

Political Science 357/Women's Studies 352 Women, Gender and Social Change in Latin America

"Reality unrefined by theory is too chaotic for us to absorb."

W. Phillips Shively (2002)

"Politics has to do with power and the control of the common good...Power decides access to necessities, the satisfaction of class interests and of desires."

Leonardo Boff, Brazilian activist, *Ecology and Liberation* (1995)

"There are other truths."

Silvia Marcos, Mexican feminist scholar and guest speaker

*"You don't have to signal a social conscience by looking like a frump. Lace knickers won't hasten the holocaust, you can ban the bomb in a feather boa just as well as without, and a mild interest in the length of hemlines doesn't necessarily disqualify you from reading *Das Kapital* and agreeing with every word."*

Elizabeth Bibesco (1945)

Course Rationale and Purpose

Frumps? Feather boas? Lace knickers? Hemlines? Holocaust? Bombs? *Das Kapital*? The purpose of this course is to help you comprehend the complex nature of gender, politics, and social change in Latin America. Moreover, you will develop an appreciation for Latin American women's political struggles in both the public and private realm within the broader social, political, and economic context of globalization. Over the past four decades, Latin American women have increasingly been involved in social, political, and revolutionary movements for social change. At the same time, Latin American feminists and other social theorists have been questioning traditional understandings of gender, masculinity, femininity and raising important questions about the politics of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and sexuality.

Today, Latin Americans of diverse backgrounds are empowering themselves and organizing politically at the grassroots level to promote participatory democracy and alternatives to the dominant model of economic globalization. Central to the course is an exploration of the political roles played by individuals and groups as both obstacles to and catalysts for social change.

Throughout Latin American political history, the United States has played a strong role in shaping the politics of the region. Therefore, you will analyze diverse political perspectives regarding the impacts that U.S. foreign policies have had on women and men of diverse socio-economic, racial and ethnic, and cultural backgrounds in Latin America. Since the course is taught in Mexico, the course will focus particularly on issues of women, gender, and social change in Mexico.

Cross Listing

This course is cross-listed as both a Political Science (POL) and a Women's Studies (WST) course. You must choose to register for **either** POL **or** WST credit. Both disciplines provide theoretical frameworks for helping you to engage in systematic and critical analysis of political and social realities, which will enable you to better understand our complex and diverse social realities.

Augsburg General Education Requirements

This course fulfills a Social and Behavioural Sciences Liberal Arts Foundation (LAF) requirement at Augsburg College.

Social and Behavioural Sciences LAF Syllabus Statement

Social Science Liberal Arts Foundation (LAF) courses seek to show how our understandings of social reality, with all of its complexities and diversity, can be improved and clarified through systematic and critical analysis. The social sciences offer a variety of methods for systematically analyzing social systems and reality. Economics, political science, psychology, and sociology each utilize different theoretical frameworks and research methods to analyze and better understand various aspects of social systems. Moreover, the social sciences offer ways of gaining knowledge that are different from other intellectual disciplines (eg. the natural sciences; the fine arts) by focusing on a diverse array of social realms. Economics focuses on the economy, political science focuses on the polity, psychology focuses on the individual in social situations, and sociology focuses on social groups. The disciplines (areas of study) known as the Social Sciences at Augsburg College include economics, political science, psychology, and sociology. Students take two Social Science courses designated as 'LAF' as part of the Aug Core curriculum.

Required Readings (Primary texts; you don't have to buy all of them. See separate book list.)

- Bromley, Victoria L. *Feminisms Matter: Debates, Theories, Activism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Lamas, Marta. *Feminism: Transmissions and Retransmissions*. Translated by John Pluecker. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Muñoz, Carolina B. *Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics in Mexico and the United States*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell U., 2008.
- Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. South End Press, 2005.
- Steger, Manfred B. and Roy, Ravi K. *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. NY, 2010.

