

University of Florida
Center for Latin American Studies/ Department of Political Science
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Politics of Puerto Rico (POS 4931/LAS 4935)

Course Description

This course will offer an examination of the development of politics in Puerto Rico from the late 19th century to the present. This course will focus mostly on the politics in Puerto Rico covering topics such as party politics, social movements, sports, urbanism, colonialism, and debt. It will also discuss certain relevant elements that were and are part of the Puerto Rican diaspora.

Course Objectives

Students will debate the common themes of Puerto Rican politics; analyze how the field of political science has contributed to the understanding of Puerto Rico. Also, students will analyze the contributions from other fields that have tried to address power dynamics in Puerto Rico.

About the Syllabus

Based on the composition of the class, our progress discussing these issues, elements beyond our control, and student needs, this syllabus is flexible and may change. Throughout the semester, you will be notified of any changes that might emerge. During the first day of class the professor will read and explain this syllabus at length. It is the student's responsibility to understand the requirements for this class and asking all the appropriate questions about this document to the professor. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalogue.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance>.

Readings

The assigned texts are required and available at the UF Bookstore. It will be our source of discussion and used extensively. In addition, during the course the professor will offer required readings that will be available on our Canvas page identified by a C. This syllabus is a living document, and in case of changes in the readings students will be properly notified.

Class Texts

Required

Ayala, César and Rafael Bernabe (2007). *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History Since 1898*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Trías Monge, José (1999). *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Texts for Papers

Domenech, Ligia. (2025). *US According to Them*. Oxford: University of Mississippi Press.

Esterich, Carmelo. (2018). *Concrete and Countryside*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Writing Requirements and Grade

The grade will be based on a first short paper (20 points), a mid-term examination (20 points), second short paper (20 points), reaction papers (10 points), second examination (20 points), attendance (5 points), participation (5 points).

Reaction Papers (10 points)

Class members will be asked to submit via Canvas 490-500 words, single spaced- reaction paper every Tuesday and Thursday before class (unless told otherwise by the professor). The reaction paper should not be a summary of the readings, but instead it should: *ask probing questions, propose what might come next, compare or contrast this reading or concepts to another paper or concepts we have discussed in class, highlight important implications of the work for understanding Politics of Puerto Rico*. The rubric and specific details will be made available on Canvas. The grade scale for this assignment is 0 points for papers that were not submitted, 1 point for a satisfactory submission and 2 points for a remarkable submission. The professor will randomly grade six weeks, and out of those six reactions papers the five papers with the best grades will be used to calculate your grade. Papers that are not submitted through Canvas will be penalized. Please familiarize yourself with Canvas.

Two Four Page Papers (20 + 20= 40 points)

Students will read one of the books (see above) and address the question offered by the professor. This four-page, double-spaced paper should have a total of 980-1,000 words. The assignment will rely only on the selected book as a source.

Midterm Exam (20 points)

The mid-term will be held during class hours. Blue books will be required, and the student is expected to complete the exam during the exam period.

Second Exam (20 points)

The second exam will be held during class hours. Blue books will be required, and the student is expected to complete the exam during the exam period. will be take home or in class.

Participation (5 points)

Students are expected to attend and be active components of the class and discussion. It is expected that by the end of the semester all students have participated by offering quality contributions. The rubric for participation will be posted on our Canvas page. Participation in our class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited. If you do not feel comfortable by participating in class feel free to send me an email with your thoughts to casuarez@ufl.edu.

Attendance (5 points)

The professor will take attendance using Canvas. Students are therefore allowed three absences from days of class without penalty. Four absences will see a three-point penalty out of five points. Five or more absences will lead to 0 points for the attendance grade. A student who leaves the class before it is over will not be considered as present in terms of attendance. Written evidence will be required to justify absences. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of their number of absences during the semester. If a student has any questions about their attendance on a particular day, this issue should be brought up in writing no later than the following class. Students that are late will be marked as such, and three recorded late arrivals will be counted as one absence.

Grade scale

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	59 and below

The Canvas grade book will be updated as class assignments are graded. Please note that the grade book does not include the grades for Participation and Attendance.

On Timeliness

Students are expected to turn in their assigned work on time through Canvas, not email. If a student is not able to turn in their work on time through Canvas they will have offer written evidence in order to justify the tardiness. If said evidence is not produced one letter grade will be deducted per day after due date.

Academic Honesty

An important component in academic work is recognizing one's work as well as others. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not allowed. **Any violations of the academic honesty policy will be vigorously pursued. All students are expected to adhere scrupulously to the University policy concerning academic honesty.** In order to respect

this principle, students are expected to abide by the Academic Honesty Policy. A copy of the Academic Honesty Policy can be found in the following link, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the policy. Following these guidelines will assure that original academic work will be recognized and celebrated.

Concerns with a Grade

In the case that a student disagrees with a grade that concern should be presented in writing. This statement should be handed in writing the next class day after receiving your grade. The merits of the concern will be evaluated taking into consideration how deeply the student is thinking about the subject at hand, and whether or not this student can provide textual evidence to justify their claim. After careful evaluation, I will notify the student about my decision and adjust the grade accordingly if applicable.

Incompletes

Students who have not completed the required class work will only be evaluated by the work that was turned in by the day it was due. Incompletes will only be awarded under exceptional circumstances. Incompletes will be given when students comply with the following conditions, (1) notifying the professor two weeks prior to the last day of class, (2) providing written evidence for the medical condition, or situation that has prompted the student to request an incomplete. The student and professor should agree upon a proper arrangement on how the missing work will be submitted. The student will have the following semester as the time period to complete the missing work; failure to do so will result in an E.

