

Hello everyone,

I hope you are having a beautiful sunny weekend.

Starting this week and for the rest of the course we will be focusing on contemporary issues related to democracy and economic development in Latin America.

On Tuesday, we will talk about the transitions to democracy that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, that is, the political side of the “dual transitions” that we started analyzing in our last discussion about the Washington Consensus. For the lecture, I will start with a brief introduction to the topic, pointing out some of the defining features that characterized these transitions. We will then watch a movie (*No*, by Pablo Larraín) about the transition process in Chile in 1989. The movie portrays really nicely some of the issues that I will mention during the lecture and that you will encounter in the assigned readings. We will then have a general discussion to underline some of these points.

In relation to the readings, you will see that there is an implicit discussion going on between Grugel, Bermeo, Collier & Mahoney and, implicitly, the classical work of the “transitions literature” spearheaded by Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead. Notice how the classical approach of the “transitions” paradigm made certain key remarks about the nature of the democratization processes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century (what is usually called the “Third Wave of Democracy”): 1) that it was largely a top-down process; 2) that center and center-right parties and actors played a main role; 3) that these “pacted” transitions were very moderate, offering a way into electoral democracy at the expense of more ambitious agendas of material redistribution or political inclusion.

Each one of the authors that you will read is grappling in one way or another with this approach, either challenging it empirically or trying to make explicit some of the normative and political implications of this type of transitions. Pay attention to the differences in their positions. This will be crucial since, as I mentioned last class, some of these features of the transitions explain the consolidation and resilience of electoral democracy in the last three decades, but also the high levels of discontent and dissatisfaction with its performance.

I suggest to start with Bermeo’s piece. It is a long but very helpful summary of the “transitions approach”, while also initiating the discussion of some of the implications of its findings. For those of you who haven’t written your book review yet, it will also be a great model of a very well-crafted (albeit too long for our assignment’s requirements) review. Second, move on to read Grugel. That is a very short article but it also raises some concerns about the empirical basis of the dominant understanding of the transitions, as well as inquires about the political consequences that followed these democratization processes. Finally, skim over Collier and Mahoney’s piece. For those of you writing a review on Collier’s book

*Paths toward Democracy*, this article might be helpful. It is an attempt to underline some of the empirical blind spots of the “transitions” approach.

On Thursday, we will focus on the rise of indigenous social movements by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will begin lecturing for the first half of the session about how these new actors emerged in specific countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Mexico), and provide a bit of an analysis of their different degrees of success. We will then spend the second part of the lecture working with Deborah Yashar’s article. As before, I will ask you to tease out the argument together.

I recommend that you begin with Van Cott’s article. It is a quick read and provides much of the background knowledge that you need to have to really understand the rest of the readings and some of the lecture material. Then move on to carefully read Yashar’s piece. You will notice that neither of these articles is particularly dense or difficult, so you will be able to read them quickly.

Starting this week, I am also assigning case-study chapters from the Domínguez & Schifter volume. For every session you will have two or three chapters that you should read, even if less attentively as the other readings, to familiarize yourselves with current events in each country. For example, for this week, the chapter on Bolivia discusses in depth the nature of the coalition of indigenous social movements and labour unions that brought Evo Morales to power and the challenges that his government has faced to keep this coalition together since 2009. If you read this chapter carefully, you will also have a stronger foundation for the following week when we will discuss the “Left Turns”. Levitsky’s chapter on Peru is an exploration of an opposite case, one where the Left has been very weak, both in terms of formal political parties and in terms of autonomous social movements. Note the weaknesses of the Peruvian political system coming out of the very fragmented and incoherent party system. Why do you think the Left was so weak in Peru, despite also having a massive indigenous, peasant, and poor population like Bolivia?

See you all on Tuesday!

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