

Mauro P. Porto
Department of Communication
Tulane University
mporto@tulane.edu

Office: 219 Newcomb Hall
Office hours: Tue and Thu, 9:30-10:30 p.m.
or by appointment
Phone: 862.3037

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

COMM 481 – Spring 2006

Course Description

This course analyzes the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies. We will investigate whether communication industries and institutions have contributed to promote or to impede democratic consolidation in the region. After introducing the main features of the region's political and media systems, the course analyzes the political role of the media in different countries, focusing on the cases of Mexico and Brazil. The course then discusses the political role of entertainment-oriented genres, including popular journalism and *telenovelas* (soap operas). Finally, the course explores contemporary issues, including investigative journalism and the barriers to and perspectives for the full democratization of media and political spheres in the region.

One of the central goals of the course is to provide conceptual tools that will enable students to develop a critical and comprehensive analysis of the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies.

Course Texts

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

Thomas Skidmore (ed.), *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Both books available through Tulane Bookstore.

Required texts

Besides the two textbooks, we will work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at *Electronic Reserves* (E-Res: <<http://eres.library.tulane.edu/>>). 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.

Blackboard

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and grades, and for the discussion board. The system can be accessed at: <<http://blackboard.tulane.edu/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

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 absences will result in notification of the Dean's office. Unexcused absences after notification will result in the final grade recommendation of a "WF" to the Dean.

Evaluation

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which covers Parts I and II of the course. 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 10-13 pages paper. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. Students are expected present questions about the readings and suggestions of topics for discussion, and might be called any time to present them in class. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) 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 one forum to each part of the course and the discussions will be "threaded", i.e. organized by topics.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective "forum" (Part I, II, etc.); 3) add a new "thread" to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to the existing thread. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click "reply" to comment on someone's posting. You will be expected to post at least one original thread to a discussion board for each of the five parts/forums of the course and to post at least two comments or responses to a classmate's posting for each part/forum. Whether you post more than these three messages per forum is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 15 minimum posts (five threads and ten messages) with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	30 %	Participation	18 %
Final Paper	40 %	Discussion board	12 %

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. Buying or finding papers on similar topics of the course in the Internet is a form of plagiarism. Also remember that turning in the same paper for credit in two courses is a violation of scholarly ethics. This course adheres strictly to the Tulane Honor Code, available at: < <http://www.tulane.edu/~lasdean/honor%20code.htm>>.

Course Schedule

PART I MEDIA AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN LATIN AMERICA.

Jan 17 - Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.

(No readings).

Jan 19 - Introduction to Latin American democracies.

* Peter Smith, *Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
(Introduction, pp. 1-15; and Epilogue, pp. 327-345).

Jan 24 - The historical context of media policies.

* James Schwoch, "Broadcast media and Latin American politics: the historical context",
in Skidmore, pp. 38-54.

Jan 26 - Media and democracy in South America.

* Silvio Waisbord, "Media in South America: between the rock of the state and the hard
place of the market". In J. Curran and M. Park (Eds.), *De-Westernizing Media Studies*.
London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 50-62

PART II MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE MEXICAN CASE.

Jan 31 - Political communication in Mexico's "perfect dictatorship".

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

Feb 2 – Media bias in authoritarian Mexico: the 1988 election.

* Ilya Adler, "The Mexican case: the media in the 1988 presidential election". In
Skidmore, pp. 145-173.

Feb 7 - The opening of Mexican media: the press.

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

Feb 9 - 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 14 - The opening of Mexican media: broadcasting.

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

Feb 16 - Media and civil society in Mexico.

* Sergio Aguayo Quezada, "A Mexican milestone". *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, n. 2,
1995, pp. 157-167.

* Lawson, chapter 7, pp. 125-136.

Feb 21 - Media opening and elections in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 9, pp. 157-180.

Feb 23 - MIDTERM EXAM.**Feb 28 and March 2 - No classes. Mardi Gras/Spring Break.**

PART III
MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY:
THE BRAZILIAN CASE.

March 7 – Television and the transition to democracy.

* Venicio A. de Lima, “The state, television, and political power in Brazil”. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 5, n. 2, 1988, pp. 108-128.

March 9 - The 1989 presidential election.

* Joseph Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Nunes, “The Brazilian case: influencing the voter”. In Skidmore, pp. 118-136.

March 14 - No class. Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association.**March 16 - Documentary: “Assignment - Brazil”.****March 21 – The 1989 presidential election (cont.).**

* Venicio A. de Lima, “Brazilian television in the 1989 presidential election: constructing a president”. In Skidmore, pp. 97-117.

* Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, “The Brazilian case: manipulation by the media?”. In Skidmore, pp. 137-144.

March 23 - Media and democracy in Brazil (1985-2000).

* Mauro Porto, "Mass media and politics in democratic Brazil". In M. D. Kinzo & J. Dunkerley (Eds.), *Brazil Since 1985: Economy, Polity and Society*. London: ILAS, 2003, pp. 288-313.

PART IV
OTHER CASES:
ELECTIONS, POPULAR JOURNALISM AND TELENOVELAS.

March 28 - The plebiscite in Chile.

* María Eugenia Hirmas, “The Chilean case: television in the 1988 plebiscite”. In Skidmore, pp. 82-96.

March 30 - The Argentine case.

* Enrique Zuleta-Puceiro, “The Argentine case: television in the 1989 presidential campaign”. In Skidmore, pp. 55-81.

April 4 - Popular journalism in Mexico.

* Daniel Hallin, "La Nota Roja: popular journalism and the transition to democracy in Mexico". In C. Sparks and J. Tulloch (Eds.), *Tabloid Tales*. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 267-284.

April 6 - Documentary "Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power".**April 11 - 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
SCANDALS, MEDIA OPENING, AND
DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN LATIN AMERICA.

April 13 - Scandals and regime legitimacy in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 8, pp. 138-156.

April 18 - Watchdog journalism in South America.

* Silvio Waisbord, "Investigative journalism and political accountability in South American democracies", *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 13, n. 4, pp. 343-363.

April 20 - Barriers to media opening.

* Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson, "The barriers to media opening in Latin America", *Political Communication*, Vol. 22, n. 1, 2005.

April 25 – Media opening and democratization: the Brazilian case.

* Mauro Porto, "TV News and political change in Brazil: The impact of democratization on TV Globo's journalism", mimeo.

April 27 - Conclusions. Course evaluation.