Course Description:

The neoliberal reform that started in the 1980s has brought historic shifts in Latin American polities and societies. The state had played a central role in economic development since the 1930s in a top-down and mostly authoritarian model of politics. Focused on import-substitution industrialization (ISI), the state-centered model came to depend heavily on foreign indebtedness and proved unsustainable economically and politically. The indebtedness crisis of the 1980s forced a shift in the development model toward reducing state intervention, enhancing the role of private firms and market liberalization. Democracies of varying characteristics have supplanted dictatorships and diverse social actors have articulated longstanding grievances in new ways. The region remains plagued by levels of social and economic polarization, which were actually deepened by the neoliberal reform. Trade liberalization and biotechnology have led to new patterns in food production, dependency and crisis. Hence, some of the most important social movements in the region are based in the countryside.

Since the 1990s, new political forces coming from a broadly-defined “left” have won political office or exercised hefty influence from civil society and tried to transcend the neoliberal model with varying degrees of success. This graduate seminar aims to familiarize students with the key characteristics of contemporary Latin American politics and society and to situate the rise of the left historically. Given the strategic socioeconomic and political importance of food and agriculture they will be the guiding thread in this course. The objective is both to strengthen our understanding of particular political and social formations and to develop conceptual frameworks for analyzing particular cases and for carrying out comparisons of change over time and across settings. Readings analyze a wide range of countries and draw from several disciplines in the social sciences. Weekly seminars will consist of a combination of lectures by the instructor (minimal), discussions moderated in part by students, and structured discussion of extensive readings.

Learning Goals:

This seminar has several learning goals beyond the substantive topic of its title as specified above. Other learning goals include the following:

Critical synthesis. One of the main abilities that any university student must acquire is to gather, classify, analyze and synthesize large amounts of information. Information is usually abundant, so what you need to develop is the ability to process it in a coherent way. For graduate students, this ability will become critical when writing their theses or dissertations. Undergraduate students planning to do graduate work will also greatly benefit from this exercise.
Most assignments in this course are geared to enhance the ability for critical synthesis.

**Participation and group interaction.** Most settings in the world of work will involve discussion, dialogue, debate and group interaction. Fruitfully interacting with other students is a skill to be learned or developed, and so is moderation of group discussion. Each student will moderate part of weekly discussions, which will be organized during the first week of class (5%). Our group discussions will also involve that each student will take different roles in each seminar, which shall be rotated weekly among group members: **moderator**, chooses questions, introduces readings, and coordinates discussion, making sure that no two people speak at one time and that everyone gets a fair share of time to contribute; **timekeeper**, makes sure that discussion is flowing at an adequate pace to finish the assignment on time; **participation encourager**, makes sure that everyone in the group contributes in some way to the discussion; **concept clarifier**, checks the readings as needed to make sure that the group is properly understanding the key concepts under discussion; and **reporter** to class, records the names of group participants and keeps minutes of the discussion with a view to give a summary of conclusions to the entire class, and hand in an outline of the group’s discussion with the names of participants to professor. **When a group must function with four people only, the roles of moderator and timekeeper will be merged.**

**Presentation skills.** A presentation of about 15 minutes using power point with no more than about 15 slides, assuming that you take a minute per slide, will be done in the last class. Technical guidelines: Each slide should not contain much more than 3-5 lines, with not more than 3-4 words per line, always using a 36-point font in the main text and 40 points for slide titles. If you use pictures or images, then shorten text within those slides or leave them without a text. Content guidelines: (1) Introduce your topic, why you were interested in the book you chose, its relevance, and how it relates to your thesis or dissertation’s research question. This should take no more than 3 minutes. (2) Go over the main theoretical positions in which the book is inserted and what is the author’s position in the debate. What is your own position in this debate and with respect to the book’s author (3-5 minutes). (3) Briefly describe the empirical evidence used by the author as it relates to the debate and/or to your own stance (3-5 min.) (4) Finally, what are your main conclusions and ideas for your future research? (2-3 min.) This exercise will prepare you for your thesis or dissertation defense.

