¡REVOLUCION!
New York University
Gallatin School of Individualized Study
IDSEM-UG.1486.001

Instructor: Alejandro Velasco
Office: 1 Washington Place, Rm. 506
Off. Hours: T 3:30-5:30PM; W 10AM-2PM, or by appt
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Spring 2013: Term
Silver 621: Location
Wed 6:20-9:00 PM: Time

Course Description

Equating Latin America and revolution seems almost a truism. From Zapata to “Ché” to Chávez, the region’s modern history is a tale of one movement promising epic change to the next, each more dramatic than the last and collectively giving rise to an image of Latin America as a cradle of firebrand leaders and riotous masses leaving in their wake endless cycles of unrest. But to look deeper into this history is to find a world of complexity, of peoples pursuing radical change but also gradual reform, at times taking up ballots and at times taking up arms, at times at the factory and at times at the farm, at times from the left and at times from the right. All of it “revolución,” yes, but what kind? And through what means? And for what ends? And at what cost? This course traces the evolution of revolution in twentieth century Latin America, from the final collapse of Spanish colonialism in 1898 to the rise of chavismo in 1998.

Please keep in mind that because the course structure is chronological, you should be sure to read the assigned documents (either primary or secondary) in the order in which they appear in the syllabus.

Requirements/Grading

Weekly Responses throughout 15%
First Response Essay varies per student 15%
Second Response Essay varies per student 15%
Final Paper 17 or 20 May 25%
Participation/Attendance throughout 30%

Attendance/Participation (30%)

Regular attendance, punctuality, and engagement with the readings are keys to being an active participant. As such I will expect you to be present and on time at each of our class sessions. For your benefit and mine, I will distribute attendance sheets at the beginning of each class. Should you need to miss a session, let me know ahead of class as I will not consider retroactive explanations and each unexcused absence will incur a five point reduction from your final grade. After three unexcused absences, you will receive an “F” for participation/attendance. More importantly, though, I will expect you to come to class prepared, which of course means that you
have read/seen/heard the work assigned in advance of each class, and are ready to participate in discussions about the materials. **Please don’t take this course if you think you will be unable to handle a reading load of about 120 pages per week.**

**Weekly Responses (due at 2PM on Wednesdays; 15%)**

To help you keep up with our readings, and to help me gauge where your areas of interest or concern lay, students will **post responses to the course website by 2PM on Wednesday (responses submitted after 2PM will not be counted)**. Over the course of the semester, you **will be responsible for submitting at least 7 responses.** Responses may address specific readings – either in general terms or focus on a particular section – or issues raised in the context of class discussion, issues that perhaps were left unexamined or that you wished we had tackled further. Responses can be as specific or broad as you wish. They can include questions or reflections on the materials, or both. In all instances they should lay bare your own process of coming to terms with the overarching theme of the course: revolution. That is, your responses should genuinely express an effort at clarification for the purposes of helping you better to engage with course readings. Was something in the readings, lectures, or class discussion unclear? Especially interesting? Particularly troublesome? **Responses should be roughly 150-200 words in length (about the length of this paragraph).**

**Response Essays (2 of 3, due 3 March; 7 April; 5 May; 15%)**

Over the course of the semester you will have **three opportunities to submit two written responses on our readings.** Your responses should analyze course materials covered in the weeks prior to the due dates, as noted above. The purpose of these responses is to consider critically the materials we read and the discussions that followed. Indeed, you may want to draw from one of the questions that you posted on the website (see above) to explore it in more detail. Your response should reflect careful consideration of the various points advanced in each section. To help you I will provide prompts, but you may also write on a topic of your choice. What struck you as especially unexpected, and why? What contradictions emerged from the various readings? What was most surprising to you about the discussions that ensued? What did you take away from the overall readings? You might consider a close reading of a particular passage as a way to reflect upon larger issues that arose in the context of discussion. Or perhaps a conversation in class seemed especially rich, sparking you to respond in more detail if you were unable to develop your thoughts fully in class. **In all cases, responses should make an argument by marshaling evidence drawn from our readings.** Responses should be roughly 5 pages in length (double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman or comparable font) and should use proper citation technique (MLA, APA, Chicago are fine; just be consistent). After receiving my comments, you will have one week to resubmit your response to reflect my feedback and opt for a higher grade. Please submit all responses to av48@nyu.edu; I will not grade hard copies.