Accommodations

Testing accommodations and other needs will be addressed for students with proper documentation. Please make sure to inform me of these needs in writing during the first week of class. Retroactive accommodations will not be considered. In case of questions about Disability Resource Center feel free to contact them at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Classroom interaction

Respect is always required. Textual evidence is crucial when engaging in intelligent academic debates. Please make use of this tool when elaborating your arguments in the classroom. Refrain from comments that are not related to class discussion. Unauthorized video or audio recording of the class is not allowed. The use of cell phones is prohibited; laptops will be allowed until disruptive to the class. The topics we discuss in this course may be controversial and may touch upon deeply-held positions or beliefs held by you or your classmates. While I want to encourage open discussion, I also encourage you to consider how your interventions affect others. How we say something is often even more important than what we say; if you are struggling with how to articulate your questions or reactions to the readings please inform the professor.

Course evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Course Outline

I. Introduction (1/13)

Review course syllabus

II. The Spanish Colonial Period (1/15)

Readings: Trías Monge, Ch. 1.

III. 1898 and its political context (1/20)

Readings: Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 1.

IV. American Colonization (1/22-2/12)

A. Military Period

Readings: Trías Monge, Chs. 2 and 3; Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 2.

B. Economic and Political Changes

Reading: Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 3; Trías Monge, Chs. 4, 5 and 6.

C. Health as colonialism

Reading: Trujillo-Pagán, *Worms as a Hook for Colonizing Puerto Rico*. C

D. Early Political Resistance

Readings: Trías Monge, Chs. 7 and 8.

E. Everyday Life

Readings: Loveman and Muñiz, *How Puerto Rico became White*; Truman Clark, *Prohibition in Puerto Rico: 1917-1937* C. Brian Marein, *Economic development in Puerto Rico after US annexation: Anthropometric evidence*.

First Paper Question Distributed (1/29)

V. The 1930s-1940s (2/17-2/24)

A. Political Discontent

Readings: Ayala and Bernabe, Chs. 5 and 6; Trías Monge, Ch. 8.

B. Political suppression of political dissidents

Reading: Atilés-Osoria, *Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico* C.

VI. Rise of the PPD

Readings: Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 7, Trías Monge, Ch. 9.

VII. A New Constitution

Readings: Trías Monge, Ch. 10, Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 8.

First Paper Due (2/12)

VIII. Industrialization and Operation Bootstrap (2/26-3/3)

Readings: Ayala and Bernabe, Ch. 9; Padín, *Puerto Rico in the Post War* C.

IX. The Suburbanization of Puerto Rico (3/5-3/24)

A. Urban sprawl and the impact to agriculture

Readings: Sebastián Martinuzzi (et.al.), *Land development, land use, and urban sprawl in Puerto Rico* C; Thomas K. Rudel, Marla Pérez-Lugo, Heather Zichal, *When Fields Revert to Forest* C; Mignucci, *Modern Urbanism in Puerto Rico*. C

B. Natural Resources

Readings: Fain, *Climate Change and Coffee* C; González-Mejía and Ma, *The Emergent Perspective* C; Massol, *Moving from protest to proposition* C, Díaz, *The Right to Food* C.

C. Public Housing

Readings: Dinzey-Flores, *Temporary Housing, Permanent Communities* C; Fusté, *Colonial laboratories, irreparable subjects* C.

Mid Term Exam (3/12)

X. End of PPD Dominance (3/26)

Readings: Melendez, *Road to collapse* C; Dietz, *Puerto Rico in the 1970's and 1980's* C.

XI. The Status Question (3/31)

Readings: Trías Monge, Chs. 11-15; Wagner, *The Politics of Evasion* C; Denis Rosario, *Perpetual Colony* C.

Second Paper Question Distributed (3/26)

XII. The 1980s-1990s (4/2-4/7)

A. Socioeconomic and urban changes

Readings: Denton Villarrubia, *Residential Segregation on the Island* C; Suárez Carrasquillo, *Gated Communities and City Marketing* C.

B. Gender and Politics

Readings: Padilla et.al. *Embodiment, Gender Transitioning, and Necropolitics among Transwomen in Puerto Rico* C; Lebrón, *Policing Coraje* C; Lisa G. Materson, *Gender, Generation, and Women's Independence Organizing in Puerto Rico* C.

C. Military Presence

Readings: Davies et. al., *Military Pollution* C; Guzmán, *Evaluating Conservation Attitudes* C.

Second Paper Due (4/9)

XIII. The 21st Century (4/9)

A. Debt, Austerity Policies

Readings: Caballero and Lara, *Deindustrialization and Unsustainable debt in Middle Income Countries* C; Quiñones and Seda, *The Political Economy of Contemporary Puerto Rico* C; Crandall, *Blockchains and the "Chains of Empire"* C.

B. Promesa (4/14)

Readings: Meléndez, *The Politics of PROMESA*, Cabán, Pedro *Puerto Rico and PROMESA: Reaffirming Colonialism* C; Falcón, *Colonial reparations for Puerto Rico* C.

C. Health Disparities (4/16)

Readings: Caraballo and Godreau, *Colorism and Health Disparities* C; Varas and Rodríguez, *Beyond Financial Incentives* C; Lerman, *¿Qué sistema de salud?* C, Matos, Aging and the left behind C.

Second Exam TBA