PL SC 358 - Latin American Politics

Summer 2013

Section 001: 346 MARB on T Th from 8:00 am - 10:30 am

Instructor/TA Info

Instructor Information

Name: Kirk Hawkins
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Office Phone: (801) 422-1362
Email: kirk.hawkins@byu.edu

Course Information

Learning Outcomes

Learning Facts About Latin American Politics

In this course you develop a general understanding of Latin American politics and how politics in the region compares with that of the rest of the world. You also develop expert knowledge of at least one Latin American country, and you learn about databases and other sources of information on the region.

Learning Theories to Understand Facts

You will learn how to apply theories in order to understand the facts. Beyond learning facts, you will improve your ability to identify patterns in Latin American politics and explain them. This analytical knowledge will allow you to make predictions and prescriptions.

Developing Broader Writing and Methods Skills

You will develop broader skills of research, writing, and "numeracy." These basic skills are taught in most Political Science classes, and you have several opportunities here to improve them.

Prerequisites

PLSc 200 or LtAm 211

Materials

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<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Price (new)</th>
<th>Price (used)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Democracy in Latin America: Political Change in Comparative Perspective Required by Smith, Peter H. Oxford University Press, USA; Edition 2 (1315461600) ISBN: 9780195387735</td>
<td>BYU Bookstore</td>
<td>44.95</td>
<td>33.75</td>
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<td>The Economist Required (1969-12-31)</td>
<td>Available through hbll.byu.edu</td>
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<td>Additional readings on Learning Suite (LS) Required (1969-12-31)</td>
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Grading Policy

Grading

Most assignments will be curved up (never down) so that the class average is a B/B+.

Turning in assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day scheduled, although I reserve the right to have you wait a few minutes so that we can use the assignments for class discussions. Late assignments should be turned in to the dropbox outside 745 SWKT and will lose a half grade before 5 p.m. and another full grade for every 24 hours after. Anything missed for a legitimate excuse can be made up without penalty.

Making up assignments

I accept legitimate excuses for tardiness and absence and allow you to retake quizzes or turn in projects late—but only for legitimate excuses. These include serious family or personal matters, illness, and events beyond your control. I can’t excuse assignments that you miss for personal reasons; you have the assignment schedule and are responsible for knowing it. If you must miss a class for personal reasons, please use your free quizzes.

There are no regularly scheduled extra-credit assignments. However, you may make up missed or badly-done assignments by proposing your own creative solutions. Whatever you propose should be something that at least equals the worth of what you missed and maybe requires some extra work and learning from you. You need to come to me with your detailed proposal before turning in anything. Note that these are make-up assignments, not extra credit; you can use these to replace an existing score, not add points to your total.

Participation Policy

This course heavily emphasizes individual and group work. Assignments such as readings quizzes, exams, and your final paper are individual ones that ensure your preparation and reward your individual effort. Your other assignments, including exercises, presentations, and the executive summary of your final paper, are done as a group to improve your learning and the quality of your product. To make sure that each of you do your part, each of you will review your fellow group members twice during the semester.

Assignments

Daily readings:

A schedule of readings follows this section. Readings are required for class each day, but you should skim them, drawing on the study questions I will send you, and using the daily quizzes as an additional guide. You also need to keep up on current events in Latin America by reading relevant articles in The Economist.

Groups:

At the beginning of the semester you will be assigned to a group of 4-5 classmates. Your group will work on the exercises and final paper together, and you must plan on spending time twice each week with group members in order to make this function well. You are also encouraged to work with your group on other assignments, such as reading and studying for exams, but this is optional; you must take quizzes and exams alone. Twice this term you will evaluate your group members, and the results will be used to adjust your individual grade on group work.

Research paper (group summary 10%, individual paper 25%):

Working with your group, you will write a write a paper of 4000-5000 words (up to 15 double-spaced pages) that presents what you consider to be the most serious weaknesses of the democracy in a country of
your choice and a set of policies to address these weaknesses. A polished draft of your group’s conclusions (one page) will be turned in at the beginning of August, and a final draft of this summary, together with the full paper, is due on the last day of classes. While the summary is written as a group, you will write the full paper on your own, based on the summary.

