

University of Mississippi

INST 314: Evaluating Democracy in Latin America

MWF 1:00-1:50

Croft 204

Instructor Information

Miguel Centellas

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Office Hrs: 11:00-12:50 MWF (or by appointment)

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Course Description

This seminar focuses on contemporary Latin American democracies within a comparative framework. We begin by reviewing how the political history of Latin America developed the attitudinal, institutional, and behavioral contexts in which contemporary politics plays out. We will ground our discussion on a review of modern democratic theory, particularly the debate between so-called “minimalist” and more expansive conceptions of democracy. Our discussion will also focus on key institutions and “arenas” necessary for democratic politics. Although we will cover the region broadly, we will also discuss key cases, including Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

A key purpose of this seminar is to help students develop strategies and tools for *qualitatively* evaluating democracy in specific countries through *empirical* measures. To do this we will: review commonly used democracy assessment measures, such as Freedom House, Polity, and the new V-DEM indicators; discuss empirical measures that describe important features of electoral politics; and learn how to use available socioeconomic, electoral, and survey data to develop indicators for the “quality” of democracy. Students will then apply this to a seminar project in which each student will qualitatively describe and quantitatively measure indicators of the quality of democracy in a selected country.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Distinguish and describe different conceptual definitions of democracy
- Describe how Latin America’s political history informs the development of democratic practices and ideas in the region
- Identify and describe trends in the development of democracy in the region, and discuss how these relate to global patterns
- Identify, appraise, and critique common indicators of democracy and democratic quality
- Locate, retrieve, and use publicly available socioeconomic, electoral, and attitudinal (survey) datasets
- Calculate common metrics associated with democracy, such as the effective number of parties and electoral volatility, and understand both their utility and limitations
- Develop (or “operationalize”) an empirically-based definition of “democracy” for use in a social science research project
- Develop, organize, and complete a self-directed social science research project

Course Texts & Readings

The following *required* texts are available at the university bookstore:

- Peeler, John. 2009. *Building Democracy in Latin America*, 3rd ed. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
Levine, Daniel H. and José E. Molina, eds. 2011. *The Quality of Democracy in Latin America*.
Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

The following *recommended* texts are available at the university bookstore and will also be available on course reserve at the library:

- Janda, Kenneth (with Jin-Young Pak). 2011. *Party Systems and Country Governance*. Boulder: Paradigm.
Smith, Peter H. 2011. *Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The following additional readings are available on Blackboard and/or library course reserve:

- Carlin, Ryan E. and Matthew M. Singer. 2011. "Support for Polyarchy in the Americas." *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (11): 1500-1526.
Gallagher, Michael. 1991. "Proportionality, Disproportionality, and Electoral Systems." *Electoral Studies* 18 (4): 497-504.
Gargarella, Roberto. 2004. "Latin American Constitutionalism, 1810-60." *Latin American Research Review* 39 (2): 141-153.
Golosov, Grigori V. 2009. "The Effective Number of Parties: A New Approach." *Party Politics* 16 (2): 171-192.
King, Phoebe. 2013. "Neo-Bolivarian Constitutional Design: Comparing the 1999 Venezuelan, 2008 Ecuadorian, and 2009 Bolivian Constitutions." In Denis J. Gallagan and Mila Versteeg, eds., *Social and Political Foundations of Constitutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 366-397.
Lagos Cruz-Coke, Marta. 2008. "Latin America's Diversity of Views." *Journal of Democracy* 19 (1): 111-125.
Lijphart, Arend. 1994. "Disproportionality, Multipartyism, and Majority Victories." In *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 57-77.
Lindberg, Staffan, et al. 2014. "V-Dem: A New Way to Measure Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 25 (3): 159-169.
Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan. 1996. "Democracy and Its Arenas." In *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1-15.
Mainwaring, Scott. 2006. "The Crisis of Representation in the Andes." *Journal of Democracy* 17 (3): 13-27.
Mainwaring, Scott and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. 2015. "Cross-Currents in Latin America." *Journal of Democracy* 26 (1): 114-127.
Marshall, Monty G., Ted Robert Gurr, Christian Davenport, and Keith Jagers. 2002. "Polity IV, 1800-1999: Comments on Munck and Verkuilen." *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (1): 40-45.
Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (1): 5-34.
Schmitter, Philippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is ... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2 (3): 75-88.
Sørensen, Georg. 2008. "What Is Democracy?" In *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*, 3rd ed. Boulder: Westview, 3-27.

- . 2008. "Processes of Regime Change." In *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*, 3rd ed. Boulder: Westview, 29-54.
- Pedersen, Mogens N. 1979. "The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility." *European Journal of Political Research* 7 (1): 1-26.
- Taagepera, Rein. 1997. "Effective Number of Parties for Incomplete Data." *Electoral Studies* 16 (2): 145-151.
- . 1999. "Supplementing the Effective Number of Parties." *Electoral Studies* 18 (4): 497-504.
- Tilly, Charles. 2007. "What Is Democracy?" In *Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-24.

Course Requirements

Below is a summary of course requirements and their share of the final semester grade:

	Points	Percent
Participation	60	15
Written assignments (x6)	120	25
Research paper	80	20
Case study report (oral/written)	40	10
Final exam	100	25
Total	400	

Grading Scale

This course uses the +/- grading scale. The corresponding percentages and point scores for each letter grade are outlined below:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥ 93
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	< 60

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend class regularly, on time, and to observe proper decorum in the classroom. You should treat class as a professional meeting and behave appropriately. That means turning off and putting away cell phones. That means coming to class prepared and ready to participate in class discussions. This includes asking questions related to class readings and/or discussions.

Because this is a *seminar* course, much of the course will revolve around in-class discussions. We will use the readings as a springboard for discussion, with the hope of expanding beyond the specific text(s).

A *minimum* requirement is to have done the required readings ahead of class. To earn high marks for participation, you should come to class with questions, comments, or observations related to the readings. You should also try to engage the various texts with each other, and with your other experiences and coursework.

Your participation grade is not simply an attendance grade. Rather, it is based on the quality of your day-to-day participation. Each day's participation is worth three points, and will be graded on the following scale:

Points	Criteria
5	Excellent; demonstrates careful thinking about the subject and engages in critical thinking
4	Good; demonstrates understanding of core concepts
3	Satisfactory; demonstrates a sincere engagement with the relevant concepts
2	Unsatisfactory; does not engage with the relevant concepts
0	Did not attend class

I will update participation grades periodically (at least every two weeks), and post them to Blackboard.

I will drop the four lowest participation scores (including zeroes). This means you can miss up to FOUR times before incurring penalties (zeroes for daily participation points). Please note that I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. Exceptions will only be made for extreme circumstances or for university-sanctioned activities/events. If you know that you will be absent for university-sanctioned events, please see me during the first two weeks of the semester.

In the event of an unforeseen emergency that requires you to miss several days of classes and/or an exam, be sure to notify the office of the Dean of Students (deanst@olemiss.edu or 662-915-7247) right away.

Written Assignments

There are several written assignments throughout the semester. The main objective of these assignments is to give you an opportunity to reflect upon and critically engage with a major theme from the readings and/or demonstrate your ability to use concepts or empirical procedures. Another objective is to help strengthen your analytical writing skills in anticipation of the larger seminar paper.

The written assignments include:

- Conceptual definition of democracy and its dimensions
- Descriptive presentation and evaluation of election statics for a selected country, since 1980 (or date of first democratic election)
- Descriptive presentation and evaluation of basic party system variables (effective number of parties, electoral volatility, index of disproportionality) for a selected country, since 1980
- Descriptive presentation and evaluation using Freedom House and Polity data for a selected country, since 1980
- Descriptive presentation and evaluation using V-Dem data for a selected country, since 1980

- Descriptive presentation and analysis using AmericasBarometer data for a selected country, since 1980
- Analysis using simple inferential statistics (time-series and/or cross-sectional) using data from the previous written assignments
- Presentation of a model used to “replicate” the Levine & Molina democracy index for a selected country

I will provide additional information about each assignment in class.

These written assignments are each worth ten points and will be graded on a simple scale:

Points	Criteria
10	Excellent; demonstrates careful thinking about the subject, engages in critical thinking, and goes beyond the course readings to incorporate additional content or concepts
9	Good; demonstrates understanding of core concepts and engages in critical thinking
8	Satisfactory; demonstrates a sincere engagement with the relevant concepts
7	Acceptable; makes (limited) effort to discuss or apply relevant concepts
6	Unsatisfactory; does not engage with the relevant concepts
0	Did not complete the assignment

While I don't allow rewrites of low scoring papers, I will assign several different reflective essays, and keep only the best six scores. This means you will have multiple chances to improve your writing and/or calibrate your work to meet my expectations.

