A History of Communism in Latin America

Instructor: Professor Carlos Aguirre
Office Hours: W-Th, 10-11 am.
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Description of the Course

During most of the 20th century, Latin American societies struggled with foreign domination, social inequalities, poverty, and underdevelopment. Vast sectors of the population, including middle, lower, and working classes responded to those challenges by proposing radical social transformation and organizing various types of revolutionary movements.

Marxist, Socialist, Communist, Radical, and other Leftist parties, as well as a variety of grassroots social movements, became major political actors in Latin American societies. Today, despite numerous setbacks, the left is still a vital component of the Latin American political and cultural landscape. What seems to be gone, however, is the dream of a Communist society resulting from revolutionary transformation, which once captured the imagination of millions of Latin Americans.

This course offers a comprehensive and critical analysis of the formation and development of Communist ideologies, parties, movements, and regimes in Latin America from the late nineteenth century to the present.

Requirements

For HIST 483:
Attendance and participation, 10%
Midterm take home exam, 20% . Due on February 8th.
5 to 10-page research paper, 30% Due on March 10th.
Final Exam, 40%

For HIST 583:
Attendance and participation, 10%.
Midterm take home exam, 20%. Due on February 8th.
20-page research paper, 70% Due on March 10th.

A one-page proposal for all research papers will be due by the end of the fourth week of classes. More details will be provided in class.

Required readings

Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1998)


In addition, a photocopy packet will be available at the Copy Shop (539 E. 13th, 485-6253). All reading materials will also be available on reserve at Knight Library.

**Outline of lectures**

**Week 1**

- Marxism and Communism in Historical Perspective
- Video


**Week 2**

- The beginnings of socialism and the impact of the Soviet Revolution in Latin America
- Mariátegui, Haya de la Torre and the origins of Latin American Marxism

Readings:
- Alan Angell, "The Left in Latin America Since c. 1920", pp. 163-177 (photocopy packet)
- José Carlos Mariátegui, “Prologue to Tempest in the Andes,” “The Indigenous Question in Latin America,” “The Latin American Socialist Revolution,” and “The Anti-Imperialist Point of View” (photocopy packet)

**Week 3**

- From insurrection to class collaboration: changes in Communist tactics
- Guatemala 1950-54: a test for the Cold War

Reading: Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 1-71; Angell, “The Left in Latin America,” pp. 177-195
Week 4

- The making of the Cuban Revolution
- Communist Cuba: 1960s to the Present

Reading: Rosendahl, Inside the Revolution, all

Week 5

- Che Guevara and Guerrilla Warfare
- Che: The Making of a Myth (video and discussion)

Readings: Ernesto Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare, all

**QUESTION FOR MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 6

- Rural and Urban guerrillas in the 1960s and 1970s
- Containing Communism: US, Latin America, and the National Security Doctrine / military regimes


Week 7

- The War on Communism: Seeing Red in Central America
- Civil War in Guatemala

Reading: Grandin, pp. 73-198.

Week 8

- Socialism in Democracy: Salvador Allende and the Chilean Road to Socialism
- Leftist Cultures and the Cultures of the Left during the Cold War

Readings, Aguilera and Fredes, eds. Chile: The Other September 11 (all)
Jean Franco, “Communist Manifestos” and “Liberated Territories” (photocopy packet).
Week 9

- **Maoism in the Andes: The Shining Path of Peru**
- **Video/ discussion**

Readings: Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique, “Shining Path”, Orin Starn, “Maoism in the Andes” (Photocopy packet). See also the following website: [http://www.blythe.org/peru-pcp/](http://www.blythe.org/peru-pcp/)

Week 10

- Between revolution and democracy: the future of the left in Latin America
- Final discussion / review for final exam

Readings:
Subcomandante Marcos, “The Punch Card and the Hourglass;” Jeffrey W. Rubin, “From Che to Marcos. The Changing Grassroots Left in Latin America” (photocopy packet)

Final Exam: Tuesday, March 15th, 13:00.