

Hello everyone,

For the rest of the course, I will send every week an e-mail with some pointers about what to focus on when doing the readings. Keep this in mind as you work through the course material. I will also be posting these e-mails on the blog and on Connect so that you can consult them later as you study for the final exam.

On Tuesday, I presented a rough landscape of some key issues that shape contemporary Latin American politics. I also offered some tentative conclusions about the image that comes out of all that information.

These conclusions, which, I argue, are at the forefront of current events in the region, are precisely what we will try to explain in the upcoming weeks:

Why the variation in economic development?

Why the prevalence of inequality, insecurity and corruption?

Why the evolution of electoral democracy in the last few years, while at the same time a tendency towards the concentration of power in the President?

Why the experiments with new democratic institutions, especially concerning popular participation?

As I mentioned in the first class, I propose to adopt a long-term view in order to make sense of these questions. This week, we will begin with that exercise, going all the way back to the institutions, power relations and cultural practices built during the colonial domination of Spain and Portugal in Latin America.

The reading assigned for Thursday's class, Lange et al's article, is a very interesting macro-historical theory about why certain countries in Latin America became much richer by the 20<sup>th</sup> century than others. Particularly puzzling is to see how the richest territories during the colonial period (Mexico, Peru, Bolivia) eventually fell behind the more peripheral colonial possessions (Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica). Why is this the case?

In this article, Lange, Mahoney and Vom Hau advance a very sophisticated argument about the long-term effects of economic institutions. As you read, make sure that you understand this argument and can explain it.

For those of you choosing to write a book review for next week, Mahoney's book is the final product of the research project that started with that article with Matthew Lange and Matthias vom Hau. Here he offers the most developed version of the theory. Mahoney's book quickly became a landmark study in political science and historical sociology.

I suggest that you use this article and Centeno's (assigned for Tuesday) as practice for your book review. Try to identify:

1. What is the research question?
2. What is their argument?
3. How does their argument improve on or challenge previous theories?
4. What kind of evidence do they use and does it really help them prove their argument?

Tomorrow, I will begin lecturing during the first part to provide you with some historical context of colonial practices and institutions in Latin America. After the break, we will tease out Mahoney et al.'s argument together and discuss its implications.

I have also posted the slides on Connect and a version without the images (due to copyright constraints) on the blog.

See you all on Thursday!

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