In addition, you will be given a supplementary reading packet that will include excerpts of the following (as well as other books and articles):

- Cantú, Lionel, Jr. And edited by Nancy A. Naples and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*. NY: New York University Press, 2009.
- Fregoso, Rosa-Linda and Cynthia Bejarano, eds. *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Maier, Elizabeth and Nathalie Lebon, eds. *Women's Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Engendering Social Justice, Democratizing Citizenship*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
- Speed, Shannon, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn Stephen, eds.. *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006.
- Steger, Manfred B. *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. NY, 2013.

Tuñon-Pablos, Julia. *Women in Mexico: A Past Unveiled*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999.
Waller, Marguerite and Sylvia Marcos, eds. *Dialogue and Difference: Feminisms Challenge Globalization*.
Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Learning Outcomes

Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to do the following:

1. Provide an overview of the Mexican political history and key issues in contemporary Mexican politics.
2. Articulate the key ideas of theories and models used to explain human behaviour in the fields of political science and women's studies.
3. Apply theoretical frameworks from the fields of Political Science and Women's Studies to your analysis of the of the impacts that U.S. foreign policies have had on women and men of diverse socio-economic, racial and ethnic, and cultural backgrounds in Latin America.
4. Employ the feminist concept that "the personal is political" in the discussion of key political issues.
5. Analyse women's roles in both private and public realms, including participation in communities, families, party politics revolutionary and grassroots social movements.
6. Examine the intersection of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and sexuality in the Americas.
7. Articulate how the complexity and diversity of human experience may be explained systematically, using theoretical frameworks from the fields of Political Science and Women's Studies.
8. Discuss the roles played by individuals and groups as both obstacles to and catalysts for social change.
9. Reflect upon your own positionality and relationship to power and privilege and role in politics, as defined above by Leonardo Boff.
10. Articulate the key ideas of theories and models used to explain human behaviour in the fields of Political Science and Women's Studies.
11. Express new visions of your role as a political and social actor.

Course Requirements (100%)

1. Class Participation (25%)

Effective class participation includes not only regular attendance but also active participation in class sessions involving guest lectures, other experiential activities, and internal class sessions. *Please note that class participation is required for a passing grade.* Because participation is essential to the learning process, if you miss class activities for any reason, you must speak to the instructors prior to class and make arrangements to complete a short assignment. Unexcused absences will affect your class participation grade. Absences due to religious holidays and illness are considered excused absences. However, you still must inform the instructors of such absences in advance and talk to us about how to make up the missed session/s. You are also responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and announcements from other students if they arrive late to class or miss a class session. Absences for personal travel or visits from family or friends are not excused absences. Class participation grade includes:

- **Active Participation in Class Sessions Involving Guest Speakers and/or Excursions** This includes engaging in informed dialogue with speakers, asking probing questions related to required readings or other speakers, and sharing their own thoughts and experiences, as appropriate. Although you will receive a grade on this that is separate from your class participation, you will be expected to take notes on all guest speakers and excursions for your own use in writing papers and exam questions and for use in internal class discussions.
- **Active Participation in In-House Class Sessions:** Students will be expected to demonstrate their comprehension of assigned readings by participating in class discussions, debates, role plays, in-

class writing exercises, short oral presentations on assigned readings, and/or completing other assignments in class that will not receive a specific grade but are considered part of class participation. Failure to come prepared to class by completing required readings in advance will seriously affect your class participation grade.

