

**PSCI 3205A**  
**Mexican Politics**

Tuesdays 11:35 am to 2:25 pm

Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Laura Macdonald  
Office: Room C669 Loeb Building  
Office Hours: Mondays 2:30 to 4:30 pm (on Brightspace – see signup sheet). Or email me to arrange an in-person meeting at another time or day  
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**Course Objectives:**

- To analyse the historical development of Mexican politics;
- To analyse the political institutions and actors of contemporary Mexican politics;
- To evaluate the economic, political, and social challenges facing Mexico in the coming years;
- To analyse Mexico's relationship with the United States and Canada and its position in the North American region.

**Course Description:**

The purpose of the course is to provide an introduction to contemporary Mexican politics. We will examine the evolution of the country's political institutions, as well as the transformation of the country's economy and how these changes affect the lives of ordinary Mexicans. We will also focus on how Mexico interacts with the international system (particularly the influence of the United States). We will cover such issues as historical development, market reforms, the operations of the traditional authoritarian system and how it has been democratised, the development of the party system, indigenous and women's rights, migration, and Mexico's long-lasting drug war. While the course focuses on one country, the issues we discuss are of relevance to students interested in other regions, particularly in the Global South.

This is an exciting year in Mexico's political system. The current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (or AMLO), was elected in 2018 with a mandate to carry out a fundamental transformation of the country's political and economic systems. A left-leaning populist, his style of politics represent an important turning point in Mexican politics. AMLO's six-year term is ending in 2024 and candidates from his party, Morena, and the opposition (a coalition of three parties, PAN, PRI and PRD) are jockeying to replace him. The external environment continues to be challenging. Former US President Donald Trump engaged in various forms of intimidation and pressure on Mexico, including forcing the re-negotiation of NAFTA, the threat to build a wall at the US-Mexico border, and threats to increase tariffs if Mexico did not act to restrict Central American migrants travelling through Mexico from claiming asylum in the United

States. With the election of Biden, external pressure has eased in some ways, but the U.S. continues to engage in protectionist policies and to contain migrants from reaching the U.S. border. Mexico also suffered heavy losses from COVID-19, which has revealed many of the country's inequalities and institutional weaknesses. High levels of violence and human rights violations persist, despite the current president's promises to restructure the system to reduce violence. This course provides fascinating insight into the factors behind these events. **Previous knowledge of Mexican politics is not required. The course is designed to be highly topical so short readings and guest speakers may be added in response to current events.**

**Format:** This is a lecture class, but class participation is an essential part of the class. The first part of every class will begin with a lecture, to be followed by a video, guest lecture, group discussion and/or group presentations. **Student participation based on faithful reading of the required texts is essential.**

**Classroom courtesy:** Out of respect for all of those in class, all cell phones, pagers, and any other noisemaking devices must be turned OFF during the entire class period. Laptop computers may be used in class provided they do not distract those around you. Please do not use your laptop for non-academic purposes during class. I reserve the right to ask you to turn off and put away your computer if it is creating a disruption.

**Course Materials:** Course materials are available online through the course's Brightspace site. Please advise the instructor immediately if you encounter difficulties in obtaining the course materials.

There is one **required** text for this course, which will be available through Haven Books. Haven Books is located at 43 Seneca Street. See this site for information on purchasing textbooks: <https://www.shophaven.ca>

The required text is:

Emily Edmonds-Poli and David A. Shirk, *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020, **4th edition.**

I will also regularly share news articles on current events in Mexico.

**Evaluation:**

Students will be evaluated on the following basis:

Class participation and attendance:	15%
6 quizzes (on-line – I will drop the lowest mark of the 6)	15%
Group Presentation and report	10%
Final research essay (10-12 pages - due on-line <b>December 1<sup>st</sup></b> )	30%
Final exam (will take in person place during formal exam period, December 10 to 22. Do not schedule travel during this period. Exam schedule will be available October 6 <sup>th</sup> .)	30%

See more detailed discussion of requirements below.

### **Late Policy**

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the course outline. **Late papers will be subject to a penalty of 2% a day.** Please let me know in advance if you have a justifiable reason for an extension.

### **\*Policies on Assignments:**

All assignments in this course (with the exception of the single-space annotation) must be 12 pt font, double-spaced and have standard one-inch margins. They should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. They must include appropriate citations and bibliography. Assignments that do not have any citations from academic sources will be returned to the student ungraded. Students will be permitted to re-submit the paper, within a specified deadline, but an automatic 10% penalty will be levied.

