

**History 272**  
**Latin America in the Modern Era**

TR, 1:30-2:45PM  
Art & Design 2003  
Spring 2024

Professor: Matt Karush  
Office: Horizon Hall 3103  
Office Hours: TR, 12:30-1:30  
and by appt.  
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This course will examine major themes in the history of Latin America from Independence to the present day. Focusing in particular on the cases of Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba, the class will cover such topics as: national identity, dependent development, political instability, populism and military dictatorship, revolution, ethnicity, race and religion, and the influence of the United States in both the political and cultural spheres.

This course meets the Global Understanding Mason Core requirement.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify and explain how global forces and contexts have shaped deeply unequal Latin American nations.
2. Use the tools of historical analysis to explain how ordinary Latin Americans have been shaped by global contexts.
3. Identify the major obstacles to achieving social justice in Latin American in the twentieth century and assess the approaches that governments, movements and citizens have used to overcome those obstacles.

Requirements:

1. You are expected to complete the assigned reading before the class in which we are discussing it and to **participate** in class discussion. Note: If reading is listed under two dates, it is due on the second of these.
2. **Reading Response and Chat GPT reflection.** Your first reading response of the semester is due before class on 1/23 (next week!). This is a two-part assignment. First, write an essay of no more than 2 pages double-spaced. In it, you must accurately explain one of the author's major arguments and engage substantively with it. You might agree or disagree with the author's claim and explain why, or you might draw a connection to something else you've read. For this first reading response, you must make use of an AI tool like ChatGPT. You are not to simply submit an essay written by the tool, but rather you must ask the tool for guidance about how to approach the essay or for help in understanding the issues raised by the reading. For the second part of the assignment, write a short paragraph reflecting on the utility or limitations of the AI tool: did it enable you to write a better paper? If so, how? What specific prompts seemed to elicit the most helpful responses from the tool? Would you use it for similar assignments going forward? Your reading response and ChatGPT reflection should be included in the same MS Word doc and submitted via Blackboard.
3. **4 additional reading responses.** On four other class sessions of your choosing, you must write an essay of the same format – that is, a 2-page response to the assigned reading for that

day, in which you accurately explain one of the author's main arguments and engage substantively with one specific element of it. (You may not write a reading response on the Lasso or Brennan books.) These responses are due as Word docs uploaded on Blackboard before class on the day we are discussing the reading. If you are writing about primary sources from the Problems book, you will want to explain who wrote them and why, and you'll want to examine what conclusions a historian might draw from them. For these 4 reading responses, you may use an AI tool, but if you do, you must include a brief explanation of how you used it, and you must not turn in the words the AI writes as if they are your own. Since you can choose which dates to write for, late papers will not be accepted. If you write more than 4, I will count your 4 highest grades.

4. **midterm exam**, consisting of identifications and essays

5. **final exam**, consisting of identifications and essays

6. **1 paper of 4-6 pages**. Students will have a choice of writing on Lasso's *Myths of Harmony* or Brennan's *Argentina's Missing Bones*. The specific paper assignments and due dates are included in this syllabus (page 6, below).

Grades will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Reading response and ChatGPT reflection	5%
4 other Reading Responses	15%
Midterm	20%
Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	60%-69%
F	59% and lower

Books required for purchase

John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire* (Fourth Edition) [referred to below as "Chasteen"]

James A. Wood and Anna Rose Alexander, eds., *Problems in Latin American History* (Fifth Edition) [referred to below as "Problems"]

Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795-1831*

James P. Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones: Revisiting the History of the Dirty War*

All books are available at the University Bookstore (and elsewhere).

