

Crime and Violence in Latin America
Fall 2025
LAS 4935/6293
W | Period 5 – 7
(11:45 AM - 2:45 PM)
Credit hours: 3
GRI 0376

Course instructor: Dr. Rebecca Hanson

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Office phone: 352-294-7191

Office hours: Wednesday 3:00 – 5:00pm or by appointment

All communication regarding this course should occur through Canvas. If you need to contact me about anything course related, please do so through Canvas, not via email.

This course may count towards a undergraduate minor or certificate in Latin American Studies or a graduate certificate in Latin American Studies:

Undergraduate LAS Minor: 15 credits.

Undergraduate LAS Certificate: 9 credits.

Graduate LAS Certificate 12 credits.

For more information about enrollment in the undergraduate programs offered by the Center for Latin American Studies visit our website: <https://www.latam.ufl.edu/academics/>

Do not hesitate to contact the Center's student advisor at luigomezlomeli@ufl.edu if you have any questions.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines crime and violence in contemporary Latin America. We will analyze diverse expressions and modalities of crime and violence, how they are intertwined, and how they vary across the region.

Course Objectives –

- Familiarize students with the development crime and violence in Latin America over time
- Introduce students to the different scales, definitions, and measurements of crime and violence
- Familiarize students with the ways in which contemporary events have altered crime and violence in Latin America
- Familiarize students with a relational approach to understanding crime and violence
- Promote learning through reading, discussion, and writing

REQUIRED READINGS

Bergman, Marcelo. 2018. *More Money More Crime: Prosperity and Rising Crime in Latin America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Rivers Moore, Megan. *Gringo Gulch: Sex, Tourism, and Social Mobility in Costa Rica*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

All other readings are available through CANVAS or online through the UF library.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

None.

CLASS POLICIES & CULTURE

This classroom will be an anti-racist space and sex, gender, and sexuality inclusive. I will not tolerate hate speech, homophobia, or sexism of any kind in classroom discussions, assignments, or anywhere else.

Electronics policy: You must put away all electronic devices, including cell phones and laptops, during the class. Leaving these items out during class may result in a grade penalty. An exception will be made for tablets with a stylus. Tablets cannot be used for anything other than note taking. We will use laptops for some in-class activities so please bring them to class for this purpose only.

Turn your phone on silent unless there are extenuating circumstances that require that others be able to contact you.

Students should bring in printed versions of the readings and reading notes to each class. You may also make notes on paper. Graduate students should have access to free printing via their departments. There are also locations on campus that allow students to print for free, though the page number is limited. If you do not have access to a printer, please talk with me the first day of class.

This is a seminar, not a lecture-based course. Seminars are a part of your development as a professional. They are integral to your transition from being a student who receives knowledge and information in classes to one engaged in constructive criticism and the production of knowledge.

Seminars are constructed in interaction, and the professor is more of a supervisor than a lecturer. I will provide a brief setup for some meetings and will try to provide an environment in which everyone feels comfortable participating, but responsibility for the seminar is borne collectively. The goal of this class is to learn by thinking, discussing and writing about issues of your interest.

This means that you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings, preferably with written comments and at least one question of your own. A rough guideline: everyone should speak at least once during each course meeting. If you feel uncomfortable speaking

in groups, please schedule a time to meet with me so that we can identify other ways for you to contribute to the collective knowledge building process.

The purpose of the seminar format is to provide:

- students with exposure to a variety of research projects and activities in order to enrich their academic experience.
- an opportunity for students to develop skills in presentation and discussion of research topics in a public forum.
- a space where students become active participants in contributing to the course and the direction it takes rather than being a passive receiver of information through lectures

In order to maintain a productive classroom environment for all, it is essential to listen carefully to others and to voice dissent in a respectful manner. Respect for your fellow students, your professor, and the educational process is expected at all times. If you tend to talk a lot, make sure it is not to the detriment of others who want to speak. Don't interrupt others. If someone who rarely speaks suddenly wants to voice their opinion, consider ceding the floor to them.

If you have questions about the seminar format and expectations, feel free to talk with me and/or review the following website: <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/core-programs/mentoring/mentor-memos/succeeding-in-a-graduate-seminar/>

Accommodations: Students may find themselves limited in their ability to accomplish course requirements for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to: autism, visible physical disability, non-visible physical disability or chronic illness, learning disability, mental illness, and bereavement processes. I aim to provide an inclusive and safe environment for all students and will work with the Disability Support Services and/or students to maintain an accessible and accommodating classroom. Disability Resource

Center facilitates accommodations for medically documented disabilities and is located at 0001 Building 0020-Reid Hall (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>; accessuf@dso.ufl.edu; Voice 352-392-8565; Fax, 352-392-8570).

You may also refer to the [“Get Started With the DRC”](#) webpage on the Disability Resource Center site.