### **Generative AI and this course (adapted from Peter Andree's course outline)**

Generative Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, Jasper, GPT, Google's Bard, Bing AI, etc.) are powerful new tools that can be helpful to social science researchers. However, the quality and validity of outputs from these tools varies considerably. Further, students in this course are being trained, in part, to think critically, and to strengthen their own writing skills.

For this course, students are expected to do their own research and write the entirety of their own assignments. Generative AI can be used as a guide to new topics, but no more. Students may use Generative AI tools to better understand topics at a general level, and to help them identify sources they may not have known about, much as one might use Wikipedia. As with Wikipedia, the validity of which also varies, text written by Generative AI tools should not be copied into a student's assignment, or even quoted from directly.

Instead, students should find and work from original sources to inform their papers, and then cite those original sources in their list of references cited.

The instructor reserves the right to ask students to submit evidence of their own research (e.g. rough notes, screenshots of reference sources, etc.) and to participate in an oral defense of any submitted assignment.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 – September 12<sup>th</sup> - Introductions**

Flavour of current politics in Mexico:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Vo7z3o4shds>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZeticWHWEQ>

## **Week 2 – September 19 - An Overview of Mexican History**

Guest speaker : Gerardo Familiar Ferrer  
Anthropologist and International Liaison Chief Executive, UNAM Canada (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

Required:  
Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, chapters 1 and 2.

Colby Ristow, “The Mexican Revolution,” in William Beezley, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Mexican History*, 2020.

Video: “A People's History of the Mexican Revolution, La Revolución Mexicana”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6olifItvePo>

For those with extra interest in the revolution, this is a longer, more detailed documentary (not required):

“The Storm that Swept Mexico,” PBS video available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVWcgOcvgV0>.

## **Week 3 – September 26<sup>th</sup> – The “Perfect Dictatorship” – Mechanisms of Semi-Authoritarian Rule**

Guest speaker: His Excellency Carlos Manuel Joaquín González, ambassador of Mexico to Canada (To be confirmed)

Required:  
Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, Chapter 3

## **Quiz 1 – September 29<sup>th</sup>**

## **Week 4 – October 3 – Mexican Political Economy - From Economic Nationalism to Neoliberalism**

Required:  
Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, chapter 10

Hepzibah Muñoz Martínez, *Uneven Landscapes of Violence: Geographies of Law and Accumulation in Mexico*, Introduction and Chapter 2 (pp. 1-50)

## **Quiz 2 – October 6<sup>th</sup>**

## **Week 5 – October 10 – Democratization, Human Rights, Civil Society**

Required:

Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, Chapters 4, 9

Peter H. Smith, "Mexican democracy in comparative perspective," in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 77-97.

To be viewed in class: Video: "Lupita: the indigenous activist leading a new generation of Mexican women," *The Guardian*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTEwhoC0CKY>

**Recommended:**

Amnesty International Annual Report Mexico 2022, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/americas/north-america/mexico/report-mexico/>

Alma Guillermoprieto, "Mexico, The Murder of the Young" in *New York Review of Books*, January 8, 2015. You can register for a free account to read this article: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2015/01/08/mexico-murder-young/>

**Week 6 – October 17<sup>th</sup> – Political Parties and Elections**

**Required:**

Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, Chapters 5, 6, 7

**Quiz 3 – October 20<sup>th</sup>**

**October 24<sup>th</sup> - No class FALL BREAK**

**Week 7 – October 31<sup>st</sup> (Día de Muertos!) – Poverty and Human Rights**

**GROUP 1 PRESENTS**

**Required:**

Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, Chapter 11.

Aidé Tassinari, "Territorial Dispossession in Mexico: Mining and the New Latifundism," *Latin American Perspectives*, 50:2, 2023, 151–165.

**Week 8 – November 7<sup>th</sup> –AMLO and the MORENA government**

**GROUP 2 PRESENTS**

**Required:**

Verónica Silva, "A New Dawn or a False Hope for Mexico's Left? Overcoming Neoliberal Legacies in an Uncertain World," 50:2, 2023, 4-14.

Mariano Sánchez-Talanquer and Kenneth F. Greene, "Is Mexico Falling into the Authoritarian Trap?" *Journal of Democracy*, 32: 4, 2021, 56-71.

