

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEXICO
(ILRIC 339/739)

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Tu Th 2:55-4:10
105 Ives Hall

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Description

Mexico shares a 2,000-mile border with the United States. The two countries have become increasingly interlinked by transborder flows of people, commerce, politics, and culture. Over the last two decades, Mexico has also undergone profound change from an authoritarian political system to a developing democracy, and from a nationalist economy to one built on trade with the U.S. This is an especially auspicious time in which to study Mexico: the hotly contested 2006 presidential elections, a popular uprising in Oaxaca, and a vigorous debate over immigration reform in the U.S. all call for a deeper understanding of political, social, and economic developments on our southern border.

This course provides an introduction to contemporary Mexican politics, economy, and society. The goal of the course is to give students the essential background and analytical tools for understanding Mexico's recent history, Mexico's current and future challenges, the nature of the U.S.-Mexico relationship, and the extent of Mexican influence in the U.S.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings, attend lecture and section, and participate actively in section discussions. Evaluation will be based on the following:

- a) In-class midterm exam (25%), consisting of identifications and short essay questions.
- b) Short 5-6-page essay (25%): you will have a choice of writing on a current event (drawing on recent news articles) or a comparison of two films. Some movie recommendations are provided throughout the syllabus, but you may choose others not listed here.
- c) Take-home final (35%), consisting of essay questions.
- d) Section participation (15%).

Exams will be based on required readings and lectures.

Students may choose to write a 15-page research paper in lieu of the final exam with instructor's permission. If you are interested in this option, please consult with instructor by Week 3. Those writing a research paper must turn in a 1-2 page description of the proposed research by Week 4 and a preliminary bibliography no later than Week 5.

Graduate students must take this class at the 739 level. Graduate students will be required to write an 18-20-page research paper. For additional details, please see instructor.

Readings

The following books are required reading and can be purchased at the Campus Bookstore. They will also be placed on reserve at the ILR (Catherwood) Library.

- Daniel C. Levy and Kathleen Bruhn, *Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2nd edition, 2006).
- Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon, *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004).
- Rubén Martínez, *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* (New York: Picador, 2002).

I have indicated which chapters in *Mexico: The Struggle for Democratic Development*, and *Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy*, correspond to the weekly themes. However, you are encouraged to read both of these books all the way through and earlier than the dates indicated in the syllabus. Besides these books, you are required to read several articles and book chapters, most of which have been placed on **electronic reserve** on the course blackboard site. You may access this material by going to www.blackboard.cornell.edu and enrolling in the course site. The course is listed under the Department of International and Comparative Labor in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. There is no course packet for purchase.

Additional readings will include short news articles and online reading assignments as announced. Where possible, assignments will be announced and posted on the course blackboard site, so please check this site regularly. Make sure that the instructor or the TAs have your accurate email address.

Sections

There are discussion sections for this class. Each undergraduate student has been assigned to one section on Friday. The TAs will conduct these discussion sections. Your participation grade will be based on your level of participation (including attendance) in these section meetings. **Graduate students** are not assigned to sections. Alternate arrangements will be made with the instructor.

Important

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Please make sure you are familiar with this code. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a brief introduction to the formative developments of 20th century Mexican history. The Mexican Revolution and the reform government of President Lázaro Cárdenas are crucial for understanding later developments in Mexican politics and economy. The lasting myths and symbols of contemporary Mexican politics were forged in these first decades, and later struggles such as the Chiapas uprising are better understood in reference to these early claims for social justice. The introduction covers the Mexican Revolution, the 1920s and 1930s, and the institutionalization of Mexican politics through the formation of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the longest-ruling party in the world.

Week 1. Introduction

January 23 & 25

- Levy and Bruhn, Mexico, Ch. 1.
- Preston and Dillon, Opening Mexico, Preface, Chs. 1-2.

FILM: *Americas: Mexico*

Week 2. Revolution, Reconstruction, and Reform

January 30 & February 1

- Mexico, Ch. 2.
- Selection of articles from the Mexican Constitution (on blackboard course site)

Week 3. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)

February 6 & 8

- Mexico, Ch. 3.
- Luis Javier Garrido, “The Crisis of *Presidencialismo*” in Wayne A. Cornelius et al, eds., Mexico’s Alternative Political Futures (La Jolla: Center for US-Mexican Studies, 1989), pp. 417-34.