**Theory and practice.** Most of the books that we will be reading for this class tend to be on the theoretical rather than the historical side of scholarly production. The best way of gaining an understanding of theoretical concepts, however, is by seeing the specific ways in which they can be employed as tools for analysis of concrete historical situations. In order to put some of the main concepts to work, students leading or moderating the weekly discussion are encouraged to identify a current-news article in a major newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *El País*, *La Jornada*, *El Clarín*, *The Guardian*) in the 600-800 words range. Ideally, such article will be thematically related to one of the core topics for the student’s thesis or dissertation. The article should be emailed to our classlist at least 24 hours before our class. Each student may choose to print the article for use in class. The leader can then allow the class to engage either in a structured discussion around concepts that she or he considers most appropriate from the relevant week’s readings, or allow the group to inductively derive such concepts from discussion. The group can spend 5-10 minutes reading the news article and then 20 minutes establishing the relationship with major concepts. We can then spend another 20 minutes to better understand both the substantive issues involved in the current-news article and the concepts used for its analysis. (This is an optional exercise and you are welcome to experiment.)
Grades will be assigned based on the following formula:
Ten Discussion Papers (DPs) 40%-50% (one per week in eight-ten of 13 weeks, 5% each)
Book Review 10% (mid October) (only for students writing eight DPs)
Draft Presentation 10% (December 12)
Review Essay 25% (due December 15)
Moderating discussion 5%
Participation: 10%

Required Texts: (some are available online via the UW library and most will be on reserve at the Social Science Reference Library)

Discussion Papers (a total of eight to ten for weeks 2-14. If you only write eight, then you also need to write a book review—see below.). You can only miss two weeks so plan accordingly):
These typewritten, single-spaced papers (450-600 words), in 12-point font are due no later than 12:00 noon on the Thursday of the relevant week (i.e., one day before the class). Discussion papers should be sent to the classlist, history982-1-f14@lists.wisc.edu, so that all class members have access to them. Make sure to write “CES982” in the Subject field of any email correspondence you send to the class or to me (oterorodigu@wisc.edu). This will insure my immediate attention. Everyone should read at least the discussion questions raised by others. Please follow these guidelines when writing your discussion papers: (1) Include your name and week for which you are writing on the top line, using only one line for this information: the fewer pages I have to print the better. (2) There is no need to include the full reference to the works you are writing about in discussion papers, except the author’s name. (3) The discussion papers should be written EXCLUSIVELY on the basis of required readings.

Organizing the content. Discussion papers should include 4 explicit parts, i.e., divide your papers into the following overt sections (use the following description as a model):
(1) Introduction. Write a paragraph raising a paradox or central question about the topic of the readings. You must then provide an outline of the rest of your essay (50 words). Having an explicit agenda or outline, however brief, is a crucial element in social-science writing, so it is
important to compose a proper introduction.

(2) **Synthesis.** Provide a brief synthesis of what the author is saying. (250-350 words.) Identify the central questions, main points, concepts, and/or core arguments. Rather than analyzing all the ideas that the author presents, you should focus in depth on the most significant aspects of the text, always mentioning the key concepts used by the author. Brief definitions of such concepts would help, including a reference to a specific page number or providing the author’s most synthetic rendering of the concept(s) by using a textual quotation. A synthesis is not the same as a summary. The latter is an attempt to provide an inventory of the entire text. A synthesis is not as easy because it presupposes that the text has been understood, and focuses on the core, most central parts. A good synthesis of a text requires an awareness and knowledge of the author’s style of thinking, not just the particular facts that are presented to support an argument. Focus on interrogating the texts about their theory and/or methodology, whichever seems most relevant in a given text, as well as the core argument.

(3) **Assessment.** Brief assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the authors’ central arguments or concepts. (50-150 words.) Do the authors’ evidence or analysis really support what they set out to do and their conclusions? How does their viewpoint color the interpretations they make? How well does the theory and method serve the author(s)? Rather than merely giving your opinions, say why you agree or disagree with their argument and conclusions. I encourage you to be contentious and take a risk by taking a strong stand that will get debate going in class, and be ready to defend your stance with relevant evidence and/or analysis.

(4) **Questions.** Finally, provide two discussion questions related to the readings. (30-40 words.) One should be a lingering question whose answer would further clarify the readings for you, with a focus on theory. The other may be a question on methods or one that will promote class discussion on some central substantive issue. The main task of discussion papers is to help understand the text, a precondition to assess and discuss their applicability.

