2017 by 12:00 p.m. at H.C. 7246.**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students are expected to read and understand the university’s policies with regard to academic dishonesty (T10.02 and T10.03). These policies are available through the following url:

[http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/teaching.html](http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/teaching.html)

Forms of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to the following:

- Submitting all or a portion of the same work for credit in more than one course.
- Representing another person’s work as your own for course assignments.
- Failure to acknowledge sources of facts, information, analyses, interpretations, and arguments that you incorporate in your work, whether from a source that is written, spoken communication, or the internet and whether it is published and unpublished. Appropriate documentation of your sources is necessary when you quote, paraphrase or incorporate information and ideas generated by others. In particular, please be aware that “patchwriting” is unacceptable.

All students in SIS classes are expected to read the SFU Library lesson on “What is Plagiarism?” and take the interactive tutorial, “Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism”

SFU Library: What is plagiarism?
[http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/plagiarism](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/plagiarism)

Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism:

**TURNITIN.COM**

Written work for this course will be submitted via Turnitin, a third party service licensed for use by SFU (see our course’s Canvas container for I.D. and password). Turnitin is used for originality checking to help detect plagiarism. Students will be required to create an account with
Turnitin, and to submit their work via that account, on the terms stipulated in the agreement between the student and Turnitin. This agreement includes the retention of your submitted work as part of the Turnitin database. Any student with a concern about using the Turnitin service may opt to use an anonymous identity in their interactions with Turnitin. Students who do not intend to use Turnitin in the standard manner must notify the instructor at least two weeks in advance of any submission deadline. In particular, it is the responsibility of any student using the anonymous option (i.e. false name and temporary e-mail address created for the purpose) to inform the instructor such that the instructor can match up the anonymous identity with the student.

For more information see the Protection of Privacy section of the SFU calendar at www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2014/spring/fees-and-regulations/student-contract/pop.html.

Instructions for creating a Turnitin account:
1. Go to: http://www.turnitin.com, select Create Account (see below).

![Turnitin Create Account Form](image)

2. On the page titled: Create a User Profile, supply your chosen e-mail address and the password you wish to use to access Turnitin.
3. Select the Student link at the bottom of the page to login.
4. Fill out the resulting form. You will need the Class ID and Class Enrollment Password provided by your instructor (via Canvas).
5. You must accept the User Agreement in order to use Turnitin. This is between you and Turnitin. Ignore all references to the ETS e-rater service in the User Agreement because SFU does not use this product.

See Turnitin training video: Creating a new user profile.

Joining the class using existing account:
2. Select the tab Enroll in a Class and enter the Class ID and Enrollment Password provided in our Canvas container.

See Turnitin training video: Enrolling in a class.

Submission of Assignments:
Each assignment should be submitted in two formats:
1) A hard copy at the beginning of class or relevant deadline.
2) An electronic copy, by the same deadline, to turnitin.com

Assignments that are not submitted in both formats by the deadline will result in a lower grade.
Essay Evaluation Rubric

Name: __________________________.  Essay grade: ____.

Analysis and Criticism:

POOR EXCELLENT

1 2 3 4 5  Follows the directions of the assignment (e.g., answers questions sufficiently).
1 2 3 4 5  Clearly defined agenda to demonstrate the thesis or hypothesis.
1 2 3 4 5  Coherence of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct.
1 2 3 4 5  Key terms and concepts are defined and explained.
1 2 3 4 5  Assertions and arguments supported with specific cites to the original works.
1 2 3 4 5  Assertions and arguments supported with specific quotes from the original works.
1 2 3 4 5  Creative use of insights from lecture and class discussion.
1 2 3 4 5  Various parts and paragraphs of paper well structured and interconnected.
1 2 3 4 5  Depth of coverage of existing literature and original works.
1 2 3 4 5  Analyzes literature beyond summarizing.

Technical presentation:

X denotes that attention should be paid to this problem.
XX denotes that extra attention is warranted.

_____ Late paper (one letter grade is deducted for each day the paper is late).
_____ Paper format: pages numbered in top right hand corner, one-inch margins, double-spaced.
_____ Appropriate citation format not followed.
_____ Text is too long.
_____ Text is too short.
_____ Redundancy (wordy; can be trimmed without loss of meaning).
_____ Some statements are unsupported (e.g., undeveloped and/or vague statements).
_____ Insufficient coverage of existing literature.
_____ Insufficient depth of coverage.
_____ Typographic errors, misspelled words, punctuation errors.
_____ Incomplete sentences, awkward sentence structure.
_____ Some paragraphs are too long.
_____ Some paragraphs are too short.
Name: ______________________ Phone(s): __________ 

Major? ________________ Year/Class ___________ E-mail: ________________

Other courses taken this semester (names, not numbers):

Home town and/or country? ___________________

How long have you studied at the Simon Fraser University? _________ If you come from another college or university, please name: ________________________

Why are you interested in this course? (check one:)

- It is required [ ]
- Interested in subject [ ]
- Fit my timetable [ ]
- Looked easy [ ]
- Other [ ] Specify ___________________________.

Please name two to three courses taken at this or other universities or colleges that have influenced your thinking the most. Write course names, not numbers.

What is your current definition of the “Left” in Latin America? (2-3 sentences)