Digging Through the National Security Archive: South American “Dirty Wars” and the United States Involvement

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This course offers a critical examination of 1970s Southern Cone Latin American military dictatorships focusing on the making of coups d’état; the successful imposition of neoliberal economic agendas by military-civilian alliances; daily life under state terrorism; national security doctrines; and memories of the so-called “Dirty Wars”.

As a research oriented course, the second half of the semester will be devoted to a rigorous exercise of investigation focused on the relations between those Latin American dictatorships and the United States using the National Security Archive and other primary sources.

Requirements

1. Readings:
Readings are listed in the course schedule below. A list of books available for purchase follows. All required readings available on Moodle are marked in this syllabus with an asterisk (*). Paper and/or electronic copies of these books are on-reserve and available at the library.

2. Writing:
This is a writing course. Two written assignments are mandatory. The first one is an annotated bibliography focused on the mandatory readings of the first half of the semester. The main goal of this assignment is to gain some experience in the art of writing synopsis of book and articles, identifying in them key contributions and emphasis vis-à-vis the topics of this course. A weekly two-page report on the assigned readings is due before each class. I will return them to you with my comments and suggestions. A final, edited version of each one of the entries of your annotated bibliography is due after break.
The remaining written assignment is a ten/twelve-page research paper on a topic of your choice after consultation with me. This paper must use primary sources, particularly—but not exclusively—materials from the National Security Archive. You will work on this assignment throughout the second half of the semester. This paper entails a number of accumulative tasks with very specific deadlines: 1. By week nine you will write a proposal, indicating available primary sources and secondