# Welcome to CPO4303: Latin American Politics!

## Dr. Bruce M. Wilson

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- About Dr. Wilson
- UCF Library: how to identify Fake News
- Evaluating information--Applying the CRAAP Test
- Avoiding Some Common Writing Errors in Essays

***Welcome to CPO4303 Latin American Politics, Summer A!***

*This is a VERY short semester: Read assignment instructions, take note of requirements and deadlines.*

These are truly exciting times to be learning about **Latin American Politics**!

Over the last two years, more than sixteen Latin American elections took place with nine new presidents took office in 2018 alone, which changed the political face of the region in many dramatic ways. There are other issues that dovetail with US economic and security interests that are entering uncharted territory: The US relations with Mexico (one of our largest trading partners) is more uncertain with the proposed "wall," accusations of unfair trade, and the rise of a new type of politician in the US and in Mexico. Relations with Central America are similarly under stress due to the immigration crisis. The ongoing slow-motion collapse of Venezuela, the authoritarian trends in Brazil (right-wing) and Nicaragua (traditional *caudillo*), the rise of significant and powerful evangelical parties in countries previously believed immune (Costa Rica for example) has further complicated the political and economic life of Latin Americans. Obviously, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the region further into economic, political, and social turmoil with some countries doing impressively well while others have struggled.

But there are also many fascinating lessons that can be learned from studying Latin American politics that have nothing to do with the US in any manner and it is these topics that we will cover over the course of the semester. As you will find, the

course is designed to maximize the class coverage of topics that you find fundamentally interesting.

## Course structure

The course contains six modules and an optional final essay exam that can be used to replace your lowest module grade. Modules generally have discussions, narrated PowerPoint presentations, and/or short essays that integrate much of what you learned through critical reflection.

- Essays are 650 words, plus or minus 10% (i.e., if your paper is under 585 words, it is too short and will be penalized. If it is longer than 715 words, it is too long and will be similarly penalized).

There is no required textbook assigned for this class, instead, I will upload readings and some ancillary material (videos, etc.) that you are required to read/watch and engage with; they will help you better understand politics in Latin America.

Finally, many of the class modules have more than one deadline - typically there is a deadline for the first discussion posting and a separate one for the additional follow-up postings for that discussion with a separate deadline for the short papers, which are typically due at the end of the module.

It is crucial that you are aware of all deadlines and that you don't miss any of them. If you miss a deadline, you will automatically lose 20 points per day; if you miss a final discussion deadline you will not be able to contribute further to the discussion and will be graded on what you posted prior to the deadline.

## Instructor Contact

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| **Instructor** | Dr. Bruce M. Wilson |
| **Office** | Phillips Hall 305E |
| **Office Hours** | Dr. Wilson's Office Hours: by appointment.<br><br>GTA (Graduate Teaching Assistant): TBA |
| **Homepages** | Professor Wilson's homepage:<br><br>at UCF |

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| | at CMI, Bergen, Norway |
| **Phone** | 407-823-2608 (no voice mail) |
| **E-mail** | All class email communication must be done through the Canvas email system. |

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## Course Description

This class introduces students to the major countries of Latin America, their politics, development, governance, and related political science theories to help you understand those topics. The class focuses on the post-WWII period during which Latin America has been transformed from rural to urban, agricultural to industrial, dictatorship to democracy (and back, in some cases), state-led economic growth to Neo-liberalism, revolutions, insurgencies, and elections, the rise and fall of political parties, and the rise of assertive superior courts over the last three decades.

The class uses country case studies to illuminate and illustrate the consequence of these changes on various groups and governments across the region. It also focuses on several specific major issues/developments confronting the countries of Latin America over the last decades including the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

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## Class Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will understand the:

- important social, economic, political, and geographic diversity that characterizes Latin America.
- the basic foundations of the United States/Latin American relations and those between Latin American states.
- strategies used to pursue economic development and different conceptualization of economic development
- underpinnings of political and economic development strategies.
- complex nature of the major challenges facing contemporary Latin America
- paradox of the simultaneous existence of expanding economies, democratization, and increased crime and corruption

## Required Text

- The are NO required books for this class. All readings will be made available to you via the class homepage, free of charge.
- While there is no need to buy a textbook, if you feel you would really like to have a good general textbook on Latin America, you might consider the new edition of *Democracy in Latin America* by Peter Smith and Cameron Sells, Oxford University Press. There is no obligation to purchase this book and you certainly do not need the book to excel in this course, but if you really want a textbook this is the one to read.
- Alternatively, there is an open-access textbook from 2015, *Understanding Latin American Politics* by Gregory Weeks that is available here
- To help with the class you should read a newspaper with a significant Latin American politics focus.
    - I suggest you sign up for America's Quarterly a free weekly summary of Latin American politics.
    - or use the UT Austin newspaper resource to select a newspaper to read.

## Course Requirements

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| **Assignments** | • You are responsible for:<br>  ○ completing all required assignments in this class<br>  ▪ before the relevant deadlines.<br>  ○ immediately checking that the grades posted online are correct; any discrepancies and/or errors must be reported to the instructor within **three** days of being posted. |

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| **Late, make-up, and extra credit work** | • Late work (initial discussion postings, PowerPoints, exams, and essays) will be penalized 20 points per day, including weekends and holidays.<br>• Discussion postings cannot be made after the discussion has closed<br>• No work will be accepted more than three days after the deadline.<br>• There are no substitute assignments and **NO EXTRA CREDIT**, so please don't ask!<br>• No module grades will be discussed more than five days after they are posted. |

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## Evaluation and Grading

The following scale will be used for the assignment of final grades.

| Letter Grade | Points |
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| A | 90-100 |
| B | 80-89 |
| C | 70-79 |
| D | 60-69 |
| F | 59 or below |

## Rounding of Grades:

- I use traditional rounding up/down of grades, e.g., 89.5X will be rounded up to an "A"; 89.4X remains a "B."

| Assignment | Percentage of Grade |
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| Module #1: Introduction | 2.5% (required) |

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| The 5 substantive modules (#2 through #6) | 19.5% each (97.5% of your total class grade) |
| Optional final exam* | If you take the optional final, it will replace your lowest module grade |
| Total | 100% |

*NB: This policy allows you to miss an entire module without it affecting your class grade. It is designed to accommodate any reason that you might find yourself unable to complete an assignment. It allows me to be fair to everyone in the class and to respect each student's privacy.

## Getting Started

To get started, please review the material on this page, as well as the *Announcements*, and the *Course Rules and Policies* (available at the top of this page).

There are some additional readings that I have added to the modules that you might find interesting/helpful. If you're new to using UCF's online platform, check out **Webcourses@UCF Student Tour** and/or the **Success Resources** link located to the left of this page.

Now, select **Modules** in the left sidebar of this page; then open *Module 1: Introduction* and follow the instructions.

I wish you all a great summer semester and welcome to the class!

## Late work

You can submit late work up to three days after the deadline with a penalty of 20 points per day. Except: you cannot post after the final deadline.

## Attendance Policy

Because this is a completely online class with no face-to-face meetings, there is no attendance policy, *per se*. Having said that, you need to keep up with the pace of the class and participate in all parts of each of the modules. Note that each module contains several deadlines; that is, not all work for a module is due on the last day listed on the Schedule. You must read each module's instructions for a list of deadlines for the various assignments and deadlines. It is your responsibility to check these deadlines as soon as a module opens so you won't miss any due dates.

***NB**: The federally-mandated attendance reporting policy requires you to complete an assignment before the end of the first week (before 5 pm on Friday). It does not matter what score you receive on the quiz, but you must complete it before the deadline. Failure to do so might impact your financial aid and/or other support.*

## Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on any examination or assignment will result in an "F" for that assignment and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the updated UCF Golden Rule for further information. Any module that contains any material that is identified by the professor as plagiarized will not be eligible to be dropped as your lowest grade. *Please do not plagiarize!*

I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity.

I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

All your work must be done on your own; you are not allowed to collaborate on discussion postings, essays, or exams. In short, all your written work and work submitted for grading must be your own, original work.

## Sexual Harassment

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex that interferes with educational opportunities is an offense subject to the same penalties as offenses based on other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If

you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources, and information concerning reporting options at shield.ucf.edu. Perpetrators are subject to expulsion or termination and may also be subject to criminal penalties.

## Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must connect with Student Accessibility Services, Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

## Copyright

This course may contain copyright-protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download, or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and for your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

## Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course, you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

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