Exercises and presentation (17.5%):

To help you learn the material and work on your research paper, your group will have a series of short research and writing exercises. A few of these at the beginning of the term are mandatory; the rest are “optional,” in that your group will pick just 5 out of the 7 listed in the syllabus. A description of these assignments is attached. These are usually challenging assignments, and your group will do them together and turn in a single copy. However, if you have problems with your group, you are free to submit a separate paper that I will simply average into the group's score. We will talk later about the best way to work as a group.

On days when these assignments are due, the exercises will help form the basis of our discussion. At least once in the semester, your group will be required to give a 10-minute presentation that teaches us something that you learned about your country while doing the exercise, followed by 5 minutes for questions and advice from the class; we will pass around a sign-up sheet later. These are precious opportunities to learn from each other about Latin American countries, so prepare your presentation well.

Quizzes (10%):

Prior to each class you will take an online quiz on the readings, lectures, and current events from the previous day/week. These are open-book and open-note, but must be done alone. You can save and continue working on them until 6 a.m. of class day, when they are due. The quizzes are designed to help you keep up on your readings and studying without cramming. They also help me find out what you don’t understand. Please note that these aren’t just “readings quizzes” with a couple of easy questions; but tiny exams that cover the main ideas and require you to analyze the material. In exchange for doing the online course evaluation at the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest quiz scores.

Midterm and final exam (12.5%/25%):

These exams have a format similar to the weekly quizzes (a mixture of multiple choice, fill-in, identification, and short answer) with a couple of longer essays. The final exam is comprehensive. You will find that the quizzes provide a thorough study guide for the final exam, so keep a copy of your results. Please note the dates of each exam now.

Online course evaluation:

The online course evaluation at the end of the semester provides the university and me with valuable information, so I compensate you by dropping your two lowest quiz scores if you do the evaluation on time. Even if you don’t need the help on the quizzes, you should do the evaluation.

University Policies

Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and my own expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Sexual Harassment
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education and pertains to admissions, academic and athletic programs, and university-sponsored activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment of students by university employees, other students, and visitors to campus. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor or contact one of the following: the Title IX Coordinator at 801-422-2130; the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847; the Equal Employment Office at 801-422-5895; or Ethics Point at http://www.ethicspoint.com, or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours).

