HIST 483/583 / Winter 2008
Instructor: Carlos Aguirre
Office and Office Hours: 369 McKenzie Hall, Wed, 11-12 and Thursday, 12-2 pm.
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The Cold War in Latin America

Description of the course

The Cold War had a profound impact in Latin America, as it also had on most regions of
the world, but that impact has not been sufficiently explored in the vast literature devoted
to analyzing the super-power confrontation that shaped the world between 1947 and
1991. At the same time, however, events and processes taking place in Latin America
before and during the Cold War -in particular, efforts towards social justice in the region-
had a dynamics of their own and decisively contributed to shaping both the national and
international dimensions of the Cold War. This course attempts to explore the Latin
American experience during the Cold War, emphasizing the interaction between the
region’s socio-political processes, actors, and agendas, and the different forms of
intervention in the region by the United States and the Soviet Union. Students will
hopefully come out of this class with a more nuanced understanding of the global
dynamics of the Cold War and the multiple dimensions of the Latin American experience
during that period, including processes of revolutionary transformation, protracted
military intervention, massive human rights violations, and renewed intellectual and
cultural conflict.

Course policies

1. Students are expected to attend lectures consistently. A passing grade will be
difficult to achieve without regular attendance. Students must also consistently read
the assigned materials.
2. The course instructor will hold regular office hours every week. Students are
encouraged to visit him to discuss pertinent issues or get additional information about
the course's themes, policies, and grades.
3. A common form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Students
must become familiar with the University of Oregon rules about this issue. More
information will be offered at the appropriate time.
4. An atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and fairness will be encouraged and
enforced by the instructor. Students must behave in ways proper to an academic
environment--i.e. no talking, eating, or newspaper reading during lecture. Laptop
computers are allowed only for note-taking purposes. Students that plan to use a
laptop computer must seat in the front row(s). All other electronic devices (cell
phones, i-pods, etc.) must be turned off during class time.
5. An “incomplete” grade will be granted only in cases of extreme need and only to
those students that have an acceptable record of class attendance and get at least a C in the mid-term. Students that need an "incomplete" grade must make arrangements with the instructor on or before the last week of classes.

6. No late homework will be accepted, except in cases of health-related and other types of emergency that could be documented.

Requirements and evaluations

a) For undergraduate students:

• Attendance and participation: 10%
• Take-home midterm exam: 30%. The midterm exam will include two parts: an essay question and a primary document analysis.
• Conference report: 20%. Students must attend at least three events (panels or keynote addresses) during the conference on “Violence and Reconciliation in Latin America” that will take place on our campus from January 31 through February 2, 2008, and write a 3-page paper summarizing the key issues addressed by the presenters and offering a critical assessment of them.
• Two pop quizzes: 5% each. These will be unannounced, multiple-choice tests (typically, students will be given ten questions with five possible answers each).
• Final exam: 30%. This will be a comprehensive examination, covering the entire course. It will include two parts: keyword identifications and an essay question. The final exam will take place on Friday, March 21, from 8 to 10 am.

b) For graduate students

• Attendance and participation: 10%
• 2 book reviews: 10% each. Students will write 2-3-page reviews of the books by Grandin and Franco. More details, including due dates, will be offered in class.
• Conference report: 20%. Students must attend at least three events (panels or keynote addresses) during the conference on “Violence and Reconciliation in Latin America” that will take place on our campus from January 31 through February 2, 2008, and write a 3-page paper summarizing the key issues addressed by the presenters and offering a critical assessment of them.
• 12 to 15-page research paper or historiographical essay: 50%. Students will choose a topic related to the class and will produce an essay using at least 6 books or monographs. The topics for these papers and a preliminary bibliography will be discussed with the instructor during week 3.
Required readings

The following books are available for purchase at the UO Bookstore and have been placed on reserve at Knight Library:

- Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds. *In From the Cold. Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Duke University Press, 2008)
- Jean Franco, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City. Latin America in the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2002)

Additional materials will be available in electronic format through Blackboard.

Internet resources

UO librarian John Russell has prepared a “Guide to Resources for Cold War in Latin America” that has been posted at:

http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/history/hist_483_cwla.html

Course Schedule

Week 1

Jan 8 Introduction

Jan 10 Conceptualizing Cold War History: approaches, actors, motivations, and legacies


Week 2

Jan 15 The Cold War in Latin America: an overview of historiographical and methodological issues and frameworks

Jan 17 Latin America, the US, and the Soviet Union before 1945

**Week 3.**

Jan 22 The post-WWII era in US and Latin American relations: realities and concerns

Jan 24 Seeing Red in Guatemala, 1950-1954

Reading: Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War*, pp. 1-104.

**Week 4**

Jan 29 The Cuban Revolution

Jan 31 A Soviet beachhead? Cuba’s impact on Cold War climate


**Week 5**

Feb 5 The Cuban effect and the fear of communism / Conference Report due

Feb 7 US and local responses to the communist threat

Week 6

Feb 12 From Cold War to Dirty War: State Terror in the Southern Cone (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) / Take-home midterm exam due

Feb 14 The international dimensions of the dirty way: Operation Condor

Readings: Dinges, *The Condor Years*, all

Week 7

Feb 19 Social upheaval, repression, and US intervention in Central America

Feb 21 Central America, cont.


Week 8

Feb 26 Mexico during the Cold War: the limits of exceptionalism

Feb 28 Mexico, cont.


Week 9

Mar 4 Intellectuals and the Cultural Cold War

Mar 6 The Cultural Cold War, cont. / Discussion of Jean Franco’s book

Reading: Jean Franco, *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, all.
Week 10

Mar 11 Is the Cold War over? Lasting legacies and the battles over memory

Mar 13 Review for Final Exam

Readings: Daniela Spenser, “Standing Conventional Cold War History on Its Head” and Thomas S. Blanton, “Recovering the Memory of the Cold War: Forensic History and Latin America,” in Joseph and Spenser, eds. *In From the Cold.*

Final Exam and Graduate Papers due date: Friday, March 21, 8-10 am.