

Political Science 310

Citizen Participation within a Globalized Economy: A Nicaraguan Case Study

*"Greater participation by the population is no longer a vague ideology based on the good wishes of a few idealists. It has become an imperative - a condition of survival."
- UNDP, Human Development Report.*

Instructor: Elisa Vanegas holds a Licentiate in Diplomacy and International Relations from the Christian Autonomous University of Nicaragua and a Master's Degree in Rural Sustainable Development from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua.

Credits: 4 credits

Course Description

Why is citizens' engagement and political participation relevant today? Is participation important for the development of a country? Why are citizens and civil society groups around the world demanding greater accountability, participation and transparency from national governments, political parties, international institutions and business entities? What is democracy?

In this course we will explore these questions and analyze key political, social and economic factors in Nicaragua that are shaping citizens' participation. We will analyze different views on Nicaragua's current political system, including the debate on whether it is a democratic or an authoritarian state.

Special emphasis will be placed on examining forces such as globalization and neoliberal economic policies applied in Nicaragua and how these – among other factors – have reshaped the role of government and its relationship with constituents. As we analyze the interplay between local and global processes, you will also be encouraged to reflect upon your role as a global citizen and an agent for change.

Course Objectives

1. Compare and contrast different perspectives of Nicaragua's current political system. (Unit I)
2. Learn about political participation from the viewpoint of youth involved in politics. (I)
3. Reflect upon different understandings of development and the role of citizen participation. (I)
4. Analyze the impact of neoliberal economic policies in Nicaragua, particularly for women and peasant farmers. (II)
5. Debate the opportunities and limitations of free trade and fair trade. (II)
6. Learn about civil society i.e.: Non-governmental organization, social movements and community groups in Nicaragua and their view on participation. (III)
7. Reflect upon your role as a global citizen and as an agent for change. (III)

Course Design

The course is divided into the following units:

- **Unit I: Introduction to Political Participation in Nicaragua**

This unit includes an overview of current political events in Nicaragua and will expose you to different perspectives on the obstacles and opportunities for political participation in Nicaragua. Some of the questions that will be addressed are: How do Nicaraguans - and especially youth - perceive their political system? What are their views on political participation and democracy in Nicaragua? Do Nicaraguans believe that participation is important for development? How does participation fare in comparison to other economic and social rights?

Texts and readings:

“Recent History, Part 2: The Conservative Restoration and the Return of Daniel Ortega” in Walker, T. and Wade, C. Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle. Fifth Edition. January, 2011. p. 63-83.

Figueroa-Clark, V. “21st Century Sandinismo” in Red Pepper. August, 2012, p. 1-3.

Envio, “Some are already Milling around the Electoral Starting Gate. Envio No 409. August 2015.

Waves of Democracy: Why Democracy Cannot be Reduced to Elections. John Markoff. P. 133-136.

UNDP, 2002. Democratic Governance for Human Development” in Human Development Report 2002. Chapter 2. p. 51- 61.

“What Do We Mean by Development?” in Todaro, M. and Smith, S. Economic Development. 8th Ed. p. 15-23.

Bendaña, A. “Nicaragua: Between Left Rhetoric and Right Reality” in Understanding Populism and Political Participation: The Case of Nicaragua. Woodrow Wilson Center Update on the Americas. June. 2009. p. 11-14.

- **Unit II: Citizen’s Participation in the Context of Globalization and Neoliberal Policies**

In this unit, we will examine structural adjustment policies applied in Nicaragua and analyze their impact, specifically for women and peasant farmers. You will analyze the role of the Nicaraguan government, International Financial Institutions and civil society groups in setting the agenda for these policies.

As part of this unit, in the third and fourth weeks, we will be focusing on trade liberalization and free trade agreements. This includes traveling to the northern part of Nicaragua, to Estelí and to the Miraflores Nature Reserve where you will learn about the history of particular women’s cooperatives and a women’s organization, their work on economic empowerment and on fair trade initiatives.

To conclude the unit you will critically examine the pros and cons of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and will analyze the power relations among stakeholders, as well as identify the spaces, challenges and mechanisms for civil society participation in trade policy at the global and national level.

