

PS252 Latin America: Colonial Legacies, Modernity, and Indigenous Politics

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 13-15 hrs. or by appointment

Course Description

This course offers a historically grounded and interdisciplinary survey of Latin America's political transformations, with a special focus on how colonial legacies have shaped modern institutions and continue to influence Indigenous life and politics. Drawing from history, political science, and cultural studies, this course will trace the region's trajectory from the colonial era through independence movements to the present day. Students will also analyze the complex dynamics between states, social movements, and Indigenous communities, examining how these relationships have evolved under various development models and modernization projects.

Requirements

This seminar is structured as a space for collective inquiry and discussion. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each class and to participate actively and thoughtfully in seminar discussions. Participation includes attentive listening, informed contributions, and respectful engagement with different viewpoints.

Students are required to complete all written assignments and an in-class presentation and are encouraged to approach the course as an opportunity to develop their analytical and writing skills over the semester.

Office hours are available to discuss readings, assignments, and the development of research ideas.

Because the course builds cumulatively, regular attendance and consistent engagement are important for successful participation in the seminar.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Student learning will be assessed through a combination of seminar participation, written assignments, an in-class presentation, and a final research paper. Assessment emphasizes sustained engagement with course materials, the ability to develop clear and well-supported arguments, and the capacity to situate specific cases within broader historical and political frameworks.

Written assignments and presentations are designed to support the progressive development of students' analytical and research skills over the course of the semester. Feedback will be provided throughout the term to support students' learning and improvement.

Assignments

The course includes the following required assignments:

Short Essay (mid-semester)

Students will write a short analytical essay (approximately 1,500–2,000 words) addressing a key theme, debate, or case discussed in the first part of the course. The essay should demonstrate close engagement with the assigned readings and the ability to formulate a clear and well-supported argument.

In-Class Presentation

Each student will give an in-class presentation based on an Indigenous movement, political process, or socio-environmental conflict relevant to the course. Presentations are expected to be analytically focused and to situate the chosen case within the broader historical and political frameworks discussed in the seminar. Presentations will also serve as a basis for collective discussion.

Final Research Paper

The final assignment is a research paper of approximately 3,000–3,500 words, developed in consultation with the instructor. Students are expected to define a focused research question, engage critically with relevant course materials, and present a coherent and well-structured argument.

The total amount of writing required for the course falls within the 5,000–7,000-word range specified in the Study and Exam Regulations.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar Participation: 30% (15% weeks 1–7; 15% weeks 8–14).

Short Essay (mid-semester): 20%.

In-Class Presentation: 20%.

Final Research Paper: 30%.

Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Topics: Latin America as a category of political-historical analysis; key concepts: colonialism, modernity, nation-state

Readings:

- Tulio Halperin Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, Introduction
- Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (selected excerpts)

Week 2 – Colonialism and Political–Social Structures

Topics: Colonial systems and their long-term effects

Readings:

- Karen Spalding, *Huarochirí: An Andean Society under Inca and Spanish Rule* (excerpts)
- Steve J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest* (excerpts)

Week 3 – Independence and Nation-State Formation

Topics: Independence movements and Indigenous politics in new republics

Readings:

- Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation* (excerpts)
- José Carlos Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*, “The Indian Question”

Week 4 – Citizenship, Race, and Inclusion

Topics: Indigenous citizenship, mestizaje, and racial ideologies

Readings:

- Andrés Guerrero, “The Identification Process” (excerpts)
- Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Race in the 21st Century*, chapter 2

Week 5 – Development Models and Indigenous Communities

Topics: Agrarian reform, indigenismo, displacement

Readings:

- Deborah Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship* (excerpts)
- James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (selected chapter)

Week 6 – Multiculturalism and Indigenous Rights

Topics: Recognition, autonomy, and institutional limits

Readings:

- Charles Hale, Más que un indio (excerpts)
- Rachel Sieder, Multiculturalism in Latin America, Introduction

Week 7 – Indigenous Movements in the 21st Century

Topics: Sovereignty, collective rights, and self-governance

Readings:

- Marisol de la Cadena, Earth Beings (excerpts)
- Arturo Escobar, “Thinking-feeling with the Earth”

Week 8 – Extractivism and Socio-Environmental Conflicts

Topics: Territorial defense and environmental justice

Readings:

- Eduardo Gudynas, “Extractivism: A New Social Contract?” (excerpts)
- Hochstetler & Keck, Greening Brazil (excerpts)

Week 9 – Comparative Indigenous Mobilizations

Topics: Zapatistas, CONAIE, MAS

Readings:

- Jeffrey Webber, Red October (excerpts)
- EZLN, First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle

Week 10 – Democracy and Indigenous Governance

Topics: Tensions between state authority and Indigenous autonomy

Readings:

- Aída Hernández Castillo, Multiple Injustices (excerpts)
- Bret Gustafson, New Languages of the State (excerpts)

Week 11 – Indigenous Memory and Transitional Justice

Topics: Testimony, violence, and reconciliation

Readings:

- Guatemala CEH, Memory of Silence (excerpts)
- Kimberly Theidon, Intimate Enemies (excerpts)

Weeks 12–13 – Student Presentations

Topics: Research presentations and collective discussion

Week 14 – Reflections and Final Discussion

Topics: Synthesis, course reflections, and concluding discussion.

Essay Deadlines

Short Essay (mid-semester): due Week 7

Final Research Paper: due Monday, May 4, 2026

Students are encouraged to plan their work accordingly and to make use of office hours to discuss assignments in advance of the deadlines.

Grades Submission

Final grades for graduating students are due May 8, 2026, by noon.

Final grades for all students are due on May 29, 2026.

Library and Book Purchase Policies

All course readings will be provided as PDF files. No books are required for purchase. Students are encouraged not to print the readings to avoid unnecessary paper use.