

Revolutionary Politics in Latin America

POSC 323

Professor: Eric Mosinger
Office: Zoom Room
Student Hours: Any time via Slack chat
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Spring 2021
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday
Class Time: MW 11:30am / F 11:10am
Zoom link: posted on Moodle



FSLN mural in Estelí, Nicaragua, photo by Eric Mosinger

1 Course Summary

¡Bienvenidos! Welcome to Latin American Revolutions and Counterrevolutions! Cycles of revolutionary upheaval and counterrevolutionary violence have punctuated Latin America's anti-colonial and post-colonial history. This course examines these twinned phenomena by examining three "successful" revolutions (Haiti [1791–1804], Cuba [1959], Nicaragua [1979]) alongside abortive (El Salvador, Guatemala, and the Southern Cone in the 1970s and 1980s) attempts at revolutionary change. These cases provoke a series of interrelated questions: Under what conditions do revolutionary outbreaks occur? Why do revolutionaries take power in some countries and fail in others? How can we explain (counter-)revolutionary mobilization, violence, and terror? Do revolutions produce enduring social change, or reproduce enduring problems? What will the future of revolution look like in our unstable world? By delving together into Latin America's historical specificities and broader theoretical considerations, students in this course will gain a deeper knowledge not only of revolution but of political and social change more generally.

"The dictatorship is a corpse without a grave and we have come to bury it."
-Sergio Ramírez

2 Required Books

- C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. edition (New York: Vintage, 1989)
- Gioconda Belli, *The country under my skin: a memoir of love and war* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

All other assigned readings will be posted on the class Moodle page as a PDF or a link. Make sure to read each article while taking careful notes filled with brilliant insights!

3 Attendance

Though this class will be taught online, it has the same attendance requirements as an in-person class. That is, please do attend, and join in the Zoom call on time (barring the inevitable technical difficulties, naturally). Regular attendance will make up a large part of your participation grade for the course. That said, due to the global pandemic and all that, I am giving you each *two no-questions-asked, no-need-to-email-the-prof absences* to use over the course of the trimester. If you need to take a third or fifth or twelfth absence, **you must email me at least 30 minutes before class.**

4 Student Evaluation

Course Assessment		Grading Scale			
		Grade	Range	Grade	Range
Assignment	% of Total	A	93–100	C	73–76.9
1) Participation	25%	A-	90–92.9	C-	70–72.9
2) Four Rev. Reverb. Papers	5% each	B+	87–89.9	D+	67–69.9
3) Midterm Exam	20%	B	83–86.9	D	63–66.9
4) Comparative Research Paper	35%	B-	80–82.9	D-	60–62.9
		C+	77–79.9	F	Below 60

5 Evaluation

Format and Required Citation Style: Submit written work online through our Moodle (you will get my feedback through the Moodle as well) and use the [APSA style guide](#) to format citations and bibliography. I accept papers written in **English or Spanish.**

On-Time Work Policy: My expectation is that you will complete your work by deadlines listed on this syllabus. When sufficiently compelling circumstances arise, I will grant students an extension without imposing a grade penalty. I will only grant extensions that

students request *prior* to the original deadline. Students should tell me when they expect to complete their work and *communicate* with me about its progress.

Summary of Assignments

1. **Class participation:** This is a synchronous seminar class taught over Zoom. The course will be discussion-based, with students expected to share their thoughts, ideas, and questions with the class. My role will be to facilitate discussion, not lecture or guide the class. In addition to general participation, everyone in the class will take turns acting as **discussion leader**. Three times during the trimester you will be responsible for planning the classroom conversation. Along with a partner, you will prepare themes, questions, and activities for the class. You and your partner will be entirely responsible for leading the approximately 30–45 minutes of class. Send me a short one to two page discussion prep the night before class. 25% of course grade.
2. **Four Revolutionary Reverberations Papers:** At the beginning of class, you will pick a Latin American country that experienced either some sort of revolutionary upheaval in the 20th century. Research that country's history and follow news about its ongoing political developments. Between Week 3 and Week 8, I will ask you to respond to four prompts that relate the country's revolutionary past to its contemporary politics. Your responses should be no more than 500-750 words and are always due Sunday evening at 6pm. Each assignment is worth 5% of the course grade and will be graded on a simple 0–5 scale.
3. **Midterm exam.** The midterm will be a take-home exam. You will get a list of prompts and will have one week to turn in a 8–10 page, double-spaced set of responses. The exam is designed to test your understanding and ability to work with assigned texts and will not involve any outside research. 20% of course grade.
4. **Final research paper:** Ask an empirical or theoretical question about a topic of your choosing related to the material we have studied in this course. How have political scientists, sociologists, philosophers and revolutionaries tried to answer this question? What do you think is the answer to this question? What evidence would you need to collect to answer it? 20–25 pages. 35% of course grade.

Peer Review: For your Final Research Paper you will be paired with a “peer reviewer”—another student in the class who will give you a two-page written feedback on your paper (a Peer Review Memo). Using this feedback, you will revise the Research Paper, and along with the final draft, you will submit a Reviewer Response Memo, which explains how you addressed the Peer Review Memo's comments in your revisions. Each memo is worth 10% of the paper grade.

6 Academic Integrity

Don't cheat, lie, steal, plagiarize, or otherwise behave dishonorably in this class or throughout life. If you are unsure of what might constitute plagiarism, *ask me!* When in doubt, cite your sources.

7 Schedule of Classes and Assignments

THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

Week 1, 3/29 - 4/2

Monday: Revolution and Counterrevolution

Arno J Mayer, *The Furies Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 23–59 and 71–84.