**Student Disability**

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

**Schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T - Jun 25</td>
<td>Introduction and syllabus; defining democracy</td>
<td>Smith, introduction; Dahl, chapter 1 (LS); Zakaria (LS); Hellinger, pp. 38-44 (LS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th - Jun 27</td>
<td>Defining democracy</td>
<td>Mandatory exercise: Your definition of democracy</td>
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<td>Research paper: Making democracy work in Latin America</td>
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<td>Research paper and measuring democracy</td>
<td>Sample student paper; Smith, Chapter 1; Freedom House website; Polity IV website</td>
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<tr>
<td>T - Jul 02</td>
<td>Measuring democracy</td>
<td>Mandatory exercise: Measuring democracy</td>
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<td>Transitions and consolidation</td>
<td>Linz and Stepan, &quot;Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Democracy and its Arenas&quot; (LS); Smith, chapter 2</td>
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<td>Th - Jul 04</td>
<td>Independence Day Holiday</td>
<td>Mandatory exercise: Measuring consolidation</td>
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<td>T - Jul 09</td>
<td>Consolidation</td>
<td>Mainwaring, &quot;Patronage, Clientelism, and Patrimonialism,&quot; pp. 175-80 (LS); Kitschelt, &quot;Linkages Between Citizens and Politicians,&quot; pp. 845-53 (LS); Kitschelt et al., &quot;Long-term influence on the structuring the Latin American party systems&quot; (LS)</td>
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<td>Th - Jul 11</td>
<td>Modes of linkage: programmatism and clientelism</td>
<td>Hawkins, &quot;How populist is Chavez? Measuring populist discourse in comparative perspective&quot; (LS); Hawkins, &quot;Measuring populism in comparative perspective&quot; (LS)</td>
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<td>Parties and party systems</td>
<td>Shively, &quot;Parties,&quot; pp. 247-69 (LS); Smith, chapter 6, pp. 176-82</td>
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<td>T - Jul 16</td>
<td>Clientelism</td>
<td>Optional exercise: Clientelism</td>
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<td>Presidential powers and electoral rules</td>
<td>Smith, chapter 6, pp. 156-75</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Th - Jul 18</td>
<td>Populism</td>
<td>Smith, chapter 9</td>
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<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Smith, chapter 10, pp. 263-65, 281-88</td>
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<td>Civil rights and liberties: Illiberal democracy</td>
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<td>T - Jul 23</td>
<td>Midterm exam/group evaluation #1</td>
<td>Smith, pp. 273-80; Carothers, &quot;The rule of law revival&quot; (LS); Coatsworth, &quot;Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico&quot; (LS)</td>
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<td>Civil rights and liberties: corruption</td>
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<td>W - Jul 24</td>
<td>Pioneer Day Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th - Jul 25</td>
<td>Electoral rules and the party system</td>
<td>Optional exercise: Electoral rules and the party system Smith, pp. 266-73; other readings TBA</td>
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<td>Civil rights and liberties: media freedom</td>
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<td>T - Jul 30</td>
<td>Civil rights and liberties: corruption</td>
<td>Optional exercise: Corruption Arana, &quot;How the street gangs took Central America&quot; (LS); additional short readings from The Economist</td>
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<td>Gangs and cartels</td>
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<td>Th - Aug  01</td>
<td>Civil liberties</td>
<td>Optional exercise: Civil liberties Smith, chapter 8; Daz-Cayeros and Magaloni, &quot;Aiding Latin America's Poor&quot; (LS); additional reading from The Economist</td>
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<td>Political economy of development</td>
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<tr>
<td>F - Aug 02</td>
<td>Rough draft of executive summary due, 5 p.m. at dropbox near 745 SWKT</td>
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<td>T - Aug 06</td>
<td>Political economy of development</td>
<td>Optional exercise: Economic development Smith, chapter 3</td>
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<td>The military</td>
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<td>Th - Aug  08</td>
<td>Public opinion/democracy culture</td>
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<td>Elections and participation</td>
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<td>M - Aug 12</td>
<td>Final draft of paper due at 5 p.m. in dropbox near 745 SWKT</td>
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<td>T - Aug 13</td>
<td>Final Exam:</td>
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<td>Th - Aug 15</td>
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<td>7:00am - 8:50am</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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Assignments

Research paper: Making democracy work in Latin America

Due: Thursday, Jun 27 at 8:00 am

Background

Using Prof. Smith’s text as a framework for discussion, this semester we explore the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in Latin America. We begin by defining and measuring it; we then analyze many of its components and some of their consequences using a variety of theories, concepts, and data. You and your group members will study these in detail for one country that interests you.

Purpose

To help you synthesize and apply what you have learned in a practical, cumulative exercise; to help solidify your expertise in at least one Latin American country; to help you learn to work with a group; and to continue to improve your writing, thinking, and research skills.

The basic assignment

Write a paper in which you describe the current state of democracy in a Latin American country (the one you have been studying this semester) and prescribe specific solutions. Thus, you are writing an analysis in which you advocate major policy or institutional change. Keep in mind that you are suggesting ideal reforms; you do not have to concern yourself extensively with the political feasibility of implementing them, although you should address this briefly.

Details

This assignment has a group component and an individual one. For the group component, you must together decide on the set of problems and their solutions in your country, then write up a summary of your conclusions in no more than one single-spaced page that will serve as the executive summary for your paper. Every member of your group will submit this same summary. The choice of format is yours, but it must indicate the problems you are highlighting and their policy solutions, and it must be well-written. I generally recommend following the example of the sample paper: a short introductory paragraph with a thesis, then three long paragraphs, each one discussing a problem and its solution. Creativity is helpful but not as important as making certain that this document represents your group effort.

For the individual component, you must write out the full paper in your own words, between 4,000 and 6,000 (about 15 double spaced pages), not including the title page and bibliography. The key is to write a convincing, well-researched, well-written paper that draws on what you have learned during the semester. Thus, you should:

- State your topic and your argument in the introduction while providing a clear sense of the structure of the rest of the paper. The main argument should be innovative in some way, not just parroting what you have read elsewhere (although you may explicitly describe and modify others scholars’ prescriptions).
- Substantiate your argument systematically, using both logic and data, whether quantitative, qualitative, or both. An excellent paper will not simply copy and paste previous assignments or list everything we have talked about during the semester, but will truly synthesize what you have learned, focusing on the most important things that need fixing in your country and providing well-reasoned solutions.
- Refer to sources where appropriate (quotes, paraphrased material, key data), and include a separate works cited page.
- Use good sentence- and global-level writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, paragraph construction, etc.) and correct format, including section headings and page numbers. Use tables, figures, and quotes sparingly, only where needed, and with appropriate explanations.

