The Rise and Fall of Latin America’s “Pink Tide”
(Course taught in English; some readings will be in Spanish)

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I. Course Description: Through the work of this course students will gain an understanding of the political economy of the (now receding) “pink tide” that has swept across Latin America, with a particular focus on Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile. The course will include an historical and contemporary analysis of the evolution of the Left in Latin America through the late 20th Century until today. Following the framework originally put forth by Jorge Castañeda in Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War and later updated in Leftovers: Tales of the Latin American Left, the seminar will emphasize the debate over Castañeda’s “two lefts” and evaluate the novelty or traditional roots of today’s Left in the above countries. The seminar will also seek to analyze policies and outcomes produced by leftist parties on economics, poverty, inequality and social issues, deepening democracy, and relations with the United States. The course will examine these themes in the context of the past 15-20 years during which time leftist governments were ascendant in a number of countries in the region before a recent wave of electoral defeats and socio-economic and political crises.

II. Course Texts: The following are the three (3) texts which we will read in their entirety during the course. PDFs of all three will be provided to you. The bulk of our other reading is drawn from a wide array of sources (academic journals, anthologies, readers, etc.). You will not have to purchase any of these materials as digital copies of them will be provided to you as well.


III. Course Assignments and Grading: Your grade for the course will be earned through a number of activities and assignments over the course of the semester, including attendance and participation (20%), two 3-page reading reports (20%), an in-class oral debate/presentation that will take place in the third week of the course (15%) along with a class handout (5%), and a final research paper (30%) due at our final class meeting where each student will give an individual oral presentation on the topic of their paper to their peers (10%).

A. Attendance and participation: 20%

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1 Note that this syllabus borrows heavily from Castañeda’s own syllabus for the course, “The Latin American Left,” which he taught a New York University in Fall 2013.
Attendance is mandatory. More than one unjustified absence will erode a student’s grade for the class by 10% each time. Participation is evaluated on the basis of the student’s preparation for and engagement with the discussion in class. This means that students should read (and take notes on) ALL the material listed on this syllabus for each week PRIOR to class and come ready to discuss it with me and one another.

B. Weekly reading reports: 20%

Each student will write two 3-page reports, due electronically 24-hours before the beginning of class. Students are free to decide which two weeks to do their reports (weeks 2-9). These reports should cover the assigned readings for that week. They should include: a) a short summary of the reading(s) that highlights the main arguments and evidence presented by the author(s) under review; b) a critical assessment of their contribution to the topic under discussion that week; and c) at least three stimulating questions for class discussion.

C. An oral presentation with a handout: 20%

In the third week of class, students in 2-4-person teams will engage in oral debates covering the material we have read about the definitions of and divisions among the Latin American Left. Each debate team will also distribute a data sheet with information supporting their point of view for their peers. The presentation (15%) and data sheet (5%) will together account for 20% of your course grade.

D. Final paper proposal, final individual research paper, and class presentation: 40%

Students will choose a topic of a comparative nature related to the Latin American Left and the “pink tide” and use the best and up-to-date bibliography available to write a research paper on it. I will be available for consultation on paper topics and to give bibliographical assistance. However, students must decide on a topic by the fifth class meeting (the week of Feb. 12) and hand in a 1-2 page paper proposal at that time describing the topic of their paper, the research question that the student seeks to address, sketching a rough outline of the paper, and offering a tentative bibliography. The proposal will count for 5% of the course grade, the research paper will count for 25% of the course grade, and the final presentation will count for 10% of the final grade. The papers are due on the last day of class (during the week of March 12) when students will also give their final oral presentations.

IV. Course Schedule

PART I: Defining the Latin American Left and Its Variants

Week 1: Jan. 15 – What defines the left? What was the “pink tide”? What’s left of the Latin American Left?
Readings: Castañeda, Jorge. **Utopia Unarmed.** Ch. 1.


Activities: In class documentary(ies) (TBA).

**Week 2:** Jan. 22 – Populism, Communism, and Cuba

*Readings: Castañeda, Jorge. Utopia Unarmed.* (Chs. 2-3).


**Week 3:** Jan. 29 – Debating Latin America’s Two Lefts


Morales, Marco A. 2008. “Have Latin Americans turned left?” In Leftovers.

Assignments: In-class presentations/debates on Latin America’s “Two Lefts.”

PART II: “El pollo del arroz con pollo” – Main Issues on/for the Latin American Left
**Week 4: Feb. 5 – The Democratic Imperative and Economic Policy (the market, the Washington neoliberal consensus, and the alternative(s))**


- Flores-Macías, Gustavo A. 2012. *After neoliberalism?: the left and economic reforms in Latin America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Ch 2)


**Week 5: Feb. 12 – Social Issues (inequality, poverty, and exclusion) and Nationalism and Anti-Imperialism**


Assignments: Paper proposals due.

PART III: Case Studies – Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador

Week 6: Feb. 19 – Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay

Readings:

**Brazil**


**Chile**


**Uruguay**


Week 7: Feb. 26 – Venezuela


Flores-Macías, Gustavo A. 2012. After neoliberalism?: the left and economic reforms in Latin America. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Ch 4)

Week 8: Mar. 5 – Bolivia and Ecuador
Readings:
Bolivia


Ecuador


Week 9: Mar. 12 – Alternatives for the Left; Oral Presentations & Papers
Readings: Castañeda, Jorge G. Utopia Unarmed. (Ch. 13-14).

Assignments: Final in-class oral presentations and papers due.