The United States and Central America: Revolution and Counter-Revolution

Course Description: During the 1980s, three of the six Spanish-speaking countries of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama) were ripped apart by a series of civil wars that transformed the region into a pivotal battleground of the Cold War. Twenty years later, these countries continue to wrestle with the challenges of democratization, political reconciliation, and economic and social justice. This course examines the historical roots of these civil conflicts with an emphasis on the social, economic, political, military, and religious forces that came to define the terms of revolutionary struggle, on one hand, and of counterrevolutionary repression, on the other. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of the United States. The course includes a required travel component to El Salvador over Spring Break, providing students with a unique opportunity to witness the challenges of national reconstruction following the trauma of a civil war.

Readings

You should purchase the following books, either online or at the bookstore:


In addition, there will be various articles and documents as indicated below, which we will make available as PDF files in Blackboard. In particular, readings from Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolov, eds., *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), will be denoted as [Holden-Zolov.#], with the “#” indicating the number assigned the document in that collection.
Course Requirements

First and foremost, you are required to come to every class on time, and to come prepared and alert. This means you will have done the readings before class, and be ready to answer questions and participate in discussion, since we will be functioning in seminar fashion. Given the importance of this class, and the school’s investment in it, there will be no unexcused absences. Excused absences will only be granted for serious illness, a family crisis, or a recognized religious holiday. Except in the case of the religious holidays, we require documentation (a note from a medical authority or the advisement center) to give you an excused absence. Please do not email us to say you were sick and could not make it to class.

Second, please plan to finish every assignment on time. If you urgently need an extension, it must be requested at least two days in advance of the due date. There will be no make-ups for quizzes unless you have an excused absence.

Finally, you need to be electronically connected to function in this class. Discussion questions, syllabus changes, lecture outlines, and extra readings will be deposited in Blackboard. You should plan to access your F&M email address on a daily basis, because we will often send messages to my classes.

Guidelines for Written Work

All written work must be typed in 12 pt. font (Times) using 1 1/2-line spacing with 1-inch margins. All papers must use footnotes and include a bibliography of works referenced. The “Chicago Style” should be used always for citations (see handout). Through the Writing Center you will find a number of books and useful handouts on such topics as punctuation, grammar, formatting using the “Chicago Style,” and the writing of essays, including Model Student Essays, that you may find useful for this and other courses. All written work must include your name, a title on a separate title page (please do not put your name anywhere else in the paper), and page numbers (upper right-hand corner). Sloppiness in spelling/grammar and evident lack of professionalism will negatively affect your grade. It is strongly recommended that you consult with the Writing Center (KEI-316; ext. 3866) when preparing your essays. Be sure to schedule a meeting with a tutor in advance, especially during midterms and finals when they are busiest.

Unless otherwise indicated, all written work is due at the start of class on the date indicated on the syllabus. All written work must be submitted in hard copy; no emailed copies will be accepted.

Assigning Grades

The following is the letter grade system established by Franklin & Marshall College and found in the College Catalog. It is the basis for grading of written work as well as the final course composite grade (written work, participation, level of engagement with the course material):

A range=Excellent. Work of consistently high standard, showing distinction.
B range=Good. Work showing superiority in such qualities as organization, accuracy, originality, understanding, and insight.
C range=Satisfactory. Work which fulfills essential requirements in quality and quantity and meets the acceptable standard for graduation.
D range=Passing. Work which falls below the acceptable grade point average standard yet is deserving of credit in the course.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade will be based on your grades in these categories:

a) One short essay of 1500-2000 words, due early in the course (20%).

b) A journal recording your response to studying and discussing El Salvador, and then visiting there, with a conclusion, due soon after our return (20%).

c) A major essay: at the course’s end you will turn in a major essay (15-20 pages; 3000-4000 words) on a comparative topic chosen in advance from a list made available (30%).

c) Quizzes (10%): there will be pre-announced quizzes given on a regular basis throughout the course, to test your mastery of basic data. Together, these quizzes will count ten points towards your final grade.

d) Participation: this grade will reflect your contributions in class discussions (20%).

Special Note on Film Showings: There will be several films shown outside of class during the semester. We will announce the time and location in advance, and will make the film available on reserve at ATS (basement of Stager). It is your obligation to see the film, one way or another, prior to the specified class, preferably by attending the group screening.