You are free to reproduce portions of your group’s summary in your paper.

For the paper—and for all of your exercises that build towards it—your audience is a sophisticated one of government policymakers, either from the country you are studying (say, the president) or another government institution capable of acting on your analysis. Assume they are somewhat familiar with your country (thus, don’t spend time on a long historical background) and the basic concepts you have studied this semester, but also assume that they are unfamiliar with specific data on these issue areas and have not given them creative thought. Your writing should be formal and objective but not full of jargon, should use the first person sparingly and avoid the passive voice, and should sound more persuasive than a regular scientific/academic article.

Everyone must turn in a rough of draft of the group summary by Friday, August 2, at 5 p.m. (dropbox in 745 SWKT). The group summary will be graded as if it were the final draft, with the grade factored into its final grade (35 percent of the summary grade). The final draft of the complete paper and your group summary is due at 5 p.m. on Monday, August 12, the last regular day of classes, at the dropbox in 745 SWKT.

Mandatory exercise: Your definition of democracy

Due: Thursday, Jun 27 at 8:00 am

Background

Prof. Smith provides a definition of democracy that has two or three parts, depending on how you look at it: electoral democracy (first participation, then contestation) and liberal democracy (civil rights). Within electoral democracy, he further distinguishes four regime sub-types (authoritarian, competitive oligarchic, semi-democratic, and democratic), and within liberal democracy he identifies two types, liberal and illiberal democracies. However, his definition is not necessarily perfect: he incorporates some personal biases with which you may disagree; his understanding of the way democracy actually works may be flawed; and his logic may simply be unsound or unclear.

Purpose

To help you understand what democracy is; to give you a little practice in the kind of critical and theoretical thinking you will need to do as a political scientist; and to help you think more concretely about how to improve democracy in Latin America.

The basic assignment

In no more than one page (perhaps half), and after carefully reflecting on the readings and class discussion, define democracy and justify your definition for an audience of high-level policymakers in your country. That is, provide a succinct definition of democracy, explain its components and underlying logic (including helpful examples where needed), and justify it philosophically or with reference to some data. Although your audience is a set of high-level policymakers, you must still refer to the readings and class discussion. Make certain to include appropriate in-text citations and a works cited page or footnotes. Use good sentence- and global-level writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, paragraph construction, etc.). It is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 13, and must be typed.

Other Sources


Mandatory exercise: Measuring democracy

Due: Tuesday, Jul 02 at 8:00 am

Background

Prof. Smith creates a time-series of data on Latin America democracy from 1900 to 2000, using a measurement designed to reflect his concept of electoral democracy. However, other indicators (such as the Freedom in the World Index and the Polity dataset) offer alternatives ways of measuring democracy that are possibly more meaningful and allow cross-regional comparison.

Purpose

To help you see Latin America in a global context, to familiarize you with an important set of democracy indicators, to help you learn more about your country, to help you work together more as a group, and to help you work on your quantitative skills.

The basic assignment

For just the Latin American country you are studying, use the Polity IV dataset found on Learning Suite or the Freedom House “Freedom in the World” online database to construct a graph showing the level of democracy across the entire length of the dataset. Then, in the accompanying text: 1) explain how the indicator is created and what it measures, including the meaning of the scale, 2) describe the trend in your country, and 3) compare it to trends in other countries or regions with which you are familiar. You can use Smith’s data for this last task. Note that interpreting the graph will require some references to the historical background and key events in your country; unless you have a photographic memory already full of historical detail, you should consult one or two reputable texts on the country’s history and make certain to cite them. Write no more than 1½ single-spaced pages, including your graph (which should be about half a page).