FILM: *The Frescoes of Diego Rivera*

Recommended:

- Websites: www.corridos.org
- Movies: *Frida*; *Viva Zapata!*

II. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

This section examines Mexico's long, slow road to political democracy, beginning with the massacre of university students at Tlatelolco in 1968 through the controversy surrounding the 2006 presidential elections. Themes include protest and rebellion by students, workers, and peasants; the adaptation of the political system to grassroots challenges; the major forces contributing to political opening in the 1990s; the lingering struggle to shape Mexico's democracy, and current political challenges.

Week 4. The Tlatelolco Massacre and its Political Legacy

February 13 & 15

- Mexico, Ch. 4.
- Opening Mexico, Chs. 3-6.
- Elena Poniatowska, Massacre in Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1975), pp. 171-172; 199-223.
- Kate Doyle, "The Tlatelolco Massacre: U.S. Documents on Mexico and the Events of 1968," The National Security Archive website at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB99/>

Week 5. Civil Society and Democracy

February 20 & 22

- Opening Mexico, Chs. 7-12.

FILM: *The Sixth Sun*

Week 6. Political Opening at the Turn of the 21st Century

February 27 & March 1

- Mexico, Chs. 6, 8.
- Opening Mexico, Chs. 13-15, 17.

Week 7. The Continuing Struggle over Mexican Democracy

March 6 & 8

- Opening Mexico, Epilogue.
- Kathleen Bruhn, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Los Pinos: Andres Manuel and the 2006 Presidential Campaign," paper presented at conference on Mexico's 2006 Election, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 2006, at http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/res_activities/conferences/mexico_06/papers/Bruhn.pdf

- Laura Carlsen, “Mexico’s Two Presidents,” (Sept. 20, 2006), IRC Column at <http://www.irc-online.org/content/3529>
- BBC: Q&A Crisis in Oaxaca at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/6102018.stm>
- Robin Alexander, “Report on the Human Rights Situation in Oaxaca,” Mexico (January 4, 2007), at http://www.rightsaction.org/Reports/Oaxaca_HR_Report_0107.htm
- Laurie Freeman, “State of Siege: Drug-Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico” (A WOLA Special Report, June 2006) at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/news/docs/State_of_Siege_WOLA.pdf
- Human Rights Watch, Lost in Transition: Bold Ambitions, Limited Results for Human Rights under Fox, (Part I. Summary and Recommendations), at <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/mexico0506/index.htm>

Recommended:

- Movies: *Amores Perros*; *Y Tu Mamá También*; *Traffic*
- Visit links for news articles about the 2006 presidential elections: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=5949&fuseaction=topics.item&news_id=143858#analysis and http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/res_activities/conferences/mexico_06/program.html

III. ECONOMY AND WORK: FROM NATIONALISM TO NAFTA

Mexico’s economy has undergone dramatic changes in recent years and the country still struggles to generate stable economic growth and development. This section focuses on the major shifts in Mexico’s economy and its effects on the quality and availability of work. We will look at the effects of NAFTA, the role of unions, and the changing nature of maquiladora (assembly plant) employment.

Week 8. Nationalist Origins of Economic Policy/Workers & Unions

March 13 & 15

IN-CLASS MIDTERM TUESDAY, MARCH 13

- Mexico, Ch. 5.
- Opening Mexico, Ch. 16.

Recommended websites:

Mexican Labor News and Analysis at http://www.ueinternational.org/Mexico_info/mlna.php

Resources on Mexican labor at http://www.ueinternational.org/Mexico_info/bibliography1.html

“Shop ‘til you drop on a Mexican wage,” UE’s interactive site:
<http://www.ueinternational.org/shop/index.php>

Week 9. SPRING BREAK—No Classes.

