

Sociology 940
Social inequality in 21st Century Latin America:
Class, Gender and Race in comparative perspective.
Fall 2026

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Thursdays 10-12.30

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Latin America is undergoing yet another round of economic adjustment and fiscal austerity, accompanied by a renewed dependence on extractive and service-based economies. In a rapidly changing world marked by technological change, wars, and extreme political and economic instability, it is essential to update our understanding of the main mechanisms of social inequality, as well as how people across the region are organizing in response to these challenges.

After an initial overview of contemporary politics, economy, and society, we will spend the rest of the seminar examining patterns of inequality in different countries, including Argentina, Chile, México, Perú, Brasil and Colombia; among others. Each week, we will focus on one country through a research-based book or a substantial selection of readings. Each case will highlight a particular dimension of structural inequality as well as a movement of resistance or social change associated with it.

The course is designed to foster an in-depth discussion of each country, its specific patterns of inequality, and the forms of resistance and social change that emerge in response. Although the course addresses different forms of resistance, its primary focus is on urban-based movements in which social class plays a central articulating role. Students should be prepared to read approximately 80-100 pages per week and actively participate in class discussions. In addition, students will give an in-class presentation and write a 15–20-page research paper on a Latin American country of their choice or a book review of a recent book on the topic.

Web resources

All reading materials will be available as PDF files in this Google Drive [folder](#)

Week 1 (September 3rd)

Latin America today: Political Cycles, Economic Crises and Social Struggles.

Auyero, Javier. (2024). *Portraits of Persistence : Inequality and Hope in Latin America*. Chapters: Introduction and your selection of three chapters.

Kapiszewski, Diana, Steven Levitsky, and Deborah Yashar (eds.) (2021), *The Inclusionary Turn: Democracy and Citizenship in Latin America*. Chapter selection: Introduction, 2.

Week 2 (September 10th)

Class power and Social Change in Chile.

Pérez Ahumada, Pablo (2023). *Building power to shape labor policy: unions, employee associations, and reform in neoliberal Chile*. Chapter selectoin: Intro, 1, 2, 3 and 6.

Additional reading:

Rossi, F.M., Somma, N.M. & Donoso, S. (2026) Defining and Explaining Modes of Protestng: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of Argentina and Chile. *St Comp Int Dev* (2025).

Week 3 (September 17th)

Class, Gender and Race in the Latin American Household.

Maich, Katherine Eva. (2025). *Bringing Law Home : Gender, Race, and Household Labor Rights*. Chapter selection: 1, 2, 3, 6 and Methodological Appendix.

Additional reading:

Barrenechea, Rodrigo and Alberto Vergara. "Peru: The Danger of Powerless Democracy." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 34 no. 2, 2023, p. 77-89.

Casanova, Erynn Masi (2019) *Dust and Dignity: Domestic Employment in Contemporary Ecuador*.

Week 4 (September 24th)

Worker Revolution in Argentina: Recovered Enterprises.

Sobering, Katherine. 2022. *The People's Hotel: Working for Justice in Argentina*.
Chapter selection: tbd.

Additional reading:

Goddard, V. (2006). "This Is History": Nation and Experience in Times of Crisis—
Argentina 2001. *History and Anthropology*, 17(3), 267–286.

Week 5 (October 1st)

Class, Race and Gender in Mexico

Carolyn Bank Muñoz (2008). *Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender and Shop Floor
Politics in Mexico and the United States*.

Additional reading:

Tbd.

Week 6. (October 8th)

The Feminist Wave in Latin America.

Barbara Sutton and Nayla Luz Vacarezza. (2021). *Abortion and democracy :
contentious body politics in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay*. Chapter selection: tbd.

Week 7. (October 15th)

Informality and Class in Latin America I: Precarious Hegemony in Lula's Brasil.

Braga, Ruy (2017) *The Politics of the Precariat: From Populism to Lulista Hegemony*.
Chapter Selection: tbd.

Additional reading:

Tbd.

Week 8. (October 22nd)

**Informality and Class in Latin America II: Working class segmentation and union
activism in Argentina.**

Elbert, R. (2026). *Informality, Class and Union Activism in Latin America*. Routledge.

Additional reading:

Kapiszewski, Diana, Steven Levitsky, and Deborah Yashar (eds.) (2021), *The Inclusionary Turn: Democracy and Citizenship in Latin America*.

Rosaldo, M. (2024). Top-Down and Bottom-Up Formalization: Waste Pickers' Struggles for Labor Rights in São Paulo and Bogotá. *ILR Review*, 77(1), 32-61.

Week 9. (October 29th)

Artificial Intelligence and Inequality in Latin America.

Julián Posada (2026) *Platform Extractivism: Data Work and the People Powering Artificial Intelligence*. Chapter selection: tbd.

Additional reading:

Miceli, Milagros, and Julian Posada. "The data-production dispositif." *Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction* 6.CSCW2 (2022): 1-37.

Week 10. (November 5th)

Platform work in Latin America.

Kenzo Seto (2026) *Platform Work in Latin America*.

Manky O. 2026. "Reimagining Work Security in Latin America's Platform Economy: Workers' Strategies Amid Urban Violence." *New Technology, Work and Employment* 41: 33–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.70005>.

Week 11. (November 12th).

Individualism and Subjectivities in 21st Century Latin America.

Gago, Verónica (2017). *Neoliberalism from Below: Popular Pragmatics and Baroque Economies*.

Additional reading:

Fridman, Daniel (2020). *Freedom from Work: Embracing Financial Self-Help in the United States and Argentina*.

Week 12. (November 19th)

Social Inequality and the Right turn in Latin American politics: Is there a way out?

Borges A, Lloyd R, Vommaro G, eds. (2026) *The Recasting of the Latin American Right: Polarization and Conservative Reactions*.

Pérez-Ahumada P, Elbert R. Class Solidarity or Representation Gaps? Union Attitudes Among Formal and Informal Workers in Argentina and Chile. *Latin American Politics and Society*.

Week 13. (November 26th) **Thanksgiving Recess**

Week 14. (December 3rd): Last day of classes.

Conclusions for the class and student presentations of ideas for final paper.

Week 15. (December 10th): Study Day/No classes

Week 17. (December 17th): Due date for final paper.