Texts and Readings:

“The Pillars of the System” in Global Backlash. 2002. Advocating for Washington Consensus. p. 106-111.

“What Washington Means by Policy Reform” in Frieden, J. et al, 2000. Modern Political Economy and Latin America. Westview. p. 18-26.

“Freedom to Choose” in Stiglitz, J. 2002. Globalization and its Discontents. Ch. 1. p. 53-88.
 “Women’s Work and Neoliberal Globalization” in Maier, E. and Lebon, N. 2010. Women’s Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ch. 2, p. 47-57.
 Acevedo, A. “Nicaragua: Sixteen Years Lost in Five Agreements with the IMF.” Envío. No. 321. April 2008, p. 1-12.
 “The Conscious Consumer: Promoting Economic Justice through Fair Trade” in Broad R. 2002. Global Backlash. p. 188-191.
 Globophobia: Confronting Fears about Open Trade in Global Backlash. 2002. p. 23-25.
 Mendoza R, Preza M. et al. “The Coffee Cooperatives in Nicaragua: A point of Reference for Latin America and Fair Trade International?” January 2012, p. 1-15.
 Cáceres. S. “CAFTA will be like a Brand-name Hurricane Mitch” in Envío. September. 2005. p. 1-9.
 Mejido, M., Utting P. and Carrión, G. The Changing Coordinates of Trade and Power in Latin America. Implications for Policy Space and Policy Coherence.” May 2012, p. v-28 and p. 40-50.
 “Making Trade Fair” in Stiglitz, J. 2006. Making Globalization Work. P. 61-101.

- **Unit III: Social Participation in Practice**

You will be exposed to some efforts of NGOs, the women’s movement and community groups working on social change. At the end of the unit you will be expected to synthesize what you have learned in regards to participation and social change. This will include the presentation of a creative project.

Texts and Readings:

“Toward a New Political Culture” in Babb. F. 2001. After Revolution: Mapping Gender and Cultural Politics in Neoliberal Nicaragua. P. 203-239.
 “The Women of Malpaisillo: “Our Lives Have Changed” in Envío. No 238. November 2001 p. 1-11.
 “From Global to Local: Beyond Neoliberalism to the International of Hope” in Lechner, F. and Boli, J. The Globalization Reader. 2004. p. 410- 416.
 Balardini. S. “What’s Up, Old Man? A Look at Young People’s Politics” in Envío. No. 324. July 2008, p. 1-7.

Course Requirements

- Class Participation and Facilitation (15%)
- Essay (25%)
- Take-home Exam (30%)
- Creative Project and Oral Presentation (30%)

Class participation is crucial in this course. It includes regular attendance, completion of assigned readings before class sessions, asking probing questions and a demonstrated effort to dialogue with speakers. Feel free to ask questions at any time and see me when other issues are affecting your learning. If you have formally diagnosed learning or physical differences please let me know in order to obtain assistance.

Additional Comments

Explanation of Grades

Augsburg College uses a numerical grading system using the following definitions:

Grade	Grade Points	Description
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	
B+	3.33	
B	3.00	Good
B-	2.67	
C+	2.33	
C	2.00	Satisfactory
C-	1.67	
D+	1.33	
D	1.00	Poor
D-	0.67	
F	0.00	Failure

A "Pass" grade is 2.0 or above.

CGEE Grading Policy and Late Assignments: You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us **in advance** to negotiate a new deadline. If you have not been given an extension in advance and you turn in a late assignment, you will be docked half a grade. If you are more than one week late, you will be docked a full grade. No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original deadline; a "0" will be given after that. Assignments due near the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of the semester.

Re-writing Assignments: If you receive a grade of 2.5 or lower, you may revise a paper as long as you resubmit it within one week of the date it was returned to you. Your final grade will be an average of the two grades.

Augsburg Honesty Policy: You are expected to follow the Augsburg Honesty Policy which is printed in the program manual. We assume that you have read the honesty policy, understand it, and are following it. Except when the assignment expressly encourages group work, it is assumed that all course work will be your own. You may not copy other students' work. The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment. A student who commits plagiarism a second time will fail the course.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to course modifications. Those who qualify should identify themselves to the instructor as soon as possible in order to obtain extra assistance.