Discussion papers will be marked according to the following criteria:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: _____________________</th>
<th><strong>Discussion Paper Evaluation</strong></th>
<th>Grade: _____</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POOR</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXCELLENT</strong></td>
<td>Contains four explicit sections, as requested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Introduces main topic and sets up clearly defined agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Focuses on core arguments, concepts and perspectives (rather than a superficial summary or inventory of themes).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Coherence of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct (i.e. thorough on core points, yet stays within word limit).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Key terms and concepts are defined and explained.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Assertions and arguments supported with specific cites to required readings.</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Assertions and arguments supported with specific quotes from required readings.</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Reasoned assessment of strengths and weaknesses (rather than merely agreeing or disagreeing).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Questions help disentangle readings conceptually, referring back to text rather than eliciting opinion or application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Depth of coverage of required readings.</td>
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I am looking for well-written papers which extract the main theoretical concepts and propositions, critique the readings directly or support their arguments, and which draw in questions and issues that have been raised in other readings, lectures, and/or discussions from earlier in the course (up to 50% for ten papers, or 5% each).

**Note: Late discussion papers will not be marked or counted.**

**Book Review.** (Only for students writing eight DPs.) This is a book review (800-1200 words) in which the central task is to present a neutral point of view, or what Wikipedia calls NPOV, of the book: a straightforward synthesis of the author’s perspective and arguments without yourselves being argumentative. This is akin to what could be required in a policy analysis position in the form of a “policy brief.” While a policy brief is expected to cover a wide range of debate and discussion on a given topic, the writer must present a neutral rendering of such debate. For this assignment, you are expected to develop the ability to engage in this type of writing in a book review. Students can endeavour to make an actual contribution to Wikipedia with their review, but the group will have to collectively figure out how to implement it. Notice that actual book reviews published in scholarly journals are expected to do this kind of neutral presentation plus an assessment of strengths and weaknesses which is usually argumentative. Such assessment will be the task of the final review essay. You may choose a different book for that. Otherwise, the book review may be a constitutive element of the final review essay. Therefore, this assignment may be cumulative toward the final paper (10%). Due at 9:00 a.m. on November 7th in class.

**Presentation.** Students will make a 5-7 minutes Power-Point presentation of a draft of their final review essay during the last session of the seminar, on December 12th. Technical specifications: no more than seven slides, use 40-point font for titles and 36 point-font for other text, and no more than 3-4 lines of main text per slide. Images welcome. The idea is to give you a forum to practice the type of presentation for an M.A. or Ph.D. defence. While you cannot be exhaustive in articulating all the points of the book (or your thesis), you need to highlight the most central points and make it exciting and understandable for the audience beyond your committee.

**Final Review Essay.** The review essay is intended for students to think through the various theoretical approaches and interpretations of your specific theme in a comparative perspective, while focusing the discussion on a single book. Please note that the “essay” part of this assignment should be taken seriously: the essay should engage the book under consideration and you are also encouraged to make an original argument while discussing the book’s perspective.

You are welcome to focus on a single central issue of the book and support your arguments with citations or quotations from other readings. Each essay must resort to at least three of the required and/or supplementary readings for sustained discussion (3,000-5,000 words, double-spaced, 12-point font, times roman). This is your chance to integrate your views on a central topic (25%). Because the review essay can be based on the same book used for the book review (10%), this may be a cumulative assignment of 35%. Due on August 1 at my office, A. Q. 5100 (under my door if I’m not there).

Submit a printed and an electronic version of each essay and attach a sociological-evaluation sheet to the printed version for the book review and the final review essay. The electronic version will be for my files.
Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1 (Sept. 5): Introduction and Course Overview

Week 2 (Sept. 12): Transnational Corporations, Primary Exports, and Community
Required Readings: Steve Striffler, In the Shadow of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggles and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995. (Finish Book.)

Supplementary Readings

Week 3 (Sept. 19): Class and Inequality

Supplementary Readings
Advancing Basic Needs, Preserving Privileged Interests.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 51(2):??.


**Week 4 (Sept. 26): Maize and the Neoliberal Food Regime, I**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplementary Readings:**


Week 5 (Oct. 3) Maize and the Neoliberal Food Regime, II

Week 6 (Oct. 10) Neoliberalism, Green Revolution and Food in Latin America
Required Readings: Gerardo Otero, ed. 2008. *Food for the Few: Neoliberal Globalism and Biotechnology in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press. (Chs. 1-2, and at least another chapter from first half.)