Nick Burns, "Mexico's Opposition Searches for a Winning Message," *Americas Quarterly*, November 11, 2021, Accessible at: <https://americasquarterly.org/article/mexicos-opposition-searches-for-a-winning-message/>

#### **Quiz 4 – November 10<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Week 9 –November 14<sup>th</sup> – Gender and Ethnicity**

#### **GROUP 3 PRESENTS**

##### **Required:**

Jennifer M. Piscopo, "Leveraging Informality, Rewriting Informal Rules: The Implementation of Gender Parity in Mexico," in Georgina Waylen, *Gender and Informal Rules*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Holly Michelle Worthen, "Rights to the rescue? The promotion of Indigenous women's political-electoral rights and the rise of the Mexican security state," *Political Geography* 85, 2021.

Stephania Taladrid, "Mexico's historic step toward legalizing abortion," *The New Yorker*, October 28, 2021, Accessed at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/mexicos-historic-step-toward-legalizing-abortion>

##### **Recommended:**

Shannon Speed, "Rights at the Intersection: Gender and Ethnicity in Neoliberal Mexico," in Shannon Speed et al, eds, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn M. Stephen, *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 203-221.

Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, "Indigenous Rights, AMLO's Wrongs," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 53:2, 2021, 118-120.

Annie Wilkinson, "Gender as Death Threat to the Family: How the 'Security Frame' Shapes Anti-Gender Activism in Mexico." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23, no. 4 (August 8, 2021): 535–57. doi:10.1080/14616742.2021.1957974.

#### **Week 10 –November 21<sup>st</sup> – Mexico-US relations and NAFTA/USMCA**

#### **GROUP 4 PRESENTS**

##### **Required:**

Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, Chapter 13.

Isidro Morales, "The shaky understanding between Mexico and the United States under the López Obrador administration: Will it be normalized?" *Latin American Policy*, 11:1, 175-187.

Jana Silverman and Laura Macdonald, "Labor Politics of the New Pink Tide in Brazil and Mexico" *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 55:1, 2023, 57-66.

**Recommended:**

Kathleen Staudt, "How NAFTA has changed Mexico," *Current History*. 117, 2018, 43-48.

Rebecca Watts (2019) NAFTA in the Time of AMLO, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 51:1, 9-12.

Gustavo Flores-Macías and Mariano Sánchez-Talanquer, "The Political Economy of NAFTA/USMCA," *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1662>

**Quiz 5 – November 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 11 – November 28<sup>th</sup> – Drug Wars and the Rule of Law**

**FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>**

**Required:**

Edmonds-Poli and Shirk, chapter 12.

Joel Salvador Herrera, "Cultivating Violence: Trade Liberalization, Illicit Labor, and the Mexican Drug Trade," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 61:3 August 2019.

Video: "World's Most Wanted," BBC, Film on Demand:

[http://fod.infobase.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/p\\_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=115662](http://fod.infobase.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=115662)

**Recommended:**

Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley Gutiérrez, "Why did drug cartels go to war in Mexico? Subnational party alternation, the breakdown of criminal protection, and the onset of large-scale violence," *Comparative Political Studies*, 51:7, 2018, 900–938.

**Week 12 –December 5<sup>th</sup> - Migration and Border Politics**

**GROUP 5 PRESENTS**

Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the 'Illegal Alien' and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*, New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 1-37.

David FitzGerald and Rafael Alarcón, "Migration: Policies and Politics," in Peter H. Smith and Andrew Selee, eds., *Mexico and the United States: The Politics of Partnership*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press, 2013.

Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera and Kathleen Blair Schaefer, “Notes on a perilous journey to the United States: Irregular migration, trafficking in persons, and organized crime,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, 64:3, 2021, 142-160.

**Recommended:**

Film: *Sin Fronteras*, Films on Demand (streamed through Carleton library), Item #139952

**Quiz 6 – December 8<sup>th</sup>**

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**Evaluation Guidelines:**

**A. Participation (15%):** Online/in person attendance in both lectures and tutorial groups is crucial for students to succeed in the course. **It is essential to do the required readings before the classes (which take place on Wednesdays) and quizzes (which take place on Fridays).** Participation can take the form of comments or questions relevant to the course materials. Your participation will be graded based on the frequency of your comments and questions, and how prepared you are for the discussion. I may call on people if you don't volunteer to participate. I will keep track of your attendance, which will count for 25% of your total participation grade. To facilitate discussion while we are in an on-line environment I will either divide the class into two groups and spend 45 minutes with each group in turn, or use breakout groups.

