

Mauro P. Porto
Department of Communication
Tulane University
mporto@tulane.edu

Office: 219 Newcomb Hall
Office hours: Wed and Fri, 10:30-11:30 am. or
by appointment
Phone: 862.3037

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

COMM 450 - Spring 2008

Course Description

This course examines the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies. In particular, it investigates whether communication industries and practices have contributed to promote or to impede democratic consolidation in the region, with a special emphasis on the quality of political representation. After introducing and discussing the complex links between democratization, accountability, and the media, the course investigates these links in the Latin American context, focusing on the cases of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. The course also considers the political role of television entertainment, including tabloid journalism and *telenovelas* (soap operas). The course concludes with a discussion of the complex interactions between media scandals, political conflict, and democratic consolidation in Latin America.

One of the central goals of the course is to provide conceptual tools that will enable students to develop a critical and comprehensive analysis of the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies. In particular, it offers an analytical framework that focuses on the links between accountability mechanisms, civil society mobilization, and the mass media.

Course Texts

Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth State: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Enrique Peruzzotti and Catalina Smulovitz (Eds.), *Enforcing the Rule of Law: Social Accountability in the New Latin American Democracies*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.

Both books available through Tulane Bookstore.

Blackboard

Blackboard will be used for posting announcements, assignments, and other information. It will also be used for online discussions. The system can be accessed at < <http://mytulane.blackboard.com/>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Required texts

Besides the two textbooks, we will also work with several articles and book chapters which will be available online at Blackboard. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the classes for which they are listed in the syllabus. All students should have hard copies of the texts and bring them to the respective sessions. Failure to do so will affect your participation grade.

Attendance

Regular attendance is required and attendance will be taken in every class meeting. You can miss three class sessions without penalty in your participation grade. Seven unexcused absences will result in the final grade recommendation of a “WF.”

Evaluation

Your final evaluation will be based on the following:

1) Midterm exam: Students will take an in-class midterm exam which will cover the first two units (Parts I and II). A list of possible questions will be delivered to students in advance and two of the questions will be on the exam. The midterm is a closed book exam. Students should bring a pen and a blank blue book on the scheduled dates for the exam;

2) Final paper: Students will be required to write a 12-page final paper. Specific guidelines for the paper will be given later;

3) Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. To have an effective participation, students should complete the assigned readings prior to the sessions for which they are listed in the syllabus and be ready to discuss them. Attendance will also be considered when assessing participation;

4) Readings summaries: Students should bring a one-page summary of the reading/s assigned for each session. Summaries should include the author/s’ main arguments and will be due in the beginning of class. They can be typed or hand-written, and should include the student’s full name and the date of the session. Summaries will be graded as “sufficient” and “insufficient” and only the former will satisfy the requirement. If you deliver all summaries and they are graded “sufficient,” you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade (you can miss up to three summaries without penalty). If you do not, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible “F” (50 points);

5) Discussion board: Students will be evaluated for their participation in the “Discussion Board” area of Blackboard. This is where our online discussions will take place. There will be one forum for each part of the course. Students should use the online board to engage with issues related to the readings or class discussions. There are no major restrictions on the postings, but students should be cordial and respectful when discussing classmates’ arguments. Failure to do so will disqualify the respective postings and may result in other penalties.

How to post to a discussion board: 1) click on the discussion board button; 2) click on the respective “forum” (Part I, II, etc.); 3) add a new “thread” (a new topic, with a new subject title) to the discussion or post a message (response or comment) to an existing thread.. Click "add a new thread" to create a heading or click “reply” to comment on someone’s posting.

You will be expected to post at least one message (an original thread or a response to a classmate’s posting) in each of the 11 designated weeks for online discussions (listed below). Of the 11 required messages, 4 of them need to be original threads, which should include specific question/s to stimulate the debate. Whether you post more than these 11 messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 11 minimum posts (four threads and seven messages in all designated weeks) with serious and thoughtful contributions, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. If you do not post all required messages, your grade will be proportionally lowered down to a possible “F” (50 points).

Designated weeks for online discussions - Week 1: Jan 22-27; Week 2: Jan 28-Feb 3; Week 3: Feb 11-17; Week 4: Feb 18-24; Week 5: Feb 25-Mar 2; Week 6: Mar 3-9; Week 7: Mar 10-16; Week 8: Mar 31-Apr 6; Week 9: Apr 7-13; Week 10: Apr 14-20; Week 11: Apr 21-27.

Your final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Midterm Exam	25 %	Participation	20 %	Readings summaries:	15 %
Final Paper	30 %	Discussion board:	10 %		

Grading scale

A	94.0 to 100.0	B	84.0 to 86.9	C	74.0 to 76.9	D	64.0 to 66.9
A-	90.0 to 93.9	B-	80.0 to 83.9	C-	70.0 to 73.9	D-	60.0 to 63.9
B+	87.0 to 89.9	C+	77.0 to 79.9	D+	67.0 to 69.9	F	00.0 to 59.9

Academic dishonesty

Remember that plagiarism is a form of cheating. Do not present someone else's ideas as yours, without citing the source. This course adheres strictly to the Code of Academic Conduct of the Newcomb-Tulane College, available at: < <http://college.tulane.edu/code.htm> >

Course Schedule

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICAN MEDIA AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

Jan 16 (Wed) – Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.

