

History of Latin American Political Philosophy

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**Political Science Department
Texas A&M University**

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POLS 654-600 Seminar in Theories of Political Legitimacy Order 7:00 to 9:50 M ALLN 2064

Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4:30pm ALLN 2117 or by appointment

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Overview

The discipline of political theory has traditionally been rooted in Western thought. In this seminar we will explore an alternative perspective that falls within the emerging area of 'Comparative Political Theory.' We will focus on the development of Latin American political thought, understood as part of the history of philosophy. In this context, we shall explore what it means to think about a history of ideas, how political theory fits within the tradition of political philosophy, and how this in turn relates to philosophical issues such as the philosophy of history, notions of universalism and particularism, and what makes for a proper account of philosophy as such. Thus, we will locate the history of Latin American political philosophy in metatheoretical debates regarding the practice of political theory.

We will begin the course with readings by contemporary Latin American theorists and philosophers on what it means to have a Latin American philosophy and whether this is in fact possible or distinct from traditional/canonical Western philosophy (Millán, Salles, Jorge Gracia, Pereda, Rabossi, Oscar Martí, Cerutti-Guldberg). We will read part of the *Popol Vuh*, the ancient Maya text that provides a politico-theological basis for a particular kind of Latin American political theory. We will discuss the cogency of relativism (Bernard Williams), and examine what Montaigne had to say about 'cannibalism' as part of non-Western cultures. We will then proceed to accounts on the validity of particular accounts vs. universalistic claims regarding rights (HLA Hart). We will ask what is the place of ethnic groups in a history of philosophy (Olivé). We will then explore how a history of philosophy can be a basis of cultural/regional Latin American identity (Martí, Jaksic).

We will then proceed to a more chronological assay of the history of Latin American philosophy. In this seminar, we will emphasize the idea that what is most original to this history is its *political* philosophy, as opposed to metaphysics, epistemology or other branches of philosophy. We will read European accounts of the Latin American experience by Bartolomé de Las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria on the rights of indigenous cultures. We will undertake comparative analysis with works by Aristotle and

Aquinas on natural law. We then proceed to the seminal feminism of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and her use of Catholic ideas for the defense of women's education. We then engage with the republicanism of Simón Bolívar, with comparative readings from Machiavelli, Rousseau, and Locke. The republicanism of Domingo Sarmiento of Argentina and José Martí of Cuba is then examined in light of European ideas. The Mexican authors Justo Sierra and Leopoldo Zea provide views on neo-positivism, to be compared to the ideas of Comte.

The response to positivism by the romantic, Nietzschean theorists Rodó and Vasconcelos is then examined. The next section is on Marxism in Latin America, with Mariátegui, Guevara, Sánchez Vásquez et al. Subsequently we explore 'philosophy of liberation,' in the form of the works of Gustavo Gutierrez (liberation theology) and Paulo Freire (pedagogy of liberation), with commentaries by Cerutti-Guldberg and Ofelia Schutte. The reactions to socialism, in the writings of Peruvian 'neo-liberals' De Soto and Alvaro Vargas Llosa are then examined. We then explore the relationship between literature, philosophy and politics in the writings of Borges and Mario Vargas Llosa. We conclude the historical survey with postmodern themes: first by examining the place of Latin America in the construction of modernity in the writings of Enrique Dussel; the grammatology of the city as body-politic in Beatriz Gonzalez Stephan; and lastly the debate on the construction of a postmodern identity in Latino/a life in the US in the works of Jorge Gracia.

Additional comparative selections from both *History of Political Philosophy* (Strauss and Cropsey) and *Princeton Readings in Political Thought* (Cohen and Fermon) will be used as secondary readings.

Most readings are on Electronic Reserve at <http://ereserves.tamu.edu/eres/default.aspx>

Format: lecture/discussion.

Requirements: Preparation, class participation, presentations, one long research paper in consultation with instructor.

Objective

To acquire a comprehensive and incisive understanding of the major themes and debates of political philosophy in Ibero-American history.

Learning outcomes relevant to Social and Behavior Sciences (SBS):

Students can expect to learn the following by the end of this course:

- (1) to define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the study of Latin American political philosophy;

- (2) to produce original research to support social scientific research on Latin American political philosophy;
- (3) to apply a body of factual knowledge directly relevant to understanding the role of Latin American political philosophy across a range of Latin American societies;
- (4) to analyze empirical and theoretical evidence relevant to evaluating different points of view on the role of Latin American political philosophy in Latin American history

Learning outcomes relevant to International and Cultural Diversity (ICD):

- (1) to acquire substantial knowledge of different traditions in Latin American political philosophy
- (2) to examine the interconnections between Latin American political thought and European political theory
- (3) to understand the implications of Latin American political thought to US history and society
- (4) to understand the international and cross/cultural dimensions of political thought in general

Texts

Required for Purchase:

Las Casas, *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, Penguin

Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, Johns Hopkins U Press

Rodó, *Ariel*, University of Texas U Press

Mario Vargas Llosa, *The Feast of the Goat*, Farrar Straus

Latin American Philosophy (Nuccetelli/Seay; Pearson Prentice Hall)