- **“Social Change Lab Group:”** The “social change lab group” is a discussion forum in which you will meet regularly with other students and the T.A. to maximize what you are learning in class by discussing what you are learning about social not only within the classroom but through your homestays, internships, and other experiences in the country. Active participation in the lab group includes planning and facilitating one lab group session in coordination with the T.A. You will sign up near the beginning of the semester. At least 48 hours prior to the lab group session, you must submit a short proposal that outlines the topic(s) you plan to address and the specific lab group objectives you will fulfil. You will then meet with your T.A. to discuss the proposal and plans for the session. At the time of the session, you must submit a one-page outline. “Lab groups” will often meet on Fridays from 11:15-1:30.
 - **Completion of a Blog Entry and 2 Responses to Peers’ Blogs:** Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to create one blog entry and respond to at least two written by others students in your group. The purpose of this blog is to develop a weekly photo essay and public journal reflecting what you are learning throughout the semester so you can share some of what you are learning with family and friends back home. See separate handout for detailed instructions, ethical guidelines, and grading criteria. During the first week of the semester, you will be given a sign-up for the weeks that you will submit your blog entries and comments. Blog entries and comments are due on the Friday of the week for which you sign up.
2. **Paper #1 on Indigenous Cosmovisions, Sexuality, and the Legacy of the Conquest: (15%)** At the end of the first unit, you will write a 5-6 page paper in which you analyze and reflect upon what you have learned thus far about aspects of your choosing related to the *Nahua* indigenous cosmovision, gender, sexuality, and some of the long-term impacts of the Spanish Conquest, and/or people’s resistance to it. You may write either a traditional essay in which you connect required readings, such as Andrea Smith’s book *Conquest* with guest speakers and experiences in Mexico thus far, or you may write a creative paper. You will be given a separate handout about this assignment.
 3. **Take-Home Exam #1 on Economic Globalization and Neoliberalism in Latin America (15%)** You will complete a take-home exam in which you will be expected to: 1) articulate the key ideas of theories and models used to explain human behaviour in the fields of political science and women’s studies, and 2) articulate the primary concepts of economic globalization and neoliberalism and their impact on Latin America. In the last section of the exam, you will write two short essays in which you will be expected to apply theoretical frameworks from the fields of Political Science and Women’s Studies to your analysis of the impacts that U.S. foreign policies have had on women and men of diverse socio-economic, racial and ethnic, and cultural backgrounds in Latin America, focusing particularly on Mexico. Potential exam questions will be distributed one week prior to the deadline in order to help you study for the exam.
 4. **Paper #2 on Women, Gender Roles and Feminisms in Mexico (15%):** In an 7-8 page paper you will discuss and demonstrate the complexity and diversity of the social construction of gender and feminisms in Mexico, drawing on your own findings as well as diverse guest speakers and the book *Transmissions and Retransmissions* by Marta Lamas. You should incorporate the rural seminar and homestay in Amatlan, the Urban homestay in Cuernavaca, especially what you have seen regarding gender roles.

5. **Take-Home Exam # 2 on Contemporary Issues in Mexico (15%):** There will be questions on **Indigenous Issues, Immigration, Femicides and the Drug War**. This will be a 2-hour in class exam. You will complete an in-class exam, drawing upon required readings, as well as relevant guest speakers and excursions. You will be expected to apply theoretical frameworks from the fields of Political Science and Women's Studies to your analysis. Questions to consider will be distributed in class.

6. **Creative Final Project and Oral Presentation on Global citizenship and Social Change (15%):** The purpose of the final project is to help you prepare to return to your own country by developing a project related to the themes of Global Citizenship and Social Change, that you can use to take action and share, what you have learned, with others back home. Therefore, you must choose a particular audience that you would like to educate and then design a project in which you can share your ideas with them, paying special attention to the role and power of language used to present your claims to that audience. Projects may include speeches; sermons; web pages; a collection of artwork with commentary; a zine magazine, several songs you have written with explanation; screenplays; photo essays with commentary; rituals or ceremonies; banner art that you will take to a specific protest or display in a particular location; a grassroots political action campaign that you can share; op-ed or newspaper articles; a series of articles for your school paper or another publication; a paper to be presented at the National Women's Studies Association Conference or any other format that is appropriate to the topic and your target audience.

Some projects, such as speeches and sermons, inherently involve oral presentations. In such cases, you will not be expected to give an additional oral presentation, although you should plan to provide an introductory statement and to answer questions afterwards. Projects that do not naturally include an oral component must be shared with the group in a 10-15 minute oral presentation that articulates your main points and makes explicit connections to the themes of Global Citizenship and Social Change as well as connections between written and oral sources from the course. The oral presentation, will serve as a dress rehearsal of your presentation to your target audience.

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.

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 (from a 4.0 to a 3.5 or 3.5 to a 3.0, 3.0 to a 2.5, 2.5 to a 2.0, etc.) 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.

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.