Supplementary Readings:

(Note: there are many books on the Green Revolution. Those below are suggestions on food, culture and biotechnology links, including favorable perspectives.)

Week 6 (Oct. 10): Neoliberalism and Biotechnology in Latin America

Required Readings: Gerardo Otero, ed. 2008. *Food for the Few: Neoliberal Globalism and Biotechnology in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press. (Read at least three chapters from second half.)

Week 7 (Oct. 17): Food Movements and the Agrarian Question

Suggested Readings:

Week 8 (Oct. 24): Social Movements and Agrarian Reform I

Suggested Readings:
Week 9 (Oct. 31): Social Movements and Agrarian Reform II

Week 10 (Nov. 7): Rise of the Electoral Left in Latin America I

Supplementary Readings:

Book Review Due Today by 9:00 in class.

Week 11 (Nov. 14): Rise of the Electoral Left in Latin America II
Required Readings: Jeffery R. Webber and Barry Carr, eds. *The New Latin American Left: Cracks in the Empire*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield. (Read Ch. 1 and at least three other chapters from 2-7.)

Suggested Readings (for contrast of struggles focused on civil society):

Week 12 (Nov. 21): Rise of the Electoral Left in Latin America II
Required Readings: Jeffery R. Webber and Barry Carr, eds. *The New Latin American Left: Cracks in the Empire*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield. (Read at least four chapters from 8-15, preferably including Ch. 15 to see the influence of U.S. and Canadian imperialism.)

Week 13 (Nov. 28): THANKSGIVING WEEKEND—NO CLASS TODAY (but you can still post a discussion paper).
**Week 14 (Dec. 5) Rise of the MST in Bolivia**


Suggested Readings on participatory politics:

Suggested Readings on Ethnic Politics in Latin America:

**Week 15 (Dec. 12): Presentations**

**Review Essay Due on Monday, December 15, 2014 by 4:00 p.m. Please send by email.**
Sociological Essay Evaluation (for Book Review and Review Essay)

Name: _______________________.

Essay grade: _____.

Analysis and Criticism:

POOR EXCELLENT

1 2 3 4 5 Follows the directions of the assignment (e.g., answers questions sufficiently).
1 2 3 4 5 Clearly defined agenda to demonstrate the thesis or hypothesis.
1 2 3 4 5 Coherence of explanation. Clear statements. Succinct.
1 2 3 4 5 Key terms and concepts are defined and explained.
1 2 3 4 5 Assertions and arguments supported with specific cites to the original works.
1 2 3 4 5 Assertions and arguments supported with specific quotes from the original works.
1 2 3 4 5 Creative use of insights from lecture and class discussion.
1 2 3 4 5 Various parts and paragraphs of paper well structured and interconnected.
1 2 3 4 5 Depth of coverage of existing literature and original works.
1 2 3 4 5 Analyzes literature beyond summarizing.

Technical presentation:

X denotes that attention should be paid to this problem.
XX denotes that extra attention is warranted.

_____ Late paper (one letter grade is deducted for each day the paper is late).
_____ Paper format: pages numbered in top right hand corner, one-inch margins, double-spaced.
_____ Appropriate citation format not followed.
_____ Text is too long.
_____ Text is too short.
_____ Redundancy (wordy; can be trimmed without loss of meaning).
_____ Some statements are unsupported (e.g., undeveloped and/or vague statements).
_____ Insufficient coverage of existing literature.
_____ Insufficient depth of coverage.
_____ Typographic errors, misspelled words, punctuation errors.
_____ Incomplete sentences, awkward sentence structure.
_____ Some paragraphs are too long.
_____ Some paragraphs are too short.
Name: ______________________ Phone(s): ________________

Major? ________________ Year/Class__________ E-mail: ________________

Other courses taken this semester (names, not numbers):

Home town and/or country? ___________________

How long have you studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison? _________ If you come from another college or university, please name: _____________________

Why are you interested in this course? (check one:)

[ ] It is required
[ ] Interested in subject
[ ] Fit my timetable
[ ] Looked easy
[ ] Other Specify ________________________________.

Please name two to three courses taken at this or other universities or colleges that have influenced your thinking the most. Write course names, not numbers.

What is your current definition of the “Left” in Latin America? (2-3 sentences)