(No readings).

Jan 18 (Fri) – Modern Latin American politics: nationalism and populism.

* John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, pp. 213-253.

Jan 23 (Wed) – Contemporary trends: the “Left Turn.”

* Jorge Castañeda, “Latin America’s left turn,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, n. 3, 2006, pp. 28-43.
* Matthew Cleary, “Explaining the left’s resurgence,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 17, n. 4, 2006, pp. 35-49.

Jan 25 (Fri) – Types of political accountability: vertical, horizontal, and social.

* Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, chapter 1, pp. 3-33.

Jan 30 (Wed) – Introducing Latin America’s media systems.

* Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson, “The barriers to media opening in Latin America”, *Political Communication*, Vol. 22, n. 1, 2005, pp. 9-25.

Feb 1 (Fri) – Media accountability.

* Rogério Christofolletti and Susana Damas, “Media watchers: a profile of press criticism in Latin America,” *Brazilian Journalism Research*, Vol. 2, n. 2, 2006, pp 11-28.

PART II
MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE MEXICAN CASE.

Feb 6 (Wed) – Political communication in Mexico’s “perfect dictatorship.”

* Lawson, chapters 2-3, pp. 13-47.

Feb 8 (Fri) – The opening of Mexican media: the press.

* Lawson, chapter 5, pp. 61-92.

Feb 13 (Wed) – The opening of Mexican media: the press (cont.).

* Sallie Hughes, “From inside out: how institutional entrepreneurs transformed Mexican journalism”. *Press/Politics*, Vol. 8, n. 3, pp. 87-117.

Feb 15 (Fri) – The opening of Mexican media: broadcasting.

* Lawson, chapter 6, pp. 93-121.

Feb 20 (Wed) – Media opening and elections in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 9, pp. 157-170, and “Conclusions,” pp. 173-180.

Feb 22 (Fri) – Civil society and media accountability: the Mexican case.

* Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, chapter 7, pp. 178-212.

Feb 27 (Wed) – MIDTERM EXAM.

PART III
MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE BRAZILIAN CASE.

Feb 29 (Fri) – Television and the transition to democracy.

* Venicio A. de Lima, “The state, television, and political power in Brazil”. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol. 5, n. 2, 1988, pp. 108-128.

Mar 5 (Wed) – The rise of Collor de Mello: media and neopopulism.

* Venicio A. de Lima, “Brazilian television in the 1989 presidential election: constructing a president”. In T. Skidmore (Ed.), *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America*. Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993, pp. 97-117.

Mar 7 (Fri) – Media and politics in Brazil (1985-2000).

* Mauro Porto, "Mass media and politics in democratic Brazil". In M. D. Kinzo & J. Dunkerley (Eds.), *Brazil Since 1985: Economy, Polity and Society*. London: ILAS, 2003, pp. 288-313.

Mar 12 (Wed) – Documentary screening: “Assignment – Brazil.”

Mar 14 (Fri) – Democratization and media opening in Brazil: the case of TV Globo,

* Mauro Porto, “TV news and political change in Brazil: the impact of democratization on TV Globo’s journalism”. *Journalism*, Vol. 8, n. 4, 2007, pp. 381-402.

March 19 and 21 – No classes. Spring break.

Mar 26 and 28 – No class. Attend panels of the Brazilian Studies Association’s Congress.

PART IV - BEYOND TRADITIONAL NEWS:
POPULAR JOURNALISM AND TELENOVELAS

April 2 (Wed) – Popular journalism in Mexico.

* Daniel Hallin, “La Nota Roja: popular journalism and the transition to democracy in Mexico”. In C. Sparks and J. Tulloch (Eds.), *Tabloid Tales*. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 267-284.

April 4 (Fri) – Documentary screening: “Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power.”

April 9 (Wed) – Telenovelas and politics: Brazil and Venezuela compared.

* Alma Guillermoprieto, “Rio 1993”. In *The Heart that Bleeds: Latin America Now*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995, pp. 287-316;

* Nelson Ortega, “Big snakes on the streets and never ending stories: The case of Venezuelan telenovelas”, in E. Bueno and T. Caesar (Eds.), *Imagination beyond Nation*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998, pp. 64-80.

PART V
CONTEMPORARY TRENDS: MEDIA SCANDALS, POLITICAL
CONFLICT, AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

April 11 (Fri) – Scandals and regime legitimacy in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 8, pp. 138-156.

April 16 (Wed) – Media scandals in Argentina.

* Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, chapter 9, pp. 249-271, and chapter 10, pp. 272-303.

Apr 18 (Wed) – Media scandals in Peru.

* John McMillan and Pablo Zoido, “How to subvert democracy: Montesinos in Peru”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, n. 4, 2004, pp. 69-92.

Apr 23 (Wed) – Media and political instability: the case of Venezuela.

* Eliza Hawkins, “Conflict and the mass media in Chávez’s Venezuela”, paper presented to the 2003 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Dalas, Texas, March 27-29.

Apr 25 (Fri) – Conclusions. Class evaluation.

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 6, TUESDAY, 10:00 a.m. – noon.

Papers should be delivered at the instructor’s office: 219 Newcomb Hall. Late papers will not be received.