Some students seeking disability accommodations may choose to do so through non-medical routes. I recognize potential barriers to seeking medical disability accommodations and will work with students seeking non-medical disability accommodations to specify a plan of action, if needed. Please notify me as soon as possible of any accommodation needs.

Health and Counseling: Health and counseling services are available for students in at the UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>; 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Student Names and Personal Pronouns: I will refer to students with the name and pronoun that feels best for them in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Affairs, <https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu/>.

Inclusivity Statement: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know

ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Excused Absence Policy: Excused absences include serious or contagious illnesses, personal or family emergencies, university-sponsored activities, or religious holidays that require your absence from campus. You may be asked to provide documentation verifying your absence. If you know about an excused absence ahead of time, as in the case of a university sponsored-activity or religious holiday, let me know as soon as possible. Absences due to vacations, optional doctor appointments (e.g. teeth cleaning), or to be a spectator at an event are NOT excused. All other absences will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Late Work and Extensions: If you know you will not be able to turn in the assignment on time, please notify me as early as possible. Extensions must be arranged in advance.

Grade Appeals: Grades will not be discussed via e-mail. If you have a question or a complaint about your grade, please contact me within 48 hours of posting to arrange a meeting time.

Course evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals.

Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via

<https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Use of AI Tools: This course permits you to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as chatbots, text generators, paraphrasers, summarizers, or solvers, to get guidance on assignments, as long as you do so in an ethical and responsible manner. Essentially, you can think of these tools as ways to help you learn but not to create work for assignments like discussion board posts, essays, presentation slides, and so on. AI is more like your tutor or TA, not a replacement for your independent thinking.

This means that you must:

- Not use AI tools to replace your own thinking or analysis or to avoid engaging with the course content.
- Cite or explain any AI tools you use. Provide the name of the AI tool, the date of access, the URL of the interface, and the specific prompt or query you used to generate the output.
- Be transparent and honest about how you used the AI tool and how it contributed to your assignment. Explain what you learned from the AI tool, how you verified its accuracy and reliability, how you integrated its output with your own work, and how you acknowledged its limitations and biases.

You are accountable for any mistakes or errors made by the AI tool. Always check and edit the output before submitting your work. If you discover any inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the output after submission, notify the instructor immediately and correct them as soon as possible.

Using AI tools in an unethical or irresponsible manner, such as copying or paraphrasing the output without citation or transparency, using the output as your own work without

verification or integration, or using the output to misrepresent your knowledge or skills, is considered a form of academic dishonesty and will result in a zero grade for the assignment and possible disciplinary action. If you have any questions about what constitutes ethical and responsible use of AI tools, please consult with the instructor before submitting your work.

Whenever using AI tools include a statement along with the assignment explaining how they were used.

Reading Notes – Students will upload reading notes for class after August 27. Reading notes must be uploaded before class. There is a 750-word minimum for undergraduate student reading notes and a 1,000-word minimum for graduate student reading notes. Reading notes should be uploaded as a Word document or PDF on Canvas. You should also bring a print copy to class. You will only receive credit for notes if you complete the assignment in a timely manner and critically engage with the texts. Each reading note is worth 2 points towards your final grade. You are allowed to miss one class session's reading notes without a grade penalty. Students who complete all reading notes will receive an additional 2 points toward their final grade.

Reading notes will be graded not only on timely submission, but also on engagement with the readings. Reading notes also help to prepare you for participation in each week's class discussion. Reading notes are not meant to summarize the texts we read. Instead think of them as a place to synthesize ideas, work through concepts, and develop your thoughts on each theory. As such, students may only use up to ~250 words of each reading note to summarize readings for the day. For the engagement portion of each reading note students must engage with specific portions and quotes from the text and avoid overly general comments and criticisms.

It is not necessary to engage with all assigned texts for the week. However, students must engage with at least two readings assigned for the week by putting them in dialogue with

each other. Students should also address in each reading note how at least one of the readings has shaped one of the three beliefs about crime and violence in Latin America you listed at the beginning of the semester.

Consider using these notes to evaluate the readings and think about how they may be useful for thinking about your own interests. You may also explore how readings from other class days speak to each other. Make sure to include your name and the class date and topic for which they are written on your reading notes!!!

Students are allowed to use Chat GPT to produce an outline for this assignment and summaries of the texts. The use of Chat GPT for anything else in the reading notes may result in an automatic F for all reading notes. I will periodically use prompts in Chat GPT to compare against reading notes and software that estimates the likelihood that AI was used to prepare an essay. I will meet with students whose reading notes suggest use of AI or Chat GPT before deciding whether to take further action.

Leading Class – Each student will lead class at least two times during the semester. Students will lead class in pairs of two. Leading class includes two essential elements. First, the students leading their respective class will send discussion questions to me by 11:45 AM the Tuesday before class. Second, class leaders will use their questions to direct discussion for most of the class session. Rather than seeing this as a “test” of your leadership or teaching skills, think about this component as the chance to discuss and dig into the parts of the readings that you find most interesting or problematic. We will arrange student groups the first week of class.

