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## **MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA**

### COMM 450 - Spring 2009

#### **Course Description**

This course examines the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies. In particular, it investigates whether communication industries and practices have contributed to promote or to impede democratic consolidation in the region, especially in terms of the quality of political representation. After introducing and discussing the complex links between democratization, political accountability, and the media, we will investigate these links in the Latin American context, focusing on the cases of Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela. The course emphasizes journalistic practices and cultures, but it also considers the role of telenovelas (soap operas).

#### **Course Goals and Objectives**

The central goal of this class is the development of conceptual tools that will enable students to analyze the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies from a critical and comprehensive perspective. More specifically, we will develop an innovative analytical framework that focuses on the links between accountability mechanisms, civil society mobilization, and the mass media.

Our objectives to reach this central goal include learning how to:

- Distinguish between the main theories that explain the relationship between media and political change in new democracies.
- Identify the main features of the political and media systems of Latin America.
- Analyze how the interactions between the state, the media, and civil society shape contemporary historical developments in Latin America.
- Conduct research and gather data in library archives to apply the analytical frameworks of the course in the development of a specific case study.

#### **Course Texts**

Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth State: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Carolina Matos, *Journalism and Political Democracy in Brazil*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008.

Both books available through Tulane Bookstore.

#### **Blackboard**

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and other information. It will also be used for online discussions. The system can be accessed at < <http://mytulane.blackboard.com/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

## **Required texts**

Besides the two textbooks, we will also work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

## **Attendance**

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a “WF.”

## **Evaluation**

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

- 1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which will cover the first two units (Parts I and II). A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be on the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled date for the exam;
- 2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 12-page final paper (excluding front page and references), which should be typed and spaced 1.5. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;
- 3) Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. To have an effective participation, students should complete the assigned readings prior to the sessions for which they are listed in the syllabus and be ready to discuss them. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;
- 4) Readings summaries: Students should bring a one-page summary of the reading/s assigned for each session. Summaries should include the author/s’ main arguments and will be due in the beginning of class. They can be typed or hand-written, and should include the student’s full name and the date of the session. Summaries will be graded as “sufficient” and “insufficient” and only the former will satisfy the requirement. If you deliver all summaries and they are graded “sufficient,” you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade (you can miss up to three summaries without penalty). If you do not, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible “F” (50 points);
- 5) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the “Discussion Board” area of Blackboard. This is where our online discussions will take place. There will be 8 discussion periods and each of them will be led by at least one discussion leader. Discussion leaders are responsible for proposing themes and questions for their respective periods by posting original threads. They should post at least two threads in the day before the respective period is supposed to start and they can add extra threads later, if they wish. Discussion leaders will be in charge of commenting on classmates’ postings, connecting them to readings and other materials, and eventually answering specific questions that emerge in the discussions. There are no major restrictions on the postings in terms of their contents, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates’ arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties. After the conclusion of each period, discussion leaders should submit a 2-page long typed report, containing a personal evaluation of the discussions, as well as the number of messages posted by each student.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective “Period” (Period 1, Period 2, etc.); 3) Discussion leaders can add a new “thread” (a new topic, with a new subject title) to the discussion, while other students can post a message (response or comment) in an existing thread by clicking on “reply.”

Evaluation of discussion board participation: students should post at least two messages in each of the 8 designated periods for online discussions (listed below). Whether you post more than these 16 required messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 16 minimum posts, with at least two in each period, with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not post all required messages, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible “F” (50 points). The evaluation of discussion board leaders will be based on the written report and on the quality of their threads and postings.

The 8 designated periods for online discussions are: Period 1: Jan 26-Feb 1; Period 2: Feb 2-8; Period 3: Feb 9-15; Period 4: Feb 16-27; Period 5: March 9-15; Period 6: March 16-22; Period 7: March 30-April 8; Period 8: April 20-26.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	20 %	Participation	20 %
Readings summaries	15 %	Final Paper	25 %
Discussion board participation	10 %	Discussion board leader report	10%

### Grading scale

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

### Academic dishonesty

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else’s ideas as yours, without citing the source. This course adheres strictly to the Code of Academic Conduct of the Newcomb-Tulane College, available at: < <http://college.tulane.edu/code.htm> >

### Course Schedule

#### PART I

#### INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICAN MEDIA AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS: DEMOCRATIZATION AND MEDIA OPENING

**Jan 12 (Mon) – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.**

(No readings).

**Jan 14 (Wed) – Democratization, political representation and the media.**

\* Mauro Porto, “Theories of democratization: towards a comprehensive framework on political representation.” Manuscript.

**Jan 19 (Mon) – No class. Martin L. King Holiday.**

**Jan 21 (Wed) – Modern Latin American politics: nationalism and populism.**

\* John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, pp. 213-253.