Wednesday: Slavery in Saint-Domingue

James, *The Black Jacobins*, preface and 1–61.

Friday: The Free People of Color

James, 62–84.

John D. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé "Jeune" (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas* 68, no. 1 (2011): 33–62.

Week 2, 4/5 - 4/9

Monday: Revolt

James, *The Black Jacobins*, 85–144.

Wednesday: Toussaint Louverture

James, 145–223.

Friday: Revolution

James, 223–288.

Week 3, 4/12 - 4/16**Monday:** Independence

James, *The Black Jacobins*, 289–377.

Wednesday: Interpreting the Haitian Revolution

Adom Getachew, "Universalism After the Post-Colonial Turn: Interpreting the Haitian Revolution," *Political Theory* 44, no. 6 (2016): 821–845.

Friday: Echoes of Haiti in Cuba

Watch film before class: *The Last Supper* (1976).

Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), Chapter 5.

Week 4, 4/19 - 4/23**Monday:** The Aponte Conspiracy

Ferrer, Chapter 7 and epilogue.

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION**Wednesday:** The Second Empire of Sugar

Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapters 1 and 2.

Friday: Why Did Batista Lose?

Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (2001), 24–50, and 59–64.

Week 5, 4/26 - 4/30**Monday:** Foco Theory

Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Grove Press, 2010), Chapter 14.

Ernesto Guevara. "Notes for the Study of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution," "The Cadres: Backbone of the Revolution," and "Cuba: Historical Exception or Vanguard in the Anticolonial Struggle?" (www.marxists.org).

Matt D. Childs, "An Historical Critique of the Emergence and Evolution of Ernesto Che Guevara's Foco Theory," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 593–624.

Wednesday: Consequences of Victory

Michelle Chase, "The Trials," in *A Century of Revolution*, ed. Greg Grandin (Duke University Press, 2010), 163–198.

Friday: The Real Revolution

Fidel Castro et al., "I Will Be a Marxist-Leninist to the End of My Life (December 2, 1961), Passages," in *Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro*. (New York: Pathfinder, 1992), 11.

Susan Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba under Castro* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), pp. 19–58.

Week 6, 5/3 - 5/7

Monday: Midterm Break.

Watch film over break: *Before Night Falls* (2000).

Wednesday: Revolution at Home and Abroad

Johnnetta B. Cole and Gail A. Reed, "Women In Cuba: Old Problems And New Ideas," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 15, nos. 3/4 (1986): 321–353.

Tanya Harmer, "Two, Three, Many Revolutions? Cuba and the Prospects for Revolutionary Change in Latin America, 1967–1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 61–89.

THE GUERRILLA CONTINENT

Friday: Cuba's Children

Timothy Wickham-Crowley, "Winners, Losers, and Also-Rans: Toward a Comparative Sociology of Latin American Guerrilla Movements," *Power and popular protest: Latin American social movements*, 1989, 132–81.

Week 7, 5/10 - 5/14

Monday: Urban Revolution in the Southern Cone

Aldo Marchesi, "Revolution Beyond the Sierra Maestra: The Tupamaros and the Development of a Repertoire of Dissent in the Southern Cone," *The Americas* 70, no. 3 (2014): 523–553.

Wednesday: Las guerrilleras

Jocelyn S. Viterna, "Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (2006): 1–45.

Friday: The Ethnic Question

Orin Starn, "Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 02 (1995): 399–421.

Betsy Konefal, "The Ethnic Question in Guatemala's Armed Conflict: Insights from the Detention and "Rescue" of Emeterio Toj Medrano," in *Making the Revolution: Histories of the Latin American Left*, ed. Kevin A. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 240–265.

THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

Week 8, 5/17 - 5/21

Monday: The Country Under My Skin, pt. 1

Gioconda Belli, *The country under my skin: a memoir of love and war* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), Chapters 1–20.

Wednesday: The Country Under My Skin, pt. 2

Belli, Chapters 21–41.

Friday: The Country Under My Skin, pt. 3

Belli, Chapters 42–58.

Week 9, 5/24 - 5/28**Monday:** The Power Struggle

Eric S. Mosinger, "Balance of Loyalties: Explaining Rebel Factional Struggles in the Nicaraguan Revolution," *Security Studies* 28, no. 5 (2019): 935–975.

Wednesday: Regrets, I've Had a Few

Tina Rosenberg, *Children of Cain: Violence and the Violent in Latin America* (Harmondsworth [etc.: Penguin, 1992), Chapter 5.

Friday: Counterrevolution, pt. 1

Mateo Cayetano Jarquín, "Red Christmases: The Sandinistas, Indigenous Rebellion, and the Origins of the Nicaraguan Civil War, 1981–82," *Cold War History* 18, no. 1 (2018): 91–107.

Week 10, 5/31 - 6/4**Monday:** Counterrevolution, pt. 2

Watch film before class: *Pictures of a Revolution* (1991).

Trigger warning: photographs of dead bodies, including of children. Film may be skipped.

Lynn Horton, *Peasants in Arms War and Peace in the Mountains of Nicaragua, 1979-1994* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998), Chapters 4 and 5.

Wednesday: The Long Shadow of Revolution

Eric S. Mosinger, Kai Thaler, Diana Paz García, and Charlotte Fowler, "Civil Resistance in the Shadow of the Revolution: Historical Framing in Nicaragua's Sudden Uprising," *Comparative Politics* (2021): Forthcoming.