Details

Remember that your audience is a set of high-level policymakers. To receive a passing grade you must:

- Provide a complete, readable, nicely formatted graph that includes all the required data
- Provide the appropriate explanations for your data required above (one paragraph)
- Adequately describe the trend in your country, situate it historically, and compare it to other countries/region (one or two good paragraphs)
- Refer to good sources where appropriate, and include a separate works cited page.
- Use good sentence- and global-level writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, paragraph construction, etc.).

Given your audience, you should write with a voice that is formal and considerate, avoids jargoon, uses the first person sparingly, and avoids the passive voice. Do this and all subsequent exercises as a group. The paper is due at the beginning of class.

Sources

Mandatory exercise: Measuring consolidation

Due: Tuesday, Jul 09 at 8:00 am

Background

Prof. Smith explores some of the common explanations for democracy, both in terms of transitions and consolidation. However, he doesn’t really measure the degree of consolidation in specific countries or even across the region.

Purpose

To help you learn more about your country, to help you prepare for your paper by identifying some general areas in which democracy is weak, and to further develop your quantitative skills and knowledge of helpful sources of data.

The basic assignment

Using the five “arenas” described by Linz and Stepan, measure democratic consolidation in your country and reach a summary judgment of how consolidated its democracy is. This will require several indicators and qualitative assessments, but probably no graphs or tables because you will only report a couple of numbers or pieces of information for each arena. Make certain to describe the meaning of each numerical indicator (how it is collected, what it measures, what the scale means) and to explain the relevance of these indicators to the overarching arena of consolidation. Write up all of this in no more than 1½ single-spaced pages.

Details

Remember that your audiences is a set of high-level policymakers. To receive a passing grade you must:

- Reach an accurate overall conclusion about the degree of consolidation of democracy in your country.
- Provide enough data for each arena to back up your claim, including explanations of the data and sources and how they relate to the overarching concept.
- Refer to sources where appropriate, and include a separate works cited page or footnotes with complete citations.
- Use good sentence- and global-level writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, paragraph construction, etc.).

Write with a voice that would be appropriate for this audience: fairly formal and objective, using the first person very sparingly, and avoiding the passive voice, but taking a somewhat persuasive stance.

Sources

Free and lively civil society Try survey data on associational life (World Values Survey or the AmericasBarometer) or a study of civil society such as Joseph Klesner’s article on social capital in Latin American Research Review.

Autonomous and valued political society Use survey data on confidence in political parties, articles on the party system, and qualitative assessments about how institutionalized or personalistic the parties are.
**Rule of law** Try the corruption perception indexes of Transparency International (www.transparency.org) or the World Bank’s Governance indicators (google “governance matters”). Also consider crime data, including homicide rates (provided in numerous online resources) or “experienced crime” measured in the AmericasBarometer

**Autonomous and capable bureaucracy** Tricky. Try the CIA World Factbook for possible numbers of government employees--but are they professionalized? Look for studies of the police force. Also try survey data on confidence in components of the bureaucracy.

**“Institutionalized” economic society** Qualitative data on the nature of current political conflicts and the issues at stake (for example, is a radical, anti-neoliberal party in power?), as well as mass or elite survey data on left-right polarization and support for market economics.

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**Optional exercises**

**Purpose**

To familiarize you more with democracy in your country of emphasis, to help you work on your research paper, to help you improve your skills of research, writing, and numeracy, to learn to work together as a group, and to apply and synthesize the material you are learning in class.

**The basic assignment**

As group, select five of the seven optional exercises listed below. For each one, do some outside research and explain whether or not the topic of the exercise represents a problem or a unique strength of democracy in your chosen country. If it is a problem, you must then provide a specific, workable policy solution; if it is not a problem, you must explain the unusual success of your country at making this a strength. Convey both of these—problem and solution, or strength and explanation—in one, single-spaced page of text, with a works cited page.

**Details**

This assignment requires very concise writing, but if you really need more space, go ahead and take it. To receive a good grade on each exercise, you must:

- State your key arguments in the first paragraph, including both description (how much of a continuing problem X is) and the policy solution/causes of success. Also provide a clear sense of the structure of the rest of the paper.
- Outline the problem area systematically, using both logic and data, whether quantitative, qualitative, or both.
- Provide a policy solution and justify it in sufficient detail that your audience would not only be convinced to try it, but would know what they were supposed to be doing.
- Refer to the sources where appropriate, and include a separate works cited page.
- Use good sentence- and global-level writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, paragraph construction, etc.).