Course Outline

Week I
January 17       Introduction to class
                 Discuss Mark Danner, *Massacre at El Mozote*

Week II
January 22      An Overview of Central America, From Conquest to Independence
January 24      The U.S. Comes In: From the Big Stick to the Good Neighbor
                 Reading: *Inevitable Revolutions*, “Introduction” and Chapter 1
                 [start reading Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*]
                 Documents: “The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1904),”
                             “The Clark Memorandum (1928),” “The Good Neighbor Policy (1933)”
Week III

Sunday, January 28  
**Film Screening**: Walker (Dir. Alex Cox, 1987), Location TBA

January 29  
Nicaragua and the US: William Walker to the Civil War of 1912  
**Reading**: Confronting the American Dream, Chapters 1-4  
Documents: “Filibuster (1860),” “Managing Nicaragua (1912)”  
[Holden-Zolov.14; Holden-Zolov.39]

January 31  
Nicaragua and the US: Dollar Diplomacy  
**Reading**: Confronting the American Dream, Chapters 5-6  
[Holden-Zolov.42; Holden-Zolov.44]

Week IV

February 5  
Nicaragua and the US: Cultural Anti-Americanism  
**Reading**: Confronting the American Dream, Chapter 7

February 7  
Revolutionary Nicaragua, 1927-33  
**Reading**: Confronting the American Dream, Chapters 8-9  
Documents: “With Sandino in Nicaragua (1928)”  
[Holden-Zolov.51]

Week V

February 12  
The Cold War, 1945-58  
**Reading**: LaFeber, Inevitable Revolutions, Chapter 2  

February 14  
The Cold War, 1959-79  
**Reading**: LaFeber, Inevitable Revolutions, Chapters 3-4  

**Writing Assignment**: First Essay (Due Friday, February 16)

Week VI

February 18  
**Film Screening**: 1932: Scars of Memory (Dir. Jeffrey Gould and Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, 2002)
February 19  El Salvador’s Oligarchy and the Challenge of Peasant Revolution, 1850-1932

February 21  The Military-Oligarchical State, 1933-1979

**Week VII**

*Sunday, February 25*  *Film Screening:* El Salvador: Another Vietnam (*Dir. Glenn Silber, 1984*)

February 26  The U.S. Comes In, 1980-1994

February 28  Thinking Locally: El Salvador’s Revolutionary Process at the Grassroots
*Reading:* *Insurgent Collective Action*, Preface, Chapters 1 & 3 [scan Chapter 2, especially section on mapmaking]

**Week VIII**

March 5  *Reading:* *Insurgent Collective Action*, Chapters 4-5

March 6  *Film Screening:* Romero (*Dir. John Duigan, 1989*)

March 7  *Reading:* *Insurgent Collective Action*, Chapters 6-7, Epilogue

*MARCH 8*  *Final Briefing* [Time/Place TBA]

*MARCH 9*  *LEAVE FOR EL SALVADOR!*

**Week IX**

El Salvador Travel (9-17 March)

**Week X**

March 19  Debriefing

March 21  The Sandinista Revolution Triumphant
*Reading:* Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream*, “Epilogue”

**Week XI**
March 26  The Rise, Fall (and Survival?) of the Sandinista Revolution, 1980-2007  
**Reading:** TBA  
**Writing Assignment:** El Salvador Journal (Due Monday, March 26)

March 28  The U.S. War in Central America, 1980-1990  
**Reading:** *Inevitable Revolutions*, Chapter 5  
[Holden-Zolov.108; Holden-Zolov.109; Holden-Zolov.110; Holden-Zolov.113]

**Week XII**

April 2  **Reading:** *Inevitable Revolutions*, Chapter 6

April 4  The Solidarity Movement: A Different Relationship  
**Reading:** TBA  
**Documents:** “Solidarity (1986)” [Holden-Zolov.112]

**Week XIII**

April 9  Guatemala: Hidden Holocaust, 1954-1990  
**Reading:** *The Last Colonial Massacre*, Chapters 1-2

April 11  **Reading:** *The Last Colonial Massacre*, Chapter 3

**Week XIV**

April 16  **Reading:** *The Last Colonial Massacre*, Chapter 4

April 18  **Reading:** *The Last Colonial Massacre*, Chapter 5

**Week XV**

April 23  Taking Stock of the Cold War in Central America  
**Reading:** *The Last Colonial Massacre*, “Preface,” “Introduction,” “Conclusion”

April 25  Concluding discussion  
**Writing Assignment:** Final Essay (Due Thursday, May 3rd)