I will update participation grades periodically (at least every two weeks), and post them to Blackboard. You will earn credit for the six written assignments with the highest scores.

Group Projects

Several of the semester assignments—particularly the Case Study Report and the Seminar Paper—are *group* assignments. You will be organized into small groups (of 2-3 students) and responsible for conducting the research necessary to complete the assignments.

Each group will be assigned one of the following countries: Chile, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. Each country is covered in a chapter in the Levine & Molina book (*The Quality of Democracy in Latin America*).

All group assignments will be graded *collectively*. That means that whatever points awarded for the assignment will be given to all group members. The one exception is the oral report for the case study presentation: any group member absent on the day of his/her group's presentation will receive a zero for that assignment. If there are any concerns about the way groups are working, students should see me immediately so that I can try to address those concerns.

Case Study Report (Group Project)

Each small student group will complete one “case study” report on a selected country. The main objective of the case study report is to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your familiarity about a selected country’s politics as relevant for this course. Another objective is to help strengthen your analytical writing skills in anticipation of the larger seminar paper.

The case study report has both a written and an oral component.

The written component is a short (4-5 pages) paper written in the style of a policy “brief” or “white paper” that provides a brief (or “executive”) summary of the country’s political history since 1980 (or date of democratic transition), as well as a preliminary assessment of and the trends in the quality of that country’s democracy since 1980 (or date of first democratic election). In addition to engaging with basic concepts introduced in the seminar, the written report should include reference citations to at least five additional sources beyond the seminar readings. References should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* author-date conventions.

The written component is worth 20 points and will be graded based on the following criteria:

Points	Criteria
0-5	Quality of writing: spelling and grammar, following formatting guidelines, and overall presentation
0-5	Incorporation of additional references, their quality, and their relevance
0-5	Presentation of case background: information is relevant and well organized
0-5	Strength of analysis: engages in relevant concepts, bases analysis on (strong) evidence, makes sure conclusions follow from evidence

The oral component is a brief (5-minute) presentation given during the week before spring break. The oral presentation should include a slideshow presentation using PowerPoint (or other similar software).

The oral component is worth 20 points and will be graded based on the following criteria:

Points	Criteria
0-5	Quality of oral presentation: confident concise, clear, professional delivery
0-5	Quality of slideshow presentation: good visuals, information is presented clearly and well organized, evidence of careful editing and design
0-5	Presentation of case background: information is relevant and well organized
0-5	Strength of analysis: engages in relevant concepts, bases analysis on (strong) evidence, makes sure conclusions follow from evidence

I will provide additional information about each component in class.

Semester Research Paper (Group Project)

The capstone project for this course is a semester research paper. The main objective of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to reflect upon and critically engage with a major theme from the readings and demonstrate his/her ability to use concepts or empirical procedures in a specific application to an in-depth case study. Another objective is to help strengthen analytical writing and empirical research skills in anticipation of a Croft senior thesis project.

Early in the semester, students will be assigned a specific country for their small group. Students will become familiar with that country, which will be the country they will write about for all assignments during the semester. Those assignments will provide preliminary research material for use in the final seminar paper. Students are *encouraged* to incorporate material from those earlier assignments into the seminar research paper.

The seminar research paper must be 12-15 pages in length, not including the reference bibliography. The paper should be written in double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman, with standard 1-inch margins. The paper should present an evaluation of a selected country's quality of democracy, centered around a "replication" of the Levine & Molina index as designed by the individual student. This means that the seminar paper should minimally include: a brief historical background of the case, a discussion of the Levine & Molina index, a description of the specific data and indicators used to "replicate" their index, an empirical presentation of the compiled index, and an evaluation of the index using both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

These seminar research paper is worth 80 points and will be graded based on the following criteria:

Points	Criteria
0-10	Quality of writing: spelling and grammar, following formatting guidelines, and overall presentation
0-10	Incorporation of additional references, their quality, and their relevance
0-10	Presentation of case background: information is relevant and well organized
0-10	Presentation of Levine & Molina index: index is conceptually anchored, index strength <i>and</i> weaknesses are discussed, clear presentation of its components
0-10	Presentation of <i>empirical method</i> : discussion of the specific data/indicators used, along with discussion about their strengths, limitations, and tradeoffs
0-10	Strength of evaluation of index: discussion of alternative measures and statistical procedures used to evaluate index, qualitative evaluation using historical record
0-10	Overall strength of analysis: engages in relevant concepts, bases analysis on (strong) evidence, makes sure conclusions follow from evidence

I will provide additional information about this assignment in class throughout the semester. Students are also encouraged to come see me during office hours (or by appointment) throughout the semester.

