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MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

COMM 450 - Spring 2007

Course Description

This course analyzes the role of the mass media in contemporary Latin American democracies. We will investigate whether communication industries and institutions have contributed to promote or to impede democratic consolidation in the region. In particular, the course investigates how the mass media have affected the quality of political representation and of accountability mechanisms in these new democracies. After introducing and discussing the complex links between democracy, accountability, and the media, the course analyzes these links in the Latin American context, focusing on the cases of Mexico and Brazil. Moving beyond the realm of traditional journalism, we will also consider the role of entertainment-oriented genres, including tabloid journalism and *telenovelas* (soap operas). The question of the relationship between media and neopopulist leaders is then introduced, as well as the role of media scandals. Finally, the course concludes with a discussion of the obstacles and prospects for the democratization of media and political spheres in the region.

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, the course 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://blackboard.tulane.edu>>. If you have problems using the system, you can call the help desk: 862.8888.

Required texts

Besides the two textbooks, we will 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 10/12-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 argument, as well as criticisms and questions about the argument, and will be due in the beginning of class. Summaries 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. 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 13 designated weeks for online discussions (listed below). Of the 13 required messages, 5 of them need to be original threads. Whether you post more than these 13 messages is entirely up to you. As long as you complete the 13 minimum posts (five threads and eight 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 22-28; Week 2: Jan 29-Feb 4; Week 3: Feb 5-11; Week 4: Feb 12-18; Week 5: Feb 19-25; Week 6: Feb 26-Mar 4; Week 7: Mar 5-11; Week 8: Mar 12-18; Week 9: Mar 26-Apr 1; Week 10: Apr 2-8; Week 11: Apr 9-15; Week 12: Apr 16-22; Week 13: Apr 23-29.

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 DEMOCRACY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND THE MEDIA

Jan 17 (Wed) - Introduction to the procedures and contents of the course.

(No readings).

Jan 19 (Fri) - Representation, elections, and accountability.

* Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski and Susan C. Stokes, "Elections and representation". In A. Przeworski, B. Manin & S. Stokes (Eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 29-54.

Jan 22 (Mon) - Types of political accountability: vertical, horizontal, and social.

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

Jan 24 (Wed) - Social accountability in Latin America.

* Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, chapter 5, pp. 115-133.

Jan 26 (Fri) - Media accountability.

* Denis McQuail, "Accountability of media to society: principles and means". *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 12, n. 4, 1977, pp. 511-529.

Jan 29 (Mon) - Media and democracy in South America.

* Silvio Waisbord, "Media in South America: between the rock of the state and the hard place of the market". In J. Curran and M. Park (Eds.), *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 50-62

PART II MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE MEXICAN CASE.

Jan 31 (Wed) - Political communication in Mexico's "perfect dictatorship."

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

Feb 2 (Fri) - The opening of Mexican media: the press.

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

Feb 5 (Mon) - 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 7 (Wed) - The opening of Mexican media: broadcasting.

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

Feb 9 (Fri) - Media and civil society in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 7, pp. 125-136.

Feb 12 (Mon) - Media opening and elections in Mexico.

* Lawson, chapter 9, pp. 157-180

Feb 14 (Wed) - MIDTERM EXAM (Part I).**Feb 16 (Fri) - MIDTERM EXAM (Part II).****Feb 19 (Mon) - No classes. Mardi Gras Break.**

PART III

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: THE BRAZILIAN CASE.

Feb 21 (Wed) - 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.

Feb 23 (Fri) - The rise of Collor de Mello

* 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.

Feb 26 (Mon) - The media and the impeachment of President Collor de Mello

* Silvio Waisbord, "The narrative exposes in South American journalism: telling the story of Collorgate in Brazil", *Gazette*, 59/3, 1997, pp. 189-203.

Feb 28 (Wed) - Documentary screening: "Assignment - Brazil".**Mar 2 (Fri) - Media and democracy 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 5 (Mon) - Television and the 2002 Presidential election

* Mauro Porto, "Framing controversies: Television and the 2002 presidential election in Brazil", *Political Communication*, forthcoming.

PART IV - BEYOND TRADITIONAL NEWS:
POPULAR JOURNALISM AND TELENOVELAS

Mar 7 (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.

Mar 9 (Fri) - Documentary screening: "Telenovelas: Love, TV and Power".

Mar 12 (Mon) - 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
MEDIA AND NEOPOPULISM IN LATIN AMERICA

Mar 14 (Wed) - Media and populism in Latin America.

* Silvio Waisbord, "Media populism: neo-populism in Latin America". In G. Mazzoleni, J. Stewart, and B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The Media and Neo-Populism*. Westport: Praeger, 2003, pp. 197-216.

Mar 16 (Fri) - Media and neopopulist leaders: the case of Ecuador.

* Carlos de la Torre, "Neopopulism in contemporary Ecuador: the case of Bucharam's use of the mass media". *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 12, n. 4, 1999, pp. 555-571.

Mar 19-23: No class. Spring Break.

Mar 26 (Mon) - Television and neopopulism in Brazil and Peru.

* Taylor Boas, "Television and neopopulism in Latin America: Media effects in Brazil and Peru". *Latin America Research Review*, Vol. 40, n. 2, 2005, pp. 27-49.

PART VI
MEDIA SCANDALS AND DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

Mar 28 (Wed) - Scandals and regime legitimacy in Mexico.

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

Mar 30 (Fri) - Media scandals in Argentina.

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

Apr 2 (Mon) - Media scandals in Argentina (Cont.).

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

PART VII
BAD NEWS? OBSTACLES TO POLITICAL AND MEDIA DEMOCRATIZATION

Apr 4 (Wed) - Oligarchic tendencies in media and political systems: the case of Central America.

* Rick Rockwell and Noreene Janus, "The triumph of the media elite in postwar Central America", in E. Fox and S. Waisbord (Eds.), *Latin Politics, Global Media*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, pp. 47-68.

April 6-9: No classes. Easter Break.

Apr 11 (Wed) - Media and corruption: the case of 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 13 (Fri) - 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 16 (Mon) - Obstacles to media opening.

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

PART VIII - GOOD NEWS? CIVIC JOURNALISM,
CIVIL SOCIETY, AND MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

Apr 18 (Wed) - The rise of civic journalism in Latin America.

* Sallie Hughes, "Media transformation in comparative perspective". In S. Hughes, *Newsrooms in Conflict*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006, pp. 208-240

Apr 20 (Fri) - Civil society and media.

* Daniel Hallin, "Broadcasting in the Third World: from national development to civil society", in Liebes and Curran (Eds.), *Media, Ritual and Identity*. London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 153-167.

Apr 23 (Mon) - Civil society and media accountability: the Mexican case.

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

Apr 25 (Wed) - Complex links between horizontal, social and media accountability in Brazil.

* Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, chapter 2, pp. 34-54.

Apr 27 (Fri) - Democratization and media opening: the Brazilian case.

* Mauro Porto, "TV news and political change in Brazil: the impact of democratization on TV Globo's journalism". *Journalism*, forthcoming.

Apr 30 (Mon) - Conclusions. Class evaluation.

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

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