Class leaders may include up to three summarizing questions per reading. For example: “What are the three factors that the author proposes to explain why violence has increased in Latin America in the 21st century?” Class leaders may use Chat GPT or another AI

platform to come up with questions that ask students to summarize the readings. If AI platforms are used they must be cited.

Students are prohibited from using Chat GPT to come up with other discussion questions. These questions should interrogate, analyze, criticize, and engage with the readings. These include questions like:

- “Rodríguez and Torres put forward two explanations for why violence has increased in Colombia in the 21st century. Do these explanations fit well with other countries in the region?”
- “What do you think about Williams’s claim that neoliberalization is responsible for the privatization of security in Guatemala? What other factors might Williams be ignoring?”
- “How might we apply Goldstein and Arias’s concept of violent democracies to Gómez’s analysis of drug trafficking patterns in the region?”

There must be at least three questions each week that ask students to put one reading in dialogue either with other readings assigned for that week or other texts we have read previously.

I will lead class on September 3rd so that students have an example of how to complete the assignment.

Class Participation – This is a discussion-based class. Careful preparation for each of the seminars and informed contribution is expected. Always bring a print copy of that day’s readings to class, and come to the seminar with questions and ideas. Participation is necessary for students to identify which schools and theories they find most useful and learn how to defend these choices. Discussion, debate, and constructive criticism are all use helpful in this process. While I may lecture at the beginning of some classes, much more time will be spent discussing, evaluating, and criticizing the readings assigned for the

day. Classes will be much more beneficial if everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the readings, particularly in relation to your own research and interests. To receive credit your comments must demonstrate that you have done the assigned readings. Though I will not take class attendance, to receive credit you must be in class to participate. Your class participation grade also includes meaningful participation in the in-class oral defense. If you do not feel comfortable talking in a group setting see me on the first day of class to discuss alternative assignments to count toward your participation grade.

Life-history assignment: Over the course of the semester students will develop a paper based on materials from class and life history interviews they will conduct with individuals from a country in Latin America or with extensive experience in that country. Because interviews will focus on people's lived experience in a place, these interviews should not be conducted with country experts. The components of this assignment include:

- A one-paragraph proposal detailing the country you will focus on, access you have to individuals from that country or with experiences there, and the topics you are interested in addressing.
- The construction of an interview guide to conduct the life-history interview.
- Conducting at least two life history interviews.
- Submitting audio files and transcriptions of the conducted interviews. Students may use transcription software but should correct transcriptions while listening to the interview.
- Analyzing interview data.
- Submitting drafts of the paper for feedback over the course of the semester
- Submitting a final version of the paper at the end of the semester.

The final paper must adhere to the following guidelines:

- 12-15 pages (without references) for undergraduate students; 17-20 pages (without references) for graduate students

- Double-spaced
- 12 point, Times New Roman font
- Include page numbers
- ASA, APA, or Chicago style formatting for in-text citations and references

I will provide detailed handout on the life history assignments over the course of the semester, including what you are and are not allowed to do with AI tools.

This is most likely everyone's first experience conducting interviews and writing a paper based on those. Over the course of the semester we will work to become familiar with this type of writing and analysis. You will also be submitting different versions of the paper to me for feedback to help guide you in this process.

If you would like additional information on how to conduct life history interviews, check out the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program on campus: <https://oral.history.ufl.edu/>

Grading

Reading Notes	24
Leading Class	20
Class Participation	11
Life history assignment*	45
Total	100

*Note that this grade also reflects timely submission of materials related to this assignment over the semester as well as participation in workshoping these materials.

Grading Scale

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	79-82
C+	76-78
C	72-75
C-	69-71
D+	66-68
D	62-65
D-	59-61
E	58 and below

	All readings from required texts are indicated with three asterisks (***)
Aug. 27	Introduction to class • Review syllabus • Review course expectations • How to read for course • Arrange class leading groups • Go over concept mapping • Hand-written writing assignment: three beliefs about crime and violence in Latin America • Discuss class format for September 24, October 1, October 8 • AI and use of Chat GPT **Review structure of Everyday Violence in Central America for final paper
Sept. 3	Changes in crime and violence in Latin America • Arias, Desmond and Daniel Goldstein, Violent Pluralism: Understanding the New Democracies of Latin America