**Final Paper (Due 17 or 20 May; 25%)**
In your final paper (approx. 8-10 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, one inch margins, Times New Roman or a comparable font, using appropriate and consistent citation styles), you will examine the specific cases of Brazil or Venezuela. You may also opt to work on another case of your choosing, in consultation with the instructor. The purpose of this assignment is to locate a particular contemporary expression of Latin American revolution within a larger historical trajectory of twentieth century revolution. In general terms, these papers are designed to confront you with the underlying question of the course: what has or hasn’t changed in the landscape of revolutionary movements in Latin America since the twentieth century? How have tactics changed or remained the same? How have claims changed or remained the same? How have actors changed or remained the same? How have transnational elements changed or remained the same?

To help you get your bearings, in the second week of class we will conduct an initial assessment of these cases, examining their historical roots, their trajectory since first emerging on the international scene, and their prospects for the future. More broadly, we will also discuss the relationship of these movements to conventional imaginaries of what “revolution” constitutes: what about them strikes us (and those writing about them) as “revolutionary”? What doesn’t? Based on this initial assessment, you should select one case to explore in more detail over the course of the semester, letting me know by no later than 13 Feb which you will want to focus on for your paper (please see me if you are already working on a project that ties into this course, or if you would prefer to develop a thematic topic, or if you already had another case in mind).

Once you’ve selected your case study, your first task will be to become familiar with the major issues around your particular case study. Although I will provide some sources during the first two weeks of class, you will also want to complement these with additional secondary sources that I will suggest. On the basis of these readings, you should be able to find a more specific area that interests you and that speaks directly to the question of how these movements do or do not fall within the scope of what we imagine as “revolución” in Latin America. Some potential topics might include social missions in Bolivarian Venezuela, the working class roots of Brazil’s Lula da Silva, populism in the discourse of Hugo Chávez, land claims in the program of Brazilian social movements, etc.

Once you have honed in on a more specific topic, you should begin compiling a dossier of primary sources on your case by conducting searches in periodicals such as the New York Times, The Miami Herald, NACLA Report on the Americas, and The Economist (available online or through the Bobst Library website; if you feel comfortable reading Spanish or Portuguese, feel free to conduct primary source research on newspapers from the region itself). If you are having trouble locating primary sources for your case, please do let me know so that we can find alternative topics or look beyond these suggested sources. Let me suggest that an effective and stress-free way of conducting this type of research is to set aside a couple of hours per week, the first hour to actually conduct the research online, and the second to read over your sources, taking rough notes (that is, do not take notes on every single point advanced in a source; instead, read the source fully, then jot down your rough impressions for easy reference later).

Successful papers, as with any research paper, will have a clearly defined (and limited) scope, dialogue with an existing literature (i.e. what others have written or said about the topic),
advance an argument, and be supported by primary sources. As such, early in your paper you should telegraph (i.e. indicate to the reader) what your overarching argument is, how you will develop it (i.e. what subsections will help you make the argument), and what sources you will be relying on (if pertinent, you should also comment on any shortcomings of your sources; for instance, if your sources are primarily one-sided, you should indicate why, and how it affects the overall argument). You should include a brief (two to three pages) section that dialogues with the major secondary literature you found. How have others dealt with the case? Has the question of how to define “revolution” arisen? If so, in what terms? Devote the bulk of your paper to exploring the actual case. Here is where you will deploy a close reading of the sources you have collected. Please submit all papers to av48@nyu.edu; I will not grade hard copies.

You can meet with me at any time for any reason, and I encourage you to do so. But to help keep you on track please keep the following timeline in mind:

**12-14 March:** Meet with me during office hours to discuss your case study, identify potential sources, and consider feasibility to narrow it down to a more specific area of interest and research. During this meeting we will also discuss potential places where you may locate primary sources on your documents, beyond those noted above.

**23-25 April:** Meet with me during office hours to go over your research to date. During this meeting we will also begin to think about the argument you will be making and the potential structure of your paper. Indeed you may want to submit a very rough sketch (outline, etc) reflecting your initial attempts to engage with the sources, both primary and secondary, listing points of particular interest, issues where you think the existing literature may be lacking, or even places where the primary sources conflict with the secondary sources.

**13 May:** Optional rough draft of paper due.

**17 May:** Final paper due if you did not submit a rough draft.

**20 May:** Final paper due if you did submit a rough draft.

**Readings**

The following books are required and will be available at Bluestockings Booksellers, 172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington, tel. 212.777.6028.


Additional required readings, such as academic and newspaper articles, will be made available on the course website or on E-Reserves.

**Academic Integrity**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

**Late Submissions/Incompletes**

Students can ask for extensions and will receive them at the instructor’s discretion, though any late submission will incur a half grade drop unless the delay results from documented medical reasons or family emergencies. **Only requests made in advance of the deadline will be considered.** Assignments submitted late without previously alerting the instructor will not be graded. The last day to submit any pending work granted an extension is **21 May**. If you anticipate being unable to meet this deadline, you should contact the instructor immediately and request to receive an Incomplete, which will be granted at the instructor’s discretion and only with a previously approved plan to complete outstanding work.

**Extra Credit**

Over the course of the semester, the instructor may make extra credit opportunities available to students. These may include attending relevant talks, performances, films, expositions, etc. Students are also encouraged to recommend any events that strike them as relevant to the course. Each extra credit opportunity will add one point to a student’s final grade, with no more than three points possible.
CLASS SCHEDULE
(subject to change)

1. **30 January: Course Intro**


2. **6 February: Latin American Revolution at a Crossroads (127 pp)**

   Revolution (38 pp):


   Venezuela (46 pp)

   Jon Lee Anderson, “The Revolutionary: The president of Venezuela has a vision, and Washington has a headache” *The New Yorker* 10 September 2001 (16 pp)

   Elisabeth Young Bruehl, “Reading Arendt in Caracas.” *The Nation*, 27 August 2007 (9 pp)


   Brazil (43 pp):


3. **13 February: Revolutionary Counterpoint: Cuba’s In-Dependence and Monroe's Resurrection (119 pp)**

   Alejandro Velasco, “Cuban In-Dependence and Monroe’s Resurrection.” Gallatin School: New York University, 2013. (Online Lecture Available from Classes)

   The view from the US

   James Monroe, “Message to Congress,” 2 December 1823 (1 pp)


The view from Cuba


Louis Pérez, “The Structure of the Republic,” in *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (40 pp) (Copies Available Outside 506)


Ricardo Flores Magón, “Land and Liberty” (4 pp)

Emiliano Zapata, “Plan of Ayala” (4 pp)

Francisco Villa, “Manifesto to the Mexican Nation,” 1915 (6 pp) (Copies Available Rm 506)


**Public Screening:** Tuesday 12 March, 7PM @ Avery Fisher (Bobst 2nd Floor); If you cannot make this screening, please arrange to watch it the film on your own at Avery Fisher Center. Call number VCA 7581


**PBSuccess:** 1-5, 7, 9-12, 148-51, 163-64, 203, 205-29 (41 pp)

8. **20 March: SPRING BREAK**


Alejandro Velasco, “Cuban Counterpoint: Revolution From Above and Below.” Gallatin School: New York University, 2013. (Online Lecture Available from Classes)


Oscar Zanetti, “The United Fruit Company in Cuba” in 290-95 (6 pp)
Fidel Castro, "History will absolve me" 306-314 (8 pp)


Fidel Castro, “Castro Announces the Revolution,” in 341-43 (3 pp)

Medea Benjamin et al, “How the Poor Got More,” in 344-353 (10 pp)

Margaret Randall, “Women in the Swamps” in 363-369 (6 pp)


Oscar Lewis et al, “The Literacy Campaign” in 389-395 (5 pp)


Reinaldo Arenas, “Homosexuality, Creativity, Dissidence,” in 406-411 (6 pp)

Guillermo Cabrera Infante, "Mea Cuba" in 481-487 (6 pp)

Carlos Moore, “Silence on Black Cuba” in 419-423 (5 pp)

John Clytus, "Black Man in Red Cuba" in 424-426 (3 pp)

“The Family Code” in 399-405 (6 pp)

Juan Antonio Blanco and Medea Benjamin, "From Utopianism to Institutionalization" in 433-442 (9 pp)


EXTRA CREDIT SCREENING: Steven Soderbergh, Ché Part Two: Guerrilla. IFC Films, 2008. Time and Location TBA

11. 10 April: Revolution from Below: Pedagogy and Theology (142 pp)


12. 17 April: Radicalism and Liberalism in Conflict: Popular Power in Chile (118 pp)


Public Screening: Tuesday 16 April, 7PM @ Avery Fisher (Bobst 2nd Floor); If you cannot make this screening, please arrange to watch the film on your own at Avery Fisher Center. Call number VCA 7898, pt 3


14. **1 May: Between Ballots and Bullets in the Twilight of the 20th Century (175 pp)**


**Public Screening:** Tuesday 30 April, 7PM @ Avery Fisher (Bobst 2nd Floor); If you cannot make this screening, please arrange to watch the film on your own at Avery Fisher Center. Call number VCA 9190)

EZLN, “First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle” (4 pp)

EZLN, “Second Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle” (11 pp)

15. **8 May: Democratic Revolutions or Revolutionizing Democracy? The Future(s) of Revolution in Latin America (176 pp)**


16. **TUESDAY 14 MAY: RESERVE FOR FINAL CLASS SESSION (NOT OPTIONAL)**