



Security in Latin America

Despite social improvements in the first decades of the 21st century, Latin America remains the most unequal and most insecure region in the world. While homicide rates reduced in other regions, they increased in Latin America and its citizens identified crime and violence as their main concern. According to the Gallup's Law and Order Index, residents of Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be the least likely to feel secure in their communities. Citizen's sense of insecurity and lack of confidence in the police to protect them was worse in Venezuela (14%) than in war-torn Afghanistan (32%) and Syria (32%).

Spring semester 2024

JPM772

6 ECTS

Lecturer

Mgr. Kateřina Březinová, Ph.D. katerina.brezinova@fsv.cuni.cz

Instruction:

Wednesdays 14:00 - 15:20 B316 Jinonice

Office hours

Wednesdays February 28, March 20, and April 17/2024 from 15:30-16:30 room B 319. Else by appointment.

Structure of the course:

Please note that this course starts on February 28, 2024. We will make up the missing class by participating in some of the relevant external event during the semester. You will be informed about these opportunities in our weekly sessions.

Course description

The course seeks to provide students with a solid, interdisciplinary understanding of crucial human security-related issues in the region of Latin America.

The first decade of the 21st century gave Latin America much to celebrate. Open markets and largely stable economic policies enabled the region to take advantage of surging commodity prices and global demand. Several Latin American countries shined on the world stage, becoming important participants in multilateral institutions and forums: Brazil as a leader of a UN mission on Haiti with a claim for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council; Mexico as the fastest growing commercial partner for the U.S.; Chile as a “Pacific gateway” to Latin America.

Despite some remarkable economic and social improvements in the first decade of the 21st century, however, no region of the world has more inequality than Latin America and the Caribbean nor does any have a higher level of criminal violence. While homicide rates reduced in other regions, it actually increased in the last two decades in Latin America.

The framework of human security and its various dimensions is applied to analyze security in Latin America in this course. The challenges to security can vary from region to region, nation to nation, and manifest in different ways depending on specific cultural, historic, gender, ethnic and socioeconomic conditions. However, several main overlapping threats that impact the security in the region have been identified, such as the street crime; violence and crime committed by and against the youth; gender-based violence; corruption; violence committed by state actors and organized crime.

Following the introductory overview that surveys the themes embedded in the historical experience in order to gain a clearer understanding of security challenges in contemporary Latin America, the course proceeds to focus on a selected number of specific issues that societies of Latin America are facing today in terms of human (in)security.

Aims of the course

After completing the course, students shall be able to understand:

- Develop a critical understanding of Latin America’s security challenges of today;
- Gain a clear understanding of the structural and specific processes that make Latin American countries’ most acute challenges be inequality and violence;
- Based on specific case studies, students gain skills to analyze and contextualize some of the human security challenges in Latin America and the measures taken in these particular cases;
- Be aware of the existing policy proposals and measures introduced to reduce citizen insecurity in Latin America both on the national and international levels;
- Be aware of the evolving civilian -military relations in Latin America, and the impact of the militarization of public security on citizen security and human rights.

Course requirements, evaluation and grading system

The students’ performance in the course will be assessed based on these criteria:

- Attendance and Activity in the Class (20 %)

- Student presentation on current event/security phenomenon in the region (15%)
- Team presentation of a case study (30%)
- Final critical review (35 %)

Attendance and active participation (20% of the mark) during the class debates and discussions of the readings. Prior to the lectures, students must have read the text assigned as a required reading for each session to establish a dynamic interaction within the class to better grasp the main ideas and concepts addressed by each topic of the program. All students are required to participate on sessions. One unexcused absence will be tolerated, more absences need to be justified for.

Student presentation on current event /security phenomenon – (15% of the mark) Each student will open one of the sessions with the report on the current event or security phenomenon relevant to the contents of our course. The goal of this individual assignment is not only to summarize the basic facts and circumstances, but to contextualize this particular event within the concerns of our classroom readings and lectures. We will proceed to arrange the order of the presentations the second day of class.

Student team research and presentation of case studies (30% of the mark)

Students form teams and jointly select one case study to present during the last sessions of the course. By depicting a specific problem, conflict or actor(s) of their choice, the case studies are meant to illustrate specific security-related issues relating to Latin America, such as personal security, economic security, environmental security, community security, political security.

Formal aspects: Presentations include a power point presentation and a 1-2-page long summary. Both must be sent to the tutor at least one day prior the presentation. They will be shared with the rest of the class.

In their presentation of 15 minutes students are encouraged to use creative and diverse formats and meaningful material to stimulate learning among their colleagues on the given topic. Students are expected to do their own bibliographic research. They are encouraged to draw on a wide set of academic and non-academic sources, including policy literature. Each student must participate in the project and contribute to its preparation and presentation. Team presentations will get one evaluation disregarding individual contributions to the collective work. We will proceed to arrange the order of the presentations after the first day of class.