**Jan 26 (Mon) – Contemporary trends: the “Left Turn.”**

\* Jorge Castañeda, “Latin America’s left turn,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, n. 3, 2006, pp. 28-43.  
\* Matthew Cleary, “Explaining the left’s resurgence,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, n. 4, 2006, pp. 35-49.

**Jan 28 (Wed) – Introducing Latin America’s media systems: the question of media opening.**

\* Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson, “The barriers to media opening in Latin America”, *Political Communication*, Vol. 22, n. 1, 2005, pp. 9-25.

**Feb 2 (Mon) – The role of civil society and the rise of media accountability.**

\* Luis Albornoz and Micael Hersmann, “Ibero-American observatories in the sectors of information, communication and culture: a brief history”, *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 30, n. 5, pp. 723-734.

PART II

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE MEXICAN CASE

**Feb 4 (Wed) – Political communication in Mexico’s “perfect dictatorship.”**

\* Lawson, chapters 2-3, pp. 13-47.

**Feb 9 (Mon) – The opening of Mexican media: the press.**

\* Lawson, chapter 5, pp. 61-92.

**Feb 11 (Wed) – The opening of Mexican media: the press (cont.).**

\* Sallie Hughes, “From inside out: how institutional entrepreneurs transformed Mexican journalism”. *Press/Politics*, Vol. 8, n. 3, pp. 87-117.

**Feb 16 (Mon) – The opening of Mexican media: broadcasting.**

\* Lawson, chapter 6, pp. 93-121.

**Feb 18 (Wed) – Media opening and elections in Mexico.**

\* Lawson, chapter 9, pp. 157-170, and “Conclusions,” pp. 173-180.

**Feb 23 (Mon) – No class. Mardi Gras break.**

**Feb 25 (Wed) – Civil society and media accountability: the Mexican case.**

\* Alberto Rivera, “Social accountability in Mexico.” In E. Peruzzotti and C. Smulovitz (Eds.), *Enforcing the Rule of Law*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006, pp. 178-212.

**March 2 (Mon) – MIDTERM EXAM.**

PART III  
MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE BRAZILIAN CASE

**March 4 (Wed) – The media and the transition to democracy.**

\* Matos, chap. 2, pp. 41-79.

**To be scheduled – Documentary screening: “Assignment – Brazil.”**

**March 9 (Mon) – The rise and fall of Collor de Mello: media and neopopulism.**

\* Matos, chap. 3, pp. 83-120.

**March 11 (Wed) – The 2002 election and shifts in election news coverage.**

\* Matos, chap. 5, pp. 159-194.

**March 16 (Mon) – Journalism and democracy in Brazil.**

\* Matos, chap. 6, pp. 197-227.

**March 18 (Wed) – Democratization and media opening in Brazil: the case of TV Globo,**

\* Mauro Porto, “TV news and political change in Brazil: the impact of democratization on TV Globo’s journalism”. *Journalism*, Vol. 8, n. 4, 2007, pp. 381-402.

**March 23 and 25 – No class. Spring break.**

**March 30 (Mon) – Civil society and media accountability in Brazil.**

\* Mauro P. Porto, "Media accountability and democratization in Brazil: civil society mobilization and the opening of TV Globo."

**April 1 (Wed) – No class.**

PART IV - BEYOND NEWS:  
THE POLITICAL ROLE OF TELEVISION FICTION

**April 6 (Mon) – Telenovelas and politics in Brazil.**

\* Mauro Porto, “Telenovelas and representations of national identity in Brazil.” Manuscript.

**April 8 (Wed) – Documentary screening: “Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power.”**

**April 13 (Mon) – No class. Easter break.**

**April 15 (Wed) – Telenovelas and politics: Brazil and Venezuela compared.**

\* Alma Guillermoprieto, “Rio 1993”. In *The Heart that Bleeds: Latin America Now*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995, pp. 287-316;

\* Nelson Ortega, “Big snakes on the streets and never ending stories: The case of Venezuelan telenovelas”, in E. Bueno and T. Caesar (Eds.), *Imagination beyond Nation*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998, pp. 64-80.

PART V  
CONTEMPORARY TRENDS:  
MEDIA AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN VENEZUELA

**April 20 (Mon) – Documentary screening: “The revolution will not be televised.”**

**Apr 22 (Wed) – Hugo Chávez and the media.**

\* Eliza Hawkins, “Conflict and the mass media in Chávez’s Venezuela”, paper presented to the 2003 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Dallas, Texas, March 27-29.

\* Andrés Cañizález and Jairo Lugo-Ocando, “The media in Venezuela: the revolution was televised, but no one was really watching.” In J. Lugo-Ocando (Ed.), *The Media in Latin America*. Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008, pp. 191-208.

**Apr 27 (Mon) – Conclusions. Class evaluation.**

**FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 5, TUESDAY, 10:00 a.m. – noon.**

Papers should be delivered at the instructor’s office: 219 Newcomb Hall. Late papers will not be received.