Final Exam

There is only one exam in this course. The final exam will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and a take-home (long essay) component. The exam will evaluate your knowledge of some basic concepts related to modern democratic theory, as well as their historical and contemporary application to Latin America. The exam will also evaluate your knowledge about various “indexes” of democracy, as well as specific indicators used to evaluate elements of the quality of democracy. The test will also evaluate your ability to interpret and use those indicators and indexes in practical application. I will provide a study guide the week before the exam.

The final exam date and time is set by the university (see the university-wide final exam schedule) and is listed on the semester schedule. If you want to schedule an alternate final exam time, you must contact me by noon on Wednesday, May 3 to make special arrangements. The granting of an alternate exam time is completely at my discretion and will only be made in extraordinary circumstances.

Student Disability Services

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have verified disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

If you have a *documented* disability as described by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 933-112 Section 504) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and wish to request academic and/or physical accommodations, contact Student Disability Services at 234 Martindale (662-915-7128 or 662-915-7907 TTY). You may consult <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/> for more information on student disability services.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Mississippi Creed and the Standards of Honesty as described in Policy Code ACA.AR.600.001 and written in the *M Book*. If you violate the Standards of Honesty, you will be reported and subject to the appropriate sanction which may include expulsion from the University. You can download a copy of the *M Book* online from: <http://conflictresolution.olemiss.edu/m-book/>

Office Hours and Email Communication

If you have any questions or concerns about class or related matters, notify me as soon as possible. If you wait, it may limit my ability to help you resolve any issues. When in doubt, ASK!

The best way to communicate with any professor is face-to-face. I invite you to come speak to me during my posted office hours. If those times do not work for you, you may email me to schedule an appointment.

I try to respond to all emails promptly (as should you). However, I typically don't respond to student emails outside normal business hours (Mon–Fri 8:00 am to 5:00 pm). Still, if you have a question or concern, email me right away. I clear my inbox first thing every morning, and will respond as soon as I can. But if you email me during the weekend, don't expect a response prior to the upcoming Monday morning.

Check your email regularly. I occasionally send notifications to the class or (if a situation warrants it) to individual students. When I do, I will use your university (go.olemiss.edu) account. If you have not activated your university account, you should do so right away. The IT help desk located in Weir Hall (662-915-522 or helpdesk@olemiss.edu) can help you set up university your email account on any device (including Android and iOS smartphones and tablets).

A useful set of email guidelines (“How to Email Your Professor (without being annoying AF)”) is posted to Blackboard, but here are some email etiquette tips to keep in mind:

- Use your university email account whenever possible. The University of Mississippi provides you a FREE email account. Whenever possible, you should use it (it’s more “professional”).
- Remember to keep your messages *professional* and *respectful*.
- Use salutations such as “Professor Centellas” or “Dr. Centellas.”
- Sign your email. Do *NOT* assume that I know who sent the email (especially if you did not use your university account).
- Try to write clear and grammatically correct emails. If your writing is unclear, I may not understand your question.
- Do *NOT* ask “Did you get my email?” the next time you see me if you haven’t checked your email recently. I may have answered your email already; your question must not have been that important if you did not check to see if I had responded to it.
- Wait at least six hours before sending another email. Like you, I have many responsibilities and may not be able to answer you immediately—but I will respond as soon as I can.