Critical review (35% of the mark)

At the end of the course, students write a critical review of a specialized article of their choice. Extension: 1200 words +/- 10% excluding the cover page and bibliography. Word File. Fully referenced. AI assistance disclaimer attached.

The aim of the written assignment is to a) summarise, and b) evaluate one of the specialized articles announced by the lecturer the last week of our class. Critical review shows students'

understanding of crucial security-related issues relating to the Americas discussed in the course; their ability to apply the critical lenses to contemporary challenges to Latin American security regimes and policies.

Formal aspects:

The critical review is due May 22, 2024 and must be sent to katerina.brezinova@fsv.cuni.cz no earlier than on May 21 and no later than on May 22, 2024. I kindly ask you to respect also the earliest possible submission deadline. The results (incl. overall course result) will be delivered to each student no later than in 10 working days after the submission deadline. Potential delays have a negative effect on the grade.

Weekly programme overview

Feb 21/2024 – no class. Note that this course starts on February 28, 2024. We will make up the missing class by participating in some of the relevant external event during the semester. You will be informed about these opportunities in our weekly sessions.

1. Introduction – February 28/2024

The introductory lesson will explain the aims and structure of the course and specify the requirements that need to be fulfilled. Opening lecture: Geopolitics in Latin America;

2. Different “securities” in Latin America, Human and citizen security in Latin America - March 6/2024

Sub-regional and country specific differences; Main global and security issues relating to Latin America. Theoretical approaches to security in Latin America. Contribution of Latin American scholarship and practice to the field of security studies. Traditional and non-traditional threats to the regional security in Latin America.

Reading:

Kacowicz, Arie M. and Mares, David R. (2016): Security Studies and Security in Latin America, Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security, Routledge, New York, pp.11-29 (SIS)

UNDP (2023): An Epidemic on the Move. The Shifting Landscape of Citizen Security in Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/blog/epidemic-move-shifting-landscape-citizen-security-latin-america-and-caribbean>

Recommended:

Nolte, Detlef, Wehner, Leslie E. Geopolitics in Latin America, Old and New in Kacowicz, Arie M. and Mares, David R. (2016): Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security, Routledge, New York, pp.33-43 (SIS)

3. Political security in Latin America. Responding to threats – March 13 /2024

From traditional security issues confronting states of Latin America in their international relations to the domestic challenges to regime stability. Democratic backsliding. Hybrid Governance. Case studies start.

Reading:

Ortiz, Román D: Guerrillas, Terrorists or Criminals? The new face of antistate violence in Latin America in Kacowicz, Arie M. and Mares, David R. (2016): Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security, Routledge, New York, pp.211-221 (SIS)

AQ Podcast Feb 2023, How Organized Crime Is Changing In Latin America with J. McDermott. 30 MIN
<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/aq-podcast-how-organized-crime-is-changing-in-latin-america/>

Recommended:

Marchesi, Aldo, Latin America's Radical Left. Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 1-22 (SIS)

NED, UNDP - SHARP POWER: RISING AUTHORITARIAN INFLUENCE": NEW FORUM REPORT [Rachelle Faust](#), 2018 Chapters: Introduction, China in Latin America: <https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-rising-authoritarian-influence-forum-report/>

4. Economic Security in Latin America - March 20/2024

Poverty; Inequality; Unemployment; Child and Youth; Women; Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. Case study & Discussion.

Reading:

Social Panorama of Latin America and the Caribbean 2022. Introduction and Chapter 1. Pp. 11-80
<https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/48519-social-panorama-latin-america-and-caribbean-2022-transforming-education-basis>

World Bank Group, Stagnant Poverty Reduction in Latin America, 2018.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/750811537474872191/pdf/130046-PUBLIC-Stagnant-Poverty-Reduction-LAC-2016-final-June2018.pdf>

Optional, not obligatory:

NED, UNDP - SHARP POWER: RISING AUTHORITARIAN INFLUENCE": NEW FORUM REPORT [Rachelle Faust](#), 2018 Chapters: Argentina, Peru: <https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-rising-authoritarian-influence-forum-report/>

ECLAC, Critical obstacles to inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2019, pp.9-45 https://crds.cepal.org/3/sites/crds3/files/19-00578_cds.3_critical_obstacles_web.pdf

UNDP, Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America, Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014, Chapter 5

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https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human_development/informe-regionalde-desarrollo-humano2013-2014-/

WB: Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2015

Chapter 1 Endowments, pp. 6-14.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/339531468190181959/pdf/103087-WP-P154195-Box394854B-OUO-8-Bolivia-Gender-Report-ENGLISH-WEB.pdf>

5. Current Security Challenges to Latin America – March 27/2024

Guest lecture. Topic *tbc*. Case study & Discussion.