	• Grandin, Greg. Living in Revolutionary Time: Coming to Terms with the Violence of Latin America's Long Cold War • Sutton, Barbara. Women, State Terror, and Collective Memory **Submit one-paragraph proposal for final paper assignment
Sept. 10	21st Century crime and violence • Auyero, Javier. The Political Makings of the 2001 Lootings in Argentina • Barnes, Nick and Desmond Arias. Crime and plural orders in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil • Hanson, Rebecca. Securing the Revolution, Part I • Monárrez Fragoso, Julia Estela. The Victims of Ciudad Juárez Feminicide: Sexually Fetishized Commodities **Review life history instrument structure
Sept. 17	Geopolitics • Huggins, Martha K. U.S.-Supported Terror: A History of Police Training in Latin America • Sanford, Victoria. Learning to Kill by Proxy • Schrader, Stuart. The Imperial Circuit of Tear Gas • Wolf, Sonja. The Making of Central America's Street Gangs **Bring life history interview instruments to class to workshop **Submit life history interview instruments for feedback at end of class
Sept. 24	State capacity • Centeno, Miguel. Blood and Debt, Chapter 1 • Karl, Terry. The Perils of the Petro-State: Reflections on the Paradox of Plenty • Schwartz, Rachel. Civil War, Institutional Change, and the Criminalization of the State: Evidence from Guatemala **Review qualitative coding in class
Oct. 1	Democratization and violence • Cruz, José Miguel. Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State • Davis, Dianne. Undermining the Rule of Law: Democratization and the Dark Side of Police Reform in Mexico

	Trejo, Guillermo and Sandra Ley. Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence **predemocratization **Practice qualitative coding in class
Oct. 8	Economics and violence - Bergman, Marcelo. More Money, More Crime. Chapters 4-5*** - Herrera, Joel. Cultivating Violence: Trade Liberalization, Illicit Labor, and the Mexican Drug Trade - Villareal, Ana. Defending San Pedro **Submit audio files and interview transcriptions before class
Oct. 15	Sex work Rivers Moore, Megan. Gringo Gulch: Sex, Tourism, and Social Mobility in Costa Rica. Chapters 1-4***
Oct. 22	Drug trafficking - Kronick, Dorothy. Profits and Violence in Illegal Markets: Evidence from Venezuela - Lessing, Ben. Logics of Violence in Criminal War - Snyder, Richard and Angélica Duran-Martinez. Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets. **Concept mapping and fentanyl production
Oct. 29	Land conflicts, environmental activism, and violence - Bliss, Moira. Criminalizing Environmental Activism - Edelman, Marc and Andrés León. Cycles of Land Grabbing in Central America: An Argument for History and a Case Study in the Bajo Aguán, Honduras - International Crisis Group. A Curse of Gold: Mining and Violence in Venezuela's South - Kay, Cristóbal. Reflections on rural violence in Latin America ** Concept mapping and land conflicts in your country of interest

Nov. 5	Citizenship and cities of fear • Hanson, Rebecca. Malandros Uniformados. • Vargas, João Costa, and Jaime Amparo Alves. Geographies of Death: An Intersectional Analysis of Police lethality and the Racialized Regimes of Citizenship in São Paulo • Villareal, Ana. Logistics of Fear • Zubillaga, Verónica. Everyone's Armed Here: Guns and Lethal Reactivity in a Caracas Barrio **Submit outline of paper for feedback before class
Nov. 12	Responses to crime and violence: La mano dura • Blair, Robert et al. Mano Dura: An Experimental Evaluation of Military Policing in Cali, Colombia • Denyer Willis, Graham. The Disappearable Subject • Hanson, Rebecca. Caiga quien Caiga: Systematic Killing in Maduro's Venezuela • Holland, Alisha. Right on Crime? Conservative Party Politics and Mano Dura Policies in El Salvador **Workshop papers in class for peer feedback
Nov. 19	Responses to crime and violence: Pacts • Brotherton, David and Rafael Gude. Social Control and the Gang: Lessons from the Legalization of Street Gangs in Ecuador • Cruz, José Miguel and Angélica Durán Martínez. Hiding Violence to Deal with the State: Criminal Pacts in El Salvador and Medellin • Phelan, Alexandra and Jacqui True. Navigating Gender in Elite Bargains: Women's Movements and the Quest for Inclusive Peace in Colombia Paz Total review, in class • What is the total peace plan in Colombia? • What is the backdrop and what are the predecessors of the total peace plan? • What have been the outcomes of this plan? Why?
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving, No CLASS
Dec. 3	Responses and Resistance

	• Ley, Sandra et al. Indigenous Resistance to Criminal Governance: Why Regional Ethnic Autonomy Institutions Protect Communities from Narco Rule in Mexico • Moncada, Eduardo. Chapter 3: Everyday Resistance • Quintela, Débora and Flávia Biroli. Activism, Justice and the Centrality of Care: Brazilian's 'Mother's Against Police Violence' Movements • Zubillaga, Verónica et al. Micropolitics in a Caracas Barrio: The Political Survival Strategies of Mothers in a Context of Armed Violence
Dec. 10	Submit final paper by 5:00pm