### Class Schedule

1/16 - Introduction: Inequality, Authoritarianism and Resistance

1/18 – Colonial Legacies

Reading: Chasteen, 17-93

### Part I - The Challenge of Independence

1/23 – Spanish American Independence I

Reading: Chasteen, 95-120

**[1/23 – Reading Response and ChatGPT Reflection due]**

1/25 – Spanish American Independence II

Reading: Problems, 27-43

1/30 – Independence and Race: The Case of Cartagena I

Reading: Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*, 1-90

2/1 – Independence and Race: The Case of Cartagena II

Reading: Lasso, *Myths of Harmony*, 91-159

### Part II - Modernization: The Rise and Fall of Liberalism, 1850-1945

2/6 – Society, Economics and Politics in the New Republics I

Reading: Chasteen, 127-159

**[Lasso Paper due by start of class, 2/6]**

2/8 – Society, Economics and Politics in the New Republics II

Reading: Problems, 75-102

2/13, 2/15 – Slavery and the Brazilian Path

Reading: (Look back at Chasteen, 109-112); Problems, 43-74

2/20 – Liberalism, Anticlericalism and the Dream of Progress

Reading: Chasteen, 161-191; Problems, 103-130

2/22 – Liberalism and the Inferiority Complex

Reading: Problems, 131-158

2/27 – Export-led Growth, 1870-1930

Reading: Chasteen, 193-231; Problems, 267-69

2/29 – **MIDTERM EXAM**

**[3/5, 3/7 – Spring Break: No Class]**

3/12 – Nationalism and Import Substitution Industrialization, 1930s-1950s

Reading: Chasteen, 233-261

3/14 – Populism: The Fall of Liberalism

Reading: Chasteen, 263-275; Problems, 159-168, 176-80

3/19 – Populism II

Reading: Problems, 181-208

### Part III – The Cold War: Revolution and Dictatorship, 1945-1990

3/21 – Guatemala, 1954 and the Onset of the Cold War

Reading: Chasteen, 275-282; Problems, 239-47, 173-75

3/26, 3/28 – The Origins and Triumph of the Cuban Revolution

Reading: Chasteen, 282-291; Problems, 209-19

4/2, 4/4 – After Cuba: Violence, Polarization and the US Role

Reading: Chasteen, 297-314; Problems, 220-27, 232-36, 247-54

4/9 – The Argentine Dictatorship I

Reading: Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones*, 1-61

4/11 – The Argentine Dictatorship II

Reading: Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones*, 62-117

4/16 – Guerrilla Struggle in Central America

Reading: Chasteen, 293-295, 314-27; Problems, 255-64

**[Brennan Paper due by start of class, 4/16]**

### Part IV – After the Cold War

4/18 – Neoliberalism in Dictatorship and Democracy

Reading: Chasteen, 329-335; Problems, 265-81, 289-92

4/23 – After Neoliberalism?

Reading: Chasteen, 335-355; Problems, 282-86

4/25 – Final Exam Review

**5/7 - FINAL EXAM (1:30-4:15)**

### A Note on Classroom Decorum

It is entirely up to you whether you attend this class. With the exception of the midterm and final exam, there is no direct penalty for non-attendance. Of course, you will learn much more and

earn a better grade for the course if you choose to attend regularly, but attendance is a choice. Therefore, if you have more pressing matters to deal with – texting, social media, online shopping, web surfing, sleeping, etc – there is no reason for you to be in class. The material we cover in class is complex; it demands your full attention. Moreover, your decision to send a text or check Instagram will not just affect you; it will distract your neighbors, and it will diminish the quality of classroom discussions. Don not text or use your phone in class. If you bring your laptop to take notes, please do not open your email, messaging program, or web browser (except to google some question that is directly relevant to class discussion).

### Paper Assignments

Students must write **ONE** of the following essays. However, you may choose to write two; in that case, I will count the one for which you received a higher grade.

Papers are to be submitted via email to [mkarush@gmu.edu](mailto:mkarush@gmu.edu). They must be Word docs attached directly to your email message. Late papers will be marked down one half-grade (from a B+ to a B, for example) for every day they are late.

Write a paper of 4-5 pages that answers the question. Your paper should be typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, proof-read, and page-numbered. There should be no extra spaces between paragraphs. Remember to make a clear argument and use specific examples to support your claims. You will need to analyze excerpts from the book. Avoid extensive summaries or overlong quotations, and focus on developing an argument that answers the question. Be sure to cite page numbers; parenthetical citations are fine. No outside reading is required, but if you do cite additional sources, be sure to include a Works Cited page.

**Paper Assignment 1:**  
**Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony***  
**Due 2/6 (before the start of class)**

According to Marixa Lasso, Spanish American independence was not just the result of the efforts of creole elites influenced by European revolutionary ideologies; people of lower social standing had their own agendas and exerted a significant influence on the outcome. How did the *pardos* of Cartagena influence the new republic of Colombia? Be sure to discuss the way the pardos adopted and adapted revolutionary ideas, the actions they took, and the impact of their participation.

**Paper Assignment 2:**  
**James P. Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones***  
**Due 4/16 (before the start of class)**

In his history of state terrorism in Argentina, James Brennan seeks to explain how the global ideological battle between communism and anticommunism produced a violent dictatorship in Argentina. Describe the ideas and strategies pursued by Peronist trade unionists and revolutionary young people. Why did the efforts of these two groups culminate not in a more just society, but in polarization and intense violence? To answer this question, you will need to discuss the ideology of the military government that seized power in 1976 and analyze the social forces that enabled it to pursue its radical, counter-subversive program.

### ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.

Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website, [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu).)

Last day to add a class: 1/23

Last day to drop a class with no tuition penalty: 1/30

Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. For the purposes of this course, make sure that you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. You may not present anyone else's words or ideas as if they were yours. If I suspect that you have, I will immediately turn your case over to the Honor Committee.

### MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

### DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474

### WRITING CENTER

For help with your writing, please use the services of the Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>; [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu)

### OTHER STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

There are a great many student support resources available on campus. For a complete list of these, see <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>