Reading will be recommended.

6. Personal Security in Latin America- April 3/2024

Personal insecurity and homicide in Latin America. Case study & Discussion.

Reading:

Amnesty International: Mexico: Justice on Trial. Mexico Failures in criminal investigations of femicides preceded by disappearance in the State of Mexico – pp. 11-56

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr41/4556/2021/en/>

Newton et al. DataInSights: Latin America's Homicide Hotspots, In Sight Crime 2023

<https://insightcrime.org/news/data-insights-latin-america-homicide-hotspots/>

Optional, not obligatory:

UNDP, Citizen Security with a Human Face: Evidence and Proposals for Latin America, Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014, Chapter 6 pp. 111-133

https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/en/home/library/human_development/informe-regionalde-desarrollo-humano2013-2014-/

7. Community Security - April 10/2024

Migration and Displacement; Cultural Diversity; Minorities and indigenous people. Case study & Discussion.

Reading:

World Bank, Indigenous Latin American in the Twenty First Century, The First Decade, 2015, pp. 13-55,
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/145891467991974540/pdf/98544-REVISED-WP-P148348-Box394854B-PUBLIC-Indigenous-Latin-America.pdf>

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WB: Bolivia: Challenges and Constraints to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, 2015

Chapters 2 and 3 Endowments, pp. 15-30.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/339531468190181959/pdf/103087-WP-P154195-Box394854B-OUO-8-Bolivia-Gender-Report-ENGLISH-WEB.pdf>

Recommended:

The Nation, September 2019: Zapatista Revolution is Not Over by Kurs Hackbarht and Colin Mooers,
<https://www.thenation.com/article/zapatista-chiapas-caracoles/>

8. Environmental Security and Disasters in Latin America – April 17/2024

Mining; Deforestation; Land and soil; Water; Air pollution; Urban sustainability. Case study & Discussion.

Note: It is mandatory for the students to discuss their ideas for the team research with the professor no later than April 17.

Reading:

Quiliconi, Rodrigues Vasco: Chinese mining and Indigenous Resistance in Ecuador. Special Report Carnegie Foundation, 2019 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/09/20/chinese-mining-and-indigenous-resistance-in-ecuador-pub-85382>

InSight Crime: LatAm is Most Murderous Region for Land, Environmental Activists: Report 2017

<https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/latam-is-most-murderous-region-for-land-environmental-activists-report/>

InSight Crime: Latin America's Massacres of Environmental Defenders Continue with Impunity: Study, 2022

<https://insightcrime.org/news/latin-american-nations-dominate-most-deadly-countriesenvironmental-protectors/>

Recommended, not obligatory:

O'Toole, Gavin, Environmental Security and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, A Blind spot in research in Kacowicz, Arie M. and Mares, David R. (2016): Routledge Handbook of Latin American Security, Routledge, New York, pp. 277-287 (SIS)

9. Student Group Presentations – part 1 - April 24/2024

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10. Session cancelled –State holiday May 1/2024

11. Session cancelled –State holiday May 8/2024

Voluntary participation in some of the relevant external events will be recommended to students in order to make up for these sessions. You will be informed about these opportunities in our weekly sessions.

12. Student Group Presentations – part 2 - May 17/2024

Wrap up of the Course

The syllabus and readings might be subject to change

Quality sources for studying Security in Latin America (selection)

Academia

Latin American Research Review

<https://larrlasa.org/>

<https://larrlasa.org/collections/special/>

Latin American Perspectives

<https://latinamericanperspectives.com/>

Latin American Politics And Society

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/latin-american-politics-and-society#>

International Organizations, NGOs, Think Tanks, Advocacy

United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC): <http://www.eclac.cl/>

UNDP Latin America: <https://www.undp.org/latin-america>

Organization of American States www.oas.org

WOLA - Washington Office on Latin America - <https://www.wola.org/?s=trafficking>

Council On Foreign Relations - <https://www.cfr.org/americas>

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars - <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

Migration Policy Institute - <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research>

Insight Crime - <https://insightcrime.org/indepth/>

NACLA - <https://nacla.org/>

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Latinobarómetro: <https://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

Igarapé Institute: <https://igarape.org.br/en/citizen-security-in-latin-america-facts-and-figures/>

The Pew Global Attitudes Project: <http://www.pewglobal.org/>

World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/lac>

Inter-American Development Bank: <https://publications.iadb.org/en/citizen-security-latin-america-and-caribbean-challenges-and-innovation-management-and-public>

MEDIA, PODCASTS (selection):

Latin America in Focus (Americas Society/ Council of the Americas)

Unpacking Latin America (Columbia University's Institute of Latin American Studies)

Americas Quarterly