**B. 6 quizzes (15% total):**

There will be **6 short quizzes** throughout the term to test your knowledge and understanding of course content, including lectures, readings, class discussions and group presentations. The quizzes will contain a mixture of multiple choice and short-answer questions. Your final grade will be based on your best results in 5 of them (the grades on the bottom one will be dropped or you can just write 5 if you are confident in your ability – I don't recommend doing this!). The quizzes will occur on Fridays and will cover course content from the period since the previous quiz (or since the beginning of term in the case of the first quiz).

Each quiz will contain a set of 5-7 questions, based on readings and lectures. You should be able to complete the whole quiz in 15-20 minutes. You can use your notes, lecture powerpoints and readings when answering the quiz. You will be able to access the quiz during a 13 hour window. **Once you access the quiz, you have 20 minutes to complete it.** I recommend strongly that you complete all readings and attend all recorded lectures before starting the quiz.

**The dates for the quizzes are: September 29<sup>th</sup>, October 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, November 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and December 8<sup>th</sup>. Quiz dates are listed above in the course outline. The quizzes will be open for 13 hours between 9 a.m. and 10 pm on these dates.**



- C. Group Presentation (10%) Dates of Presentations and group memberships will be arranged during the second class. You should come to the second class with your top two selections for topics. The first presentation will be on October 31<sup>st</sup>. See course schedule for other presentation dates (the presentation schedule may change depending on the number of people in the class)**

The group will be evaluated based on: success in covering diverse aspects of the issue under discussion; research; communication skills, and success in stimulating class participation in discussion. Your grade for this assignment will be based on a combination of three factors: grade for individual presentation; group mark, and group members' evaluation of their fellow group members (you will be asked to submit a grade for each of your fellow group members based on their contribution to the group effort, this evaluation will be confidential). I encourage you to be creative in designing a dynamic group presentation – you may want to consider using a debate format, powerpoints, multimedia, game show format, and/or handouts. **Speakers should not just read their presentations** but present material in an interesting fashion with lots of eye contact! But you should also ensure that you provide a thorough analysis of the issues under discussion.

**Written Summary:**

Each group member is also required to submit a two-page summary (double-spaced) of their own oral presentation. This summary is due in the same class as your presentation. **This summary will not be evaluated separately**, it will help me assign a grade for your oral presentation.

- D. Final Research Paper (30%)**

**Due Date: December 1<sup>st</sup>, to be submitted online**

**Length:** 10-12 pages, 12-point font, one inch margins.

**Topic:** You will write a research paper based on a topic related to the course material. I would **strongly recommend** that you discuss the topic for your paper with me in person.

**Marking:** The paper will be marked on three criteria:

**Argument, organization and logic.** Is the thesis presented in a logical and convincing manner?

**Research and use of evidence:** Does the paper contain extensive and effective use of available research sources? Does it contain proper footnotes/endnotes and bibliographic style? As this is an academic paper in an upper year course, you must include references to at least six academic articles. Failure to do this will result in a grade of D or lower.

**Communication:** Is the paper organized and written as clearly and concisely as possible?

**Citation Style:** You may use any recognized academic citation style as long as you are consistent and correct in your use of that style.

**Use of AI:** see discussion of this at the beginning of this course outline.

- E. Final Exam (30%)** – The final exam will be written during the university's exam period, December 10-22. It will consist of a mixture of short answer and essay questions. The total length will be 3 hours. It will cover the entire term.

## Appendix

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### **Student Mental Health**

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

**Emergency Resources (on and off campus):** <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

- **Carleton Resources:**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

- **Off Campus Resources:**

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy accommodation:** Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

**Religious accommodation:** Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

***Accommodations for students with disabilities:*** If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation, or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, reach out to your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, [click here](#).

***Accommodation for student activities:*** Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and to the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who engage in student activities at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more information, please [click here](#).

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: [students.carleton.ca/course-outline](http://students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

### **Sexual Violence Policy**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated. Survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](http://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) addresses academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's academic integrity rules.

### ***Plagiarism***

The Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper

citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- Submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

### ***Use of Artificial Intelligence***

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course, any use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) is considered a violation of academic integrity standards.

### ***Procedures in Cases of Suspected Violations***

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy are serious offences which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. When an instructor suspects a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the assignment/exam in question or a final grade of "F" for the course. More information on the University's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

### **Intellectual property**

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).