Week 10. NAFTA & Cross-Border Labor Campaigns

March 27 & 29

March 29: Guest Speaker--Ben Davis, Solidarity Center, AFL-CIO, Mexico City

- Mexico, Ch. 7 (pp. 248-60 only).
- Francisco Zapata, “NAFTA: Few Gains for Mexico’s Workers,” Perspectives on Work, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Industrial Relations Research Association, 2002), pp. 22-24.
- Demetrios Papademetriou, John Audley, Sandra Polaski, Scott Vaughan, NAFTA's Promise and Reality: Lessons from Mexico for the Hemisphere, Carnegie Endowment Report (November 2003) (read Introduction and Chapter 1) at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1390>

Week 11. Maquiladoras

April 3 & 5

- Dan La Botz, “Maquiladoras and Worker Rights,” ch. 7 in Mask of Democracy, pp. 161-183.
- Maria Patricia Fernández-Kelly, “Maquiladoras: The View from Inside,” chapter 6 in For We Are Sold, I And My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 108-132.

FILM: *Maquilapolis*

**IV. ISSUES IN U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS/
MEXICANS IN THE U.S.**

Undocumented immigration is probably the single most important and difficult policy issue for Mexico and the United States. Here we focus on the immigration experience: the reasons why people cross the border and what this means for their lives, communities, and country; and the political and policy debates surrounding immigration in both countries. This section also looks at the experiences of Mexicans who are in the U.S. We look at the work Mexicans do, the ways in which the Mexican presence is changing the United States, the multiple linkages being forged between Mexico and the U.S., and future challenges for both countries.

Week 12. Crossing the Border

April 10 & 12

SHORT ESSAY DUE THURSDAY, APRIL 12

- Martínez, Crossing Over (entire)

FILM: *Crossing Arizona*

Week 13. Immigration Policy & the Immigration Debate

April 17 & 19

- Mexico, Ch. 7 (except pp. 248-60).
- Peter Andreas, “The Escalation of Immigration Control,” ch. 5 in Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 85-112.
- Wayne A. Cornelius, “Impacts of Border Enforcement on Unauthorized Mexican Migration to the United States,” (September 26, 2006), at <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Cornelius/index1.html>
- Tom Barry, “Which Way Immigration Reform? Toward a Comprehensive Immigration Policy,” IRC Americas Program Discussion Paper (March 20, 2006), <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/3161>
- Mae Ngai, “How Grandma Got Legal” (July 28, 2006) at <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Ngai/>
- Selection of articles on recent policy proposals:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/custom/2006/05/26/CU2006052600148.html>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/custom/2006/03/31/CU2006033101407.html>
<http://americas.irc-online.org/am/2959>

Recommended:

Movies: *Born in East L.A.*; *El Norte*; *From the Other Side*; *La Ciudad*; *Mojados*; *De nadie*

Week 14. Working Lives

April 24 & 26

- Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, “Maid in L.A.,” ch. 2 in Doméstica (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), pp. 29-60.
- Ruth Milkman, “Labor and the New Immigrant Rights Movement: Lessons from California” (July 28, 2006) at <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Milkman/index.html>
- Abel Valenzuela, Jr., Nik Theodore, Edwin Melendez, Ana Luz Gonzalez, On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States (January 2006); (read Executive Summary and Introduction, Section II and Section IV; skim rest); at http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/csup/uploaded_files/Natl_DayLabor-On_the_Corner1.pdf

FILM: *Farmingville*

Week 15. Transnationalism, Citizenship, and Our Joint Futures

May 1 & 3

- Stephen Pitti, “Building Transnational Ties: Mexicans in the U.S.,” Ch. 11 in Mexico’s Politics and Society, pp. 289-319.
- Jonathan Fox, “Mexican Migrant Civic Participation in the United States,” (August 15, 2006) at <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Fox/index2.html>
- Kevin O’Neil, “Consular I.D. Cards: Mexico and Beyond,” (April 1, 2003), Migration Information Source, at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=115>
- Xochitl Bada, “Mexican Hometown Associations,” Citizen Action in the Americas No. 5, Americas Program, Interhemispheric Resource Center, March 2003, at <http://americas.irc-online.org/pdf/series/05.hta.pdf>

Recommended:

Visit website:

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=5949&fuseaction=topics.item&news_id=150685

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE MONDAY, MAY 14