

**Georgetown Public Policy Institute
Latin American Economic Development
Spring 2010**

Objective: Nothing is more challenging, complex, exciting and, to a certain extent, painful than to study, or attempt to understand, why one of the most beautiful regions of the planet, endowed with plenty of food, oil, natural gas, hydroelectric power, plenty of potable water, wind and solar energy sources, and an amazing amount of human capital, has experienced such, at times, dismal socioeconomic development. True enough, each country in Latin America is different, has experienced different processes of colonialism, independence and evolution. A unified explanation for the entire region would not be satisfactory or desirable. In this class we will explore some of the major socioeconomic development themes in Latin America with the purpose of attempting to formulate a series of relevant questions about the region's problems. By the end of this course you will have a deeper, richer and more sophisticated vision of some of the major problems confronting the region and a complex map to follow for future research.

Readings: "Silent Revolution: The Rise and Crisis of Market Economics in Latin America" - 2nd Edition (Paperback) by Duncan Green, Monthly Review Press; Second edition (April 1, 2003)

The book's readings will be supplemented with other materials to be posted on Blackboard.

Grades: class attendance and participation (20%), last week's presentation (30%), final written report (50%).

Group work: It is optional. You can work with up to two other students. Each person in the group will receive the same grade.

How do you turn your work in? I would prefer it person. E-mail is an option if need to be.

If due to an extreme circumstance, to be evaluated by me as such, you miss or will miss a deadline you need to talk to me about.

Teaching approach: I strongly believe that Development is a field that you can only begin to understand by reading, discussing, reflecting upon and by formulating policy alternatives. For this reason I expect all of you to do the assigned readings and to come prepared to discuss the materials in class. I can only present and discuss the main points in class, but the subject matter requires that you engage in certain amount of reading and analysis outside the classroom.

Thematic coverage: the course will cover, broadly speaking, two major themes, the past and the future: the first theme deals with the policies tried by different governments at different times to address the major developmental problems. This will lead to a complex debate about different industrialization policies like import substitution during the sixties and seventies versus the neoliberal "Washington Consensus" type of the eighties and nineties. The debate lays the

foundations upon which to discuss current and future policies. The second theme is concerned with potential policy approaches to address some of the major problems.

After we develop an intuition about what may have been some of the problems in the past we will try to develop a sense of what could be done to address some of the major problems today and in the future. Granted, in seven weeks we can only explore a limited amount of materials, but we can certainly profile a framework of reference that each one of you can use in the future to continue your analysis of the region.

Presentation and final report:

My central concern is to help you apply economic theories, ideas and concepts to the real world. You will, either individually or in a group, choose a country in Latin America, by our second meeting, and will research important issues discussed in class.

First, you will need to explain with, the help of relevant data, and how underdeveloped your country of choice is, we will discuss in class the type of data you may use and where to find it. Second, you will discuss the type of policies used during the sixties and seventies and the results obtained. Third, you will do the same for the eighties and nineties and finally you will discuss current policy since 2000. In many countries there has allegedly been a quasi-paradigmatic policy shift rendering the region more than interesting as a field of research. In ten or fifteen years time questions will be asked of the effectiveness of the “new” policies relative to the other two periods of time.

The presentation will involve an oral one including visuals, details to be discussed later, and the final report will include a serious academic effort involving a policy discussion based on the materials covered in class and the assigned readings plus other country-specific materials including the relevant data.

Expectations about the report: given the broad characteristics of the report you should strive to present some relevant empirical evidence embedded in a true intellectual effort to transform the readings and class discussions into applied, real-world, knowledge. The real world is complex, nothing is clear, there are numerous shades of gray and informed conjecture delimits the frontier of knowledge. Simplistic answers beget suspicious policies. A good report should include relevant empirical evidence (as opposed to countless, space-grabbing, graphs, diagrams and series of variables) coupled with, narratives, descriptions and analysis guided by the theories, concepts and ideas discussed in class, the readings, and your country-specific research, and should be supported by appropriate sources. Therefore, a length of about five to seven pages of single-spaced analysis (12 size), excluding diagrams, graphs and other artwork, should be enough. I pay close attention to quality of content and conceptual coherence appropriate to graduate work, but I am not impressed by the use of technical jargon. You should write this report assuming that your general audience is educated but not familiar with your analysis. One measure of education is your ability to explain in a plain language complex concepts and ideas to the rest of the world.