For these exercises, as with all previous ones, your audience is a sophisticated one of government policymakers such as the president of your country. Assume they are familiar with your country and the basic concepts you have studied this semester, but also assume that they are unfamiliar with specific data on this issue and have not given it the creative thought you have. Your writing should be fairly formal and objective but not full of jargon, should use the first person sparingly and avoid the passive voice, and should sound somewhat more persuasive than a regular scientific article.

**Topics**
Clientelism

Many Latin American countries struggle with entrenched clientelism. Is yours one of them? Describe the problem using not only aggregate measures such as that from Kitschelt et al, but with examples of areas of public administration where clientelism and patronage are rampant. You will be tempted to solve this in the same way as you solve corruption, but the two problems are not quite the same; think about broad social changes as well as institutional reform.

Sources. Kitschelt et al. is a perfectly good source of quantitative data (and theories to back up your solutions), but for qualitative evidence you will probably need to look in library books or a good journal index.

Populism and charisma

Is there a populist leader currently running your country or likely to win the next election that you think poses a big challenge for democracy? Tell us about this leader/movement with a bit of historical background, making certain to highlight its undemocratic qualities and the reasons for its popularity. Then suggest a way to meaningfully combat or moderate the influence of this and future populist movements.

Sources. Case studies of these leaders/movements are fairly typical in policy journals such as *Journal of Democracy* and in good newsmagazines; a search on a good journal index should turn up lots of information. Feel free to draw on class readings for theories to back up your proposed solutions, but bear in mind that the readings focus mostly on the long term.

Electoral rules and the party system

For this assignment you will need to identify the electoral rules for national legislative elections and/or the presidential elections in your country, then tell me whether they have a negative effect on democratic governability because of their influence on the party system. Typically, the concern is that the electoral rules are creating a highly fragmented party system in which gridlock is common.

Sources. www.ipu.org (Look under the link to the “‘Parline’ database”) is a good place for information on the electoral rules; Electionworld in Wikipedia will give you a sense of the party system’s fragmentation and even allow you to calculate the effective number of parties. And if the party system/electoral rules really are a problem, you are likely to hear a lot of complaints about it in recent journal articles or book chapters on politics in your country.

Corruption

Nearly every country in Latin American struggles with a long legacy of corruption and weak rule of law. Aggregate, quantitative data on current levels of corruption are readily available from the World Bank’s Governance Matters database (try Googling “governance matters”) and of course Transparency International’s website. Qualitative data is harder to come by, unless you can find a nice case study on the Transparency International website or in a book or article somewhere. As for solutions, there is a standard toolkit we will discuss in class. But it will be up to you to identify which are the institutions that really need targeting, and how to successfully implement what is likely to be a rather bold set of reforms.

Civil liberties

Civil liberties are generally not as big a problem in Latin America as corruption and the rule of law, but sometimes particular challenges arise from key parties, leaders, or problems of civil unrest. Describe these problems if they exist (focusing on a particular civil liberty is fine, but make certain to explain why other civil liberties aren’t a problem!), then offer a smart, convincing solution.

Sources. You will learn about good sources on press freedom in class. An excellent source of data on other civil liberties is of course Freedom House, in their country reports rather than in the data tables. Yet another good source is the State Department’s annual Human Rights Report, available on the Web.
Economic development

Here you need to say whether economic development is a problem in your country and what policies could best address any problem areas. In order to analyze economic development, it may help to describe where your country stands on the three components of economic development that you learned about in class: growth, equity, sustainability. It may also help to compare your country with others.

Sources. The World Bank’s World Development Indicators (WDI) database provides the basic indicators you need to describe the three components of economic development. However, describing solutions is more challenging and will require exploring a variety of library and web-based options. The WDI is accessible on or off campus through the HBLL website under "Databases." While you may initially look at a variety of indicators, you must be selective in your presentation and focus on the most salient ones. Remember that this is only the first part of the assignment, and that you also need to suggest a couple of good solutions. These don’t have to be especially original; feel free to defend solutions that other people are suggesting, or to modify current programs.