Course Schedule

Week 1	1/23–1/27	Conceptual definitions of democracy
	Monday	Introduction; go over course requirements
	Wednesday	Read –Sørensen, “What Is Democracy?” –Schmitter & Karl, “What Democracy Is ... and Is Not”
	Friday	Read –Tilly, “What Is Democracy?” –Linz & Stepan, “Democracy and Its Arenas”
Week 2	1/30–2/3	Latin America’s democratic tradition
	Monday	Read –Peeler, “Basic Issues of Democratic Theory”
	Wednesday	Read –Peeler, “Democracy and the Latin American Tradition”
	Friday	Read –Gargarella, “Latin American Constitutionalism” –King, “Neo-Bolivarian Constitutional Design”
Week 3	2/6–2/10	Latin America’s experience with democracy
	Monday	Read –Peeler, “Establishing Democracy” –Sørensen, “Processes of Regime Change”
	Wednesday	Read –Peeler, “Maintenance”
	Friday	Read –Mainwaring, “Crisis of Representation in the Andes” –Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, “Cross-Currents in Latin America” <i>Written assignment #1 (conceptual definition of democracy) due</i>
Week 4	2/13–2/17	The Levine & Molina Index
	Monday	Read –Levine & Molina, “Evaluating the Quality of Democracy in Latin America”
	Wednesday	Read –Levine & Molina, “Measuring the Quality of Democracy”
	Friday	Reading –Levine & Molina, “The Quality of Democracy: Strengths and Weaknesses”
Week 5	2/20–2/24	Using basic election statistics
	Monday	Learn how to work with basic voting data
	Wednesday	Focus on women in the legislature
	Friday	Learn how to write a report using election data

Week 6	2/27–3/3	Using basic election data to create composite indicators
	Monday	Effective number of parties Read –Lijphart, “Disproportionality, Multipartyism, and Majority Victories” –Janda & Kwak, “Party Systems: Data and Measures” (*) –Taagepera, “Supplementing the Effective Number of Parties” (*) –Taagepera, “Effective Number of Parties for Incomplete Data” (*) –Golosov, “The Effective Number of Parties: A New Approach” (*) <i>Written assignment #2 (election statistics) due</i>
	Wednesday	Representativeness indicators Read –Gallagher, “Proportionality, Disproportionality, and Electoral Systems”
	Friday	Electoral volatility Read –Pedersen, “The Dynamics of European Party Systems”
Week 7	3/6–3/10	Case studies
	Monday	In-class presentations <i>Written assignment #3 (party system indicators) due</i>
	Wednesday	In-class presentations
	Friday	In-class presentations <i>Case study written report due before class</i>
	***	Spring Break ***
Week 8	3/20–3/24	Common democracy indicators: Polity and Freedom House
	Monday	Read –Munck & Verkuilen, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy” –Marshall, et al, “Polity IV: 1800-1999” –Look over Polity codebook
	Wednesday	Work with Polity data
	Friday	Work with Freedom House data
Week 9	3/27–3/31	New democracy indicators: V-Dem
	Monday	Read –Lindberg, “V-Dem: A New Way to Measure Democracy” –Look over V-Dem codebook <i>Written assignment #4 (FH/Polity) due</i>
	Wednesday	Work with V-Dem data
	Friday	Work with V-Dem data

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Week 10	4/3–4/7	Using public opinion data
	Monday	Read –Carlin & Singer, “Support for Polyarchy in the Americas” –Lagos, “Latin America’s Diversity of Views” –Look over AmericasBarometer codebook <i>Written assignment #5 (V-Dem) due</i>
	Wednesday	Work with AmericasBarometer data
	Friday	Work with AmericasBarometer data
Week 11	4/10–4/14	Levine & Molina index components
	Monday	Quality of Electoral Decision indicators –World Press Freedom Index –Freedom of the Press Index –World Development Indicators –Freedom House Index <i>Written assignment #6 (public opinion) due</i>
	Wednesday	Participation indicators –Voter turnout data –Representativity index (Gallagher’s LSq)
	Friday	Accountability indicators –Horizontal accountability –Vertical accountability –Societal accountability
Week 12	4/17–4/21	Levine & Molina index components
	Monday	Sovereignty indicators –Economic autonomy –Autonomy vis-à-vis the military
	Wednesday	Responsiveness indicators –AmericasBarometer –Latinobarómetro
	Friday	Other dimensions of democracy –Human Development Index –Fragile States Index –World Development Indicators
Week 13	4/24–4/26	Simple inferential statistics
	Monday	Simple time series <i>Written assignment #7 (replication model) due</i>
	Wednesday	Simple correlation
	Friday	Review

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Week 14	5/1–5/5	Work on independent research project
	Monday	Work independently on seminar paper <i>Written assignment #8 (inferential statistics) due</i>
	Wednesday	Work independently on seminar paper
	Friday	Final exam review

Final Exam **Wednesday, May 10** **12:00-3:00 pm**