PLSC 300C Contemporary Peru: Politics and Society

(Approved to fulfill the Core “Societal & Cultural” Knowledge Area)

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Course Description

Latin American countries share a common past of colonialism, poverty, authoritarianism, political instability, and foreign intervention. They differ, however, in the way they have dealt with this heritage and in the way they are dealing with some critical contemporary challenges such as democratization, governance, economic development, human development, and human rights. Peru is an interesting case that can be used to understand the uneven success of democratization and human development in the Andean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela) and how social and economic conditions heavily shape the functioning and quality of political regimes in developing countries.

In this course we will address: (a) the structures of social, political, and cultural exclusion that characterized Peru; (b) the way social, cultural, and economic characteristics of the Peruvian society shape and affect its political fortune; (c) the main achievements and shortcomings of the current democratic experience; (d) the main obstacles to improve the democratic quality of the current political regime.

Course Objectives

This class has several objectives: (1) to provide students with a basic foundation and understanding of the most relevant themes and events in regards to contemporary Peru, (2) to encourage students to evaluate the academic literature and journalistic production on Peru with a critical eye, (3) to provide students the opportunity to understand how social, cultural, and economic structures can shape political developments in developing countries, and (4) to identify and understand the most important differences and similarities between Peru and other Latin American countries.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class and to attend lectures, as material not found in the readings may appear in lectures and in exams. Students are also expected to arrive to class on time and not to leave until class is over. Students have a responsibility to show respect for the opinions expressed by their classmates.
Grading for this class will be based on a midterm exam (40 percent of the final grade), a one 10-page final paper (50 percent of the final grade) and class participation (10 percent of the final grade). The midterm exam will be a one-hour written exam covering the readings, lectures, discussions and all other material used in class. Regarding the final paper, students will be required to write a research paper focusing on one of the main themes developed during the course. Students will have the opportunity to talk with the instructor about the topic of his or her final paper. Papers should have the following format: (a) introduction and statement of why the topic is important, (2) review of the literature or background material on this topic, (3) discussion of your research analysis and main findings, (4) conclusion and (5) references. Paper should be coherent and consistent, and must include citations (or footnotes). The final paper is due the last day of class. The participation grade will be based mostly on the overall contribution to the class—e.g., asking questions for clarification during lectures, participating in class discussions, sharing comments about the material, and answering instructor questions during lectures.

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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**Required Texts**


A course package with several journal articles and book chapters.

**Course Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Week 1: An Overview of Contemporary Peruvian Politics (Part one)**

*Democratization Cycles in Peru*

Smith (Chapter 1)

Smith (Chapter 2)


*The Military in Peru*
Political Violence in Peru: 1980-1995


Week 2: An Overview of Contemporary Peruvian Politics (Part two) and The Institutional Setting in Peru


Presidentialism in Peru

Smith (Chapter 5)

Smith (Chapter 6)

Parties and Party System in Peru


Elections in Peru

Smith (Chapter 7)
Week 3: Civil Society, Social Movements and Political Culture in Peru

Civil Society and Social Movements in Peru


Political Culture in Peru

Smith (Chapter 11)

UNDP. 2004. Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens’ Democracy (pp. 131-147)


Week 4: Human Development, Human Rights and Political Representation in Peru

The Political Impact of Poverty


Week 5: Citizenship and Governance in Peru

State Capacity and Policy Performance in Peru

Smith (Chapter 8)

Smith (Chapter 9)

The Quality of Democracy in Peru

Smith (Chapter 10)

Smith (Chapter 12)