

From Truman to Trump: U.S. Policies in the Americas

Prof. Susanne Jonas -- sjonas@ucsc.edu

Spring 2017, Fromm Institute

This course is designed to encourage critical thinking and includes various viewpoints -- official U.S. policy justifications, as well as critiques by Latin American and U.S.-based opponents. In this Trump era, we should appreciate and preserve competing narratives/debates, which did not exist at the height of the Cold War. A central question underlying the course is whether Washington officials and U.S.-based corporate interests will ever understand the social justice issues that have motivated Latin American upheaval and change during the last 7 decades. Other questions: Why didn't U.S. Cold War policies (e.g., toward Cuba) change after 1989? Are there significant differences between Republican and Democratic administrations, and what do we expect under Trump? Are U.S. policies simply or always deliberately chosen, or frequently responses to challenges from Latin America? The course also includes a major focus on policies affecting Latino immigrants in the U.S. territory of the Americas.

Reading Resource: Course Reader and handouts in class (*gratis*). Other recommendations to be made.

Course Schedule

Week #1 (April 11): "Fighting Communism," Overthrowing Democracy I (Guatemala)

- Imperial background from Monroe Doctrine and Mexican-American War to Spanish-American War, "First Vietnam" (Nicaragua), "Good Neighbor Policy" (Mexico emphasis)
- Post-World War II Cold War Policies, "Truman Doctrine"
- U.S.-orchestrated "regime change" against democratic national capitalist government in Guatemala, 1954: fighting "Communism" or defending U.S. corporate interests?

Reading: Course Reader, Week #1

Week #2 (April 18): Challenged by Revolution: Cuba and Beyond

- Cuban Revolution and its transformation, 1959-1962; U.S. responses – economic embargo, Bay of Pigs invasion, Cuban Missile Crisis, ongoing CIA covert actions
- Rise of revolutionary guerrilla movements in various other countries, and U.S. 1960s responses (Alliance for Progress "carrot" and counterinsurgency training/assistance "stick")
- U.S. support for 1964 military coup in Brazil
- U.S. Marines intervention/occupation in the Dominican Republic, 1965

Reading: Course Reader, Week #2

Week #3 (April 25): Facilitating Coups against Democracy II (Chile/Southern Cone)

- The "first 9/11," in Chile: 1973 U.S.-supported military coup against democratically elected socialist Allende government, 17 years of Pinochet dictatorship
- U.S. support for military coups and dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay
- Public debates and competing viewpoints: Kissinger policies, Sen. Frank Church Committee, and hemispheric repercussions of the "Vietnam Syndrome"

Reading: Course Reader, Week #3

Full-length Feature Film: Costa-Gavras, "State of Siege" -- between Week #3 and Week #4 (exact dates, times, locations to be announced)

Week #4 (May 2): Central America out of Control?

- Central American civil wars, 1960s-1980s – Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, “New Cold War”/Reagan Doctrine and U.S. interventions, Jeane Kirkpatrick justifications and responses
- Dramas of the unexpected negotiated peace processes ending the civil wars (1987-1996)
- Declining U.S. hegemony and Central/Latin American “relative autonomy” – how durable?
Reading: Course Reader, Week #4

Week #5 (May 9): Guest Speaker Fred Goff (Co-Founder of NACLA and Data Center): Research/Publication and Anti-Imperial Critique as U.S.-based Resistance to U.S. Policies

Week #6 (May 16): Dismantling the Mexican Revolution, Neoliberal NAFTA, Immigration

- 1990s-21st century issues: Neoliberalism, free trade, immigration, drug wars (Bush I, Clinton)
- the eternal complexities of U.S.-Mexico relations and NAFTA
- Panama invasion (1989), first Gulf War in Iraq (1991) – end of the “Vietnam Syndrome”?
- Can U.S. interventions be “humanitarian”? Haiti, 1994
Reading: Course Reader, Week #6

Week #7 (May 23): U.S. “National Security” Imperative Faces Latin American “Pink Tide”

- Post 9/11 “National Security” Policies (Bush II, Obama), especially toward immigrants
- Rise of post- and anti-neoliberal populist, left, and center-left governments in Latin America (1998-2015) and U.S. responses; cases of Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela/Chavismo, Bolivia, El Salvador, etc. – and 2009 coup against populist government in Honduras
- Obama détente with Cuba, 2014-2016, and its contradictions (ongoing embargo)
- 2015-16 return to conservative, neoliberal governments in key countries, Obama responses
Reading: Course Reader, Week #7

Week #8 (May 30): Trump Futures for the Americas and for Latino Immigrants – and New Players in the Hemisphere

- Continuation of traditional bipartisan policies, new reckless initiatives – or both?
- Rupture of traditional alliances with Mexico?
- Future of détente with Cuba?
- What role in Venezuelan crisis?
- What’s new in Trump’s anti-immigrant initiatives and immigrant resistance within the U.S.?
- Expanded role of other external players in Latin America (Europe, China, Japan, Russia, others) – and decline of U.S. influence?