Course Description

Long viewed as a region of landless peasants and landed elites, Latin America is now a continent of cities and mega-cities on whose streets vibrant social movements confront the challenges of metropolitan life. From Buenos Aires to Porto Alegre to Mexico City, new “streetroots” movements forge political identities, goals, and strategies out of a very particular experience of urbanization stretching back hundreds of years. This course examines the trajectory of these streetroots movements, asking: what social, political, and economic forces have shaped their strategies and demands over time? In turn, how have Latin American urban movements shaped developments in the region and beyond? What kinds of cleavages - geographic, generational, tactical - potentially hinder the broad appeal and usefulness of these movements? Among others, readings will include the work of Joao Jose Reis (Brazil) and Daniel James (Argentina) to examine the interplay of race, class, and gender in the development of urban social movements, and first-hand accounts of urban activism by Abraham Guillen (Uruguay) and Maria Elena Moyano (Peru). We will frame our analysis around seminal theories of social movements by Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and Alejandro Portes, as well as contemporary contributions by George Ciccariello-Maher (Venezuela), Gianpaolo Baiocchi (Brazil), and Marina Sitrin (Argentina).

Requirements/Grading

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Attendance/Participation

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 (with a maximum of three). 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 means that you have read/seen/heard the work assigned for 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 100 pages per week.

Weekly Responses
To help you keep up with our readings, and to help me gauge where your areas of interest or concern lay, you should post at least SEVEN brief comments (about 150 words, roughly the length of this paragraph) to the course website by noon on Wednesdays. These 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. These responses can be as specific or broad as you wish; they can raise questions or venture responses to questions we’ve posed in class. In all instances they should reflect your own process of coming to terms with the overarching theme of the course: how do we understand urban social movements in Latin America? 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? Remember: if you have a question about something, chances are that one of your peers does too!

Discussion Sections
Each student will have an opportunity to lead discussion for part of the class on one of the dates marked by an asterisk in the syllabus (please let me know by 11 February if you have a preference, otherwise I will assign you a day). For each section there will be four student discussants, and each student in turn will lead half four to five students in discussion. These sections will be about a half hour in duration. Students will be responsible for closely reading all materials for that week, and for developing discussion questions based on your interpretation of that material. So that we can keep a record of your questions and for others to refer to them, you should post your questions on the course website. Questions may concern whole texts, or focus on a particular section. In the event that they are detailed (for instance, if there was a particular passage that caught your attention and that you think might help draw out larger issues relevant to that section’s readings), make sure that your questions can be connected to larger themes in the text. For a thirty minute discussion, you should expect to prepare no fewer than five questions. In all cases, your questions should have a goal in mind. What is the big idea that the various materials point to? What should we get out of the readings? How do they relate to the larger issues of the course? In order to get your bearings, students will meet with me on the Tuesday before your discussion section.

In the course of actually leading discussion, you should not limit your interventions to just the prepared questions; dare venture answers to those questions, or other questions raised in the context of the discussion. Use your familiarity with the materials to provide plausible answers to the questions both you and your colleagues raise in the context of the discussion. Keep track in your mind of what your peers have said, so that you can draw connections. My evaluation of the thoughtfulness and work that went into creating your discussion questions will determine your grade for this assignment. Finally, while it will be the discussants’ responsibility to come up with engaging questions, it is in every student’s best interest to assist each other by coming
prepared for class and participating actively in the discussion. After all, every student will have a turn at leading a section.

**Response Essay (Due 14 March)**

Your responses should analyze course materials covered in the first half of the course. The purpose is to consider critically the readings, films, and other material we engaged with and the discussions that followed. While I will post essay prompts if you want some direction, you may also write on a topic of your own creation. 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. 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 text 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. This response should be roughly 6-7 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 Project (Due 13 or 16 May)**

In your final project, you should select a contemporary example of an urban social movement in Latin America today. Though you have free range to consider the format in which you wish to present your project (film, presentation, creative writing, art, etc), in finished form it should be the equivalent of a 12-15 page paper, double spaced, 12 point font, one inch margins, Times New Roman or a comparable font, using appropriate and consistent citation techniques. If you already have a case study in mind, feel free to alert me as much. If not, you can select from one of two that we will tackle in the course, namely, Participatory Budgeting in Brazil, or the piquetero movement in Argentina. The purpose of this project is to answer, against the backdrop of a specific case, and on the basis of our readings, discussions, and your own research, the overarching questions of the course: what social, political, and economic forces have shaped these movements’ strategies and demands over time? What kinds of cleavages - geographic, generational, tactical - potentially hinder the broad appeal and usefulness of these movements? How does their urban context inform the discourses of its members, the responses of their fellow citizens, the reactions of their governments, etc?

Over the course of the semester, we will read and discuss materials around these two case studies, materials drawn from different eras in the history of each urban context. These readings will culminate in the final two weeks of class with a pair of book-length ethnographic studies on Participatory Budgeting and the piquetero movement in Argentina. On the week of 24 March you and I will meet to consider the case you’ve selected, and to discuss research materials that will complement the ones we will be reading/discussing in class. You should also compile a small dossier of primary sources on your case by conducting searches in the following periodicals: New York Times, The Miami Herald, NACLA Report on the Americas, and The Economist (available online or through the Bobst Library website). 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).

If you should choose to write a paper for your project, you should be sure it has a clearly defined (and limited) scope, that it dialogues with an existing literature (i.e. what others have written or said about the topic), advances an argument, and is 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 may want to 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 “urban social movement” 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.

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:

**11 – 13 March:** Meet with me during office hours to go over the case study you have selected. During this meeting we will also discuss potential places where you may locate primary sources on your documents, beyond those noted above.

**15 – 17 April:** Meet with me during office hours to go over your progress. During this meeting we will also begin to think about the argument you will be making and the potential format of your project.

**9 May:** Optional rough draft of project due.

**13 May:** If you DID NOT submit a rough draft, then your final draft is due on this date. If it’s an electronic document, please upload it to the digital dropbox on the course website.

**16 May:** If you DID submit a rough draft, then your final draft is due on this date. If it’s an electronic document, please upload it to the digital dropbox on the course website.

**Readings**

You are responsible for purchasing or otherwise acquiring the following books, which we will be reading fully or mostly:


George Ciccarello-Maher,

The following books are optional as we will be reading selected chapters from each. You may want to consider purchasing copies online.


Additional required readings will be made available on the course website or on 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](http://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 **20 December**. 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)

Wed 29 Jan: Why Streetroots? (I)

In-Class FILM: Favela Rising (80 min)

Wed 5 Feb: Why Streetroots? (II)

In-Class FILM: The Take (87 min)

Wed 12 Feb: Theories of Movement - Contention and Beyond…


Alain Touraine. 'An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements'

Craig Jenkins. 'Resource Mobilisation Theory and the Study of Social Movements'

Charles Tilly, 'Social Movements and National Politics'

Sidney Tarrow, 'Power in Movement'

Jurgen Habermas, 'New Social Movements’

Wed 19 Feb: What is Urban in Movement?


Wed 26 Feb: The Dawn of Urban Movements in Latin America


Fri 5 Mar: Creating the Urban “Social”


Wed 12 Mar: Urban Theatrics


FILM: They Don’t Wear Black Tie (120 min) (Avery Fisher, VCA 1750)

Wed 19 Mar: Spring Break

Wed 26 Mar: Urban Tactics***


FILM: Four Days in September (107 min) (Avery Fisher, VCA 9307)
Wed 2 Apr: Magnifying Impact***


(Online via Bobst)

FILM: La Batalla de Chile (100 min) (Avery Fisher, VCA 7898)

Wed 9 Apr: Moving in Repression***


In-Class FILM: Las Madres (64 min)

Wed 16 Apr: Moving in the Neo-liberal City***

Tim Campbell, Chapters 2 and 3 in The Quiet Revolution: Decentralization and the rise of political participation in Latin American Cities. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003 (40 pp)


Wed 23 Apr: Case Study: Taking the State in Venezuela


Guest Speaker: Prof. George Ciccariello-Maher, Drexel University

Wed 30 Apr: Case Study: Taking the Institutions in Brazil

Guest Speaker: Prof. Gianpaolo Baiocchi, NYU Gallatin

**Wed 7 May: Case Study: Taking the Streets in Argentina**


Guest Speaker: Prof. Marina Sitrin, CUNY

**Fri 9 May**

Optional draft of final project due

**Tue 13 May: Possible Make Up Class/Wrap Up**

Final project due (if rough draft not submitted)

**Fri 16 May**

Final project due (if rough draft submitted)