Latin American Philosophy in the 21st Century (Gracia/Millan; Prometheus)

History of Political Philosophy (Strauss/Cropsey; U of Chicago)

Princeton Readings in Political Thought (Cohen/Fermon; Princeton U Press)

Recommended Reference Texts:

Jorrin, M., *Latin American Political Thought and Ideology* (North Carolina)

Schutte, O., *Cultural identity and social liberation in Latin American thought* (SUNY)

Halperin Donghi, T., *The contemporary history of Latin America* (Duke)

Neruda, *Canto General*

Grading

There is no Final exam or midterm

Grading depends on:

1. Paper
2. Participation
3. Presentations

Attendance is required and is a basic part of the participation grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade drop of a letter grade for the final grade. No eating in class; please refrain from wearing hats in class.

Participation is fundamental to this course and the learning process. All students must come well-prepared to class, having read the texts critically and willing to offer their own perspectives on them and to discuss the central questions.

The grade depends on showing close and careful reading of the texts; bringing up questions for discussion; showing the contemporary relevance of the historical texts/debates, and debating central problems in class (in a consistent manner throughout the semester).

Quality and quantity of participation will determine the final participation grade. If you come prepared and show some involvement, this will constitute a C level (average). If you participate with thoughtful comments once in a while, this will constitute a B level (good). If you come well prepared, show insight in your comments, and do so frequently, this will constitute an A level grade (excellent). If you do not participate at all, that will be a D level (poor).

Presentations must include three basic components: a Concise Summary, a Critical Analysis and Questions for discussion.

The Summary should point out the basic points made by the author, and use some textual evidence.

The Critical Analysis should involve engagement with the text: do you agree/disagree with the views, do you find contemporary relevance for the arguments, do you see links to other authors or traditions, do you see counter-arguments to the views in the text, etc.

The Questions for discussion regarding that day's reading should be about what you in particular found to be interesting or problematic or especially relevant from the text. These questions will serve to start class discussions.

Each presentation should be about 10-15 minutes in length and show careful and critical reading of the text and bring up 3 questions for class discussion.

Presentations that show quality in the Summary, Analysis and Questions, will get an A grade. Those that show quality in two of these but not in the third, will get a B grade. Those that show only one good element, will get a C grade. Those that show ill-preparedness on all levels will be a D grade.

The Research Paper must:

1) be well-written; 2) show careful reading of the text, 3) show critical analysis, 4) have a logical structure and clear arguments, 5) have a clear thesis statement about what the paper will argue, 6) be sustained with proper logical and textual evidence. Textual evidence (references to the reading) is necessary and must be used adequately, not in excess.

Papers that show all 6 elements above will receive an A grade (excellent). Papers that have 5 of these will border between an A and a B. Papers that have 4 of these elements but not all will receive a B grade (good). Papers that show 3 of these elements will receive a C grade (average). Papers that have 2 or less of these elements will receive a D (poor).

(Papers must be between 20-25 pages long; written in 12-point font, double spaced pages, with 1-inch top, bottom, and right margins, and 1 inch left side margin; name on first page, numbered pages)

External sources can be used but are not mandatory.
Proper use of them will strengthen the paper.

PAPER TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED WITH INSTRUCTOR BY MID SEMESTER

Weighing of Final Grade:

Paper 50%

Class participation 30%

Presentations 20%

Students With Disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

Course Materials/Copyright Statements

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Plagiarism Statement

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section “Scholastic Dishonesty.”

Plagiarism will result in failure (instructor uses Web-based search program)

Consult the instructor when in doubt, and be very cautious with Web-based sources

The Aggie Code of Honor

The Honor Code, based on the long-standing affirmation that An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do, is fundamental to the value of the A&M experience. Know the Code. Aggie Code of Honor "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do." <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>

Readings:

ER: electronic reserves

LAP: Latin American Philosophy (Nuccetelli/Seay)

LAP 21: Latin American Philosophy in the 21st century (Gracia/Millan-Zaibert)

PRPT: Princeton Readings in Political Thought (Cohen/Fermon)

HOPP: History of Political Philosophy (Strauss/Cropsey)

Schedule

READINGS ARE ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE UNLESS NOTED

1) JAN 23

Introduction; Philosophical historiography in Latin America

Pereda, 'Explanatory and Argumentative History of Philosophy' (Electronic Reserve, ER)

Rabossi, 'History and Philosophy in a Latin American Setting' (ER)

'Introduction' by Millan-Zaibert and Arleen Salles (ER)

Preface/General Introduction (in Gracia/Millan LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE 21ST CENTURY) (MSC bookstore)

Chapter 1 of Nuccetelli/Seay LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY (MSC bookstore)

2) JAN 30

Philosophical historiography in Latin America II

Strauss, 'what is political philosophy?' (Princeton Readings in Political Thought, PRPT)

Cerutti-Goldberg, 'How and Why to Foster the History of Philosophy in Postcolonial Contexts' (ER)

Marti, Oscar, 'Breaking with the past' (ER)

Gracia, 'The History of Philosophy and Latin American Philosophy' (ER)

Reason and Tradition

- a) Rationality and Indigenous peoples of Latin America
- b) Did the indigenous people of Latin America have philosophy?

Popol Vuh (ER)

Larrain, 'The Colonial Stage: Modernity Denied'

Williams, 'An inconsistent form of Relativism'

3) FEB 6

Reactions to Conquest

Scholastic and Humanistic Reactions to the Conquest

Las Casas, *Short Account* (entire; 1-70; 70-end)

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, 'Reply to Sor Philotea'

De Pizan in (in Princeton Readings in Political Thought' (PRPT))

Femenias, 'Philosophical Genealogies and Feminisms in Sor Juana Ines de La Cruz'

HLA Hart, 'Are there Natural Rights?'

4) FEB 13

The Morality of the Conquest

Vitoria (ER)

Vitoria in LAP

Acosta in LAP

O'Gorman in LAP

Montaigne, 'Of Cannibals'

Aristotle, *Politics* (in Princeton Readings in Political Thought' (PRPT))

Aquinas, 'Politics and law' (PRPT)

Aristotle entry in 'History of Political Philosophy' (HOPP)

Aquinas entry in HOPP

5) FEB 20

Republicanism: Bolivar

Dunkerley, 'Latin America since Independence'

Bolivar, 'Angostura Address'

Bolivar, 'Letter from Jamaica'

Machiavelli, PRPT

Machiavelli entry in HOPP

6) FEB 27

Argentine Republicanism: Sarmiento

Sarmiento, 'Civilization or Barbarism'

Sarmiento, 'Recollections of a Provincial Past'

Sarmiento in LAP

Locke, PRPT

Locke entry in HOPP

Tocqueville, PRPT

Tocqueville entry in HOPP

7) MAR 6

Cuban republicanism: Marti

Marti, 'Mother America'

Marti, in LAP 21 p. 245-256

Julio Ramos, 'Divergent Modernities'

Rousseau, PRPT

Rousseau entry in HOPP

SPRING BREAK

8) MAR 20

Effects of Positivism

Chapter 5 in LAP

Justo Sierra, 'The Political Evolution of the Mexican People'

Jaksic, 'The Sources of Latin American Philosophy'

Jaksic, 'Academic Rebels in Chile'

Zea, 'Latin America and the World'

Zea, 'The Latin American Mind'

Zea, 'Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem'

9) MAR 27

Reaction to Positivism and the Emergence of Latin American Regionalism

Vasconcelos, *Cosmic Race* (entire)

Rodó, *Ariel* (entire)

Oscar Marti, 'Is there a Latin American Philosophy?'

Salazar Bondy, 'The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought'

Coutinho, 'Some Considerations on the Problem of Philosophy in Brazil'

Frondizi, 'Is there an Ibero-American Philosophy?'

Deustua p 181-192 in LAP21

Nietzsche, PRPT

Nietzsche entry in HOPP

10) APR 3

(neo-)Marxism

Mariategui, 'The Heroic and Creative Meaning of Socialism'

Mariategui, 'Seven Interpretive Essays' in LAP21

Guevara, 'Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution'

Sanchez Vasquez, 'Marxism in Latin America'

Marx, PRPT

Marx entry in HOPP

11) APR 10

Philosophies of liberation

Gutierrez, 'The Task and Content of Liberation Theology'

Freire, 'Pedagogy of Liberation'

Boff in LAP Ch 6
Dussel in LAP21
Cerutti-Guldberg, 'Actual Situation and Perspectives of Latin American Philosophy for Liberation'
Hegel, PRPT
Hegel entry in HOPP

12) APR 17

Critique of the Left

De Soto, 'The Mystery of Capital'
Alvaro Vargas Llosa, 'Liberty for Latin America'
Adam Smith, PRPT
Mill, PRPT
Smith and Mill entries in HOPP

13) APR 24

Literature, Philosophy and Politics

a) Mario Vargas Llosa, '*Feast of the Goat*' (entire); part I and II
b) Borges TBA; part I and II

14) MAY 1

Race, Ethnicity and (Post-)Modernity

a) Race and Modernity
Appiah, Tanner Lectures
Gutmann, Identity and Democracy, selections, TBA
Ch 7 in LAP
Dussel, 'The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of the Other and the Myth of Modernity'
Schutte in LAP21

b) Ethnic Group identity and Postmodernism

Gracia, 'Hispanic/Latino Identity' ER
Gracia in LAP21
Martin Alcoff, in LAP21
Olivé, 'A Philosophical Debate Concerning Traditional Ethnic Groups in Latin America and the History of Philosophy'
Schutte, 'Latin America and Postmodernism'
Gonzalez Stephan, On Citizenship: The Grammatology of the Body Politic'
Foucault, PRPT
Heidegger entry in HOPP