Introduction

The Americas contain almost 1 billion people and 35 sovereign states. There is a rich history of political interaction between these people and states, and in the post-Cold War era, this interaction has become more intense and complex. This course explores some of the major episodes and themes in 20th and 21st century inter-American politics, largely but not exclusively from the vantage point of two of the most important countries in the region, Brazil and the USA. Combining comparative politics and international relations, the course is based on the premise that regional politics still matter in a globalizing world, and are increasingly important in both Brazil and the USA.

The course is divided into three parts. In the first part of the course, we will look at some regional political trends, inter-state dynamics, and Brazilian foreign policy. In Part II, we will examine four important moments in the history of the Americas: World War II, the Cuban revolution of 1959, the 1964 coup d’état in Brazil, and the 1973 military coup in Chile. These are episodes that created a ripple effect in the region, sparking processes of economic, social, and political change beyond the borders of the country in which they initially took place. In Part III, we will look at inter-American challenges in four important policy areas (trade, democracy, human rights, and drugs), examining how actors inside and outside states have tried to deal with these transnational issues, and how bilateral and multilateral policies have – and have not – changed developments on the ground.

Three themes will recur throughout the course. One is the difficulty of Latin American states, including Brazil, in dealing with the overweening power of the USA. The USA is an imperial power more interested in other parts of the world (such as East Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Europe) than the Americas, but it still has unilateralist and interventionist impulses when it comes to its southern neighbours. Unilateralist – if not yet interventionist – tendencies have been heightened by the Trump administration in the USA. The second theme is the Latin American pursuit of a foreign policy autonomous of the USA. This involves a debate about Latin America’s global and regional interests, and a search for the recognition of those interests on the part of its bilateral and multilateral partners. The third theme is how politics in the Americas are changing. This includes the extent of the USA’s relative decline, the degree of convergence between the USA and Latin America, and the relevance and effectiveness of regional institutions and attempts at
problem solving in a globalizing world.

**Educational Aims of the Course**

The course will enable students to better understand some key historical moments that have shaped inter-American relations, as well as some of the most important contemporary public policy debates in the Western Hemisphere. The specific aims of the course are to:

- introduce the students to influential texts that interpret inter-American relations from different theoretical perspectives;

- illuminate the changes to inter-American relations that occurred during and after four key historical events;

- demonstrate basic features of inter-American political and economic institutions (such as the Organisation of American States, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mercosur, Unasur, the South American Defence Council, Alba, Celac, and the UN’s ECLAC and UNDP);

- enable students to critically engage with conflicting evaluations of political and policy outcomes in several key areas affecting countries in the Americas (including the commitment to democracy, the human rights system, trade policy and regional economic integration, and illicit drug production, trafficking and consumption);

- and provide students with the concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical knowledge, and analytical skills required for evaluations of inter-American political and public policy debates.

**Learning Outcomes of the Course**

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- demonstrate a sound grasp of three key moments in 20th and 21st century inter-American political history;

- understand how these moments contributed to the development of the region’s economic, political and social development;

- critically assess and evaluate different contemporary policies and their outcomes;
and demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast various interpretations of contemporary inter-American politics from a variety of different theoretical perspectives.

**Teaching Arrangements**

Teaching will consist of six four-hour class meetings. The classes will involve a presentation by the tutor as well as discussion, student presentations and other forms of interaction. They will take place on Fridays from 9:00 to 13:00 starting on the 11th of May. Please note that there will be no class on Friday 25 May, because the instructor will be attending the Latin American Studies Association conference.

**Assessment**

Assessment will consist of: **1) one short essay** (1,500 words). This essay will be worth 30% of the course mark.

Choose one of the events covered in Part II (World War II, the Cuban revolution, the Brazilian or Chilean coups) and answer one of the following questions:

a) What are the principal causes of this event? In your answer, make sure to point out the relative balance between domestic and international factors.

b) How did the event affect inter-American politics?

c) Analyze the event in light of the foreign policy of the USA, Brazil, or another Latin American country. How did that policy attempt to respond to that event, and with what results?

**2) the second essay** (4,000 words). This essay is weighted 60% of the course mark.

Choose one of the policy areas in Part III, and answer one of the following questions:

a) Explain the origins and development of the contemporary inter-American outcome in this policy area. What were the principal factors in this development, and how might the system evolve in the medium term?

b) Examine inter-American policy in this area. What could be done by one or more regional multilateral organization (OAS, Inter-American Development Bank, etc.) or states to address current problems.

c) Explain the origins of Brazilian or US policy in this area. Is the policy responding to current problems adequately, and why or why not?
3) **in-class participation.** This will be worth 10% of the course mark.

**Course Structure and Reading List**

**PART I: Global and Regional Issues, American States, and Foreign Policy**

**11 May: Unit 1: Enduring Dilemmas and the Contemporary Conjuncture**

What are the most important issues in inter-American politics? How have inter-American politics shifted in the first part of the 21st century? What is the relationship between inter-American and global politics?

**Required**


**Recommended**


**11 May: Unit 2: Understanding Latin American Foreign Policy (The Case of Brazil)**

What are the main principles of Brazilian foreign policy? How easy is it for policymakers to adhere to those principles in practice?
PART II: KEY EVENTS AND PERIODS IN THE EVOLUTION OF INTER-AMERICAN POLITICS

18 May: Unit 3: World War II

How did World War II affect inter-American relations? Did Brazil’s role in the conflict have an
influence on its international relations and/or domestic politics?

**Required**

Frank McCann, “Brazil’s Options Narrow”, chapter 4 of book manuscript.


**Recommended**

Frank McCann, “Post World War Disappointment”, chapter 7 of book manuscript.

**18 May: Unit 4:** Guest lecture: Matias Spektor (FGV-SP) “Corruption and Foreign Policy”

**1 June: Unit 5:** The Cuban Revolution

How did the 1959 Cuban revolution change inter-American politics?

**Required**


**Recommended**


**1 June: Unit 6:** The 1964 Coup in Brazil

What were the long-term and immediate causes of the military coup in Brazil? What did it mean for inter-American politics and Brazilian foreign policy?

**Required**

Stanley Hilton, “The United States, Brazil and the Cold War, 1945-1960: End of the Special
8 June: Unit 7: The Chilean Coup

What was the significance of the coup d’état in Chile on 11 September 1973?

Required


Recommended


PART III: CONTEMPORARY POLICY ISSUES
8 June: Unit 8: Trade and Economic Integration

What are the most significant recent changes in patterns of trade in the region? What policy options in trade and regional integration do countries in the region face?

Required


Recommended


15 June: Unit 9: The Defence of Democracy

What is the track record of regional institutions and states in defending democracy in the post-Cold War period? How robust is the contemporary system of democracy protection?

Required


Recommended

Thomas Legler, Sharon Lean, and Dexter Boniface, eds. (2007) Promoting Democracy in the

**15 June: Unit 10: Human Rights**

How has the inter-American human rights system evolved, and how effective is it?

**Required**


**Recommended**


**22 June: Unit 11: Drugs**

Does contemporary drug policy make sense? Is there a viable alternative to the status quo?

**Required**


Recommended

Guzman Castro (2014) From Punishment to Markets: Social Movements, the State and Legal Marijuana in Uruguay, unpublished paper online.


22 June: Summary and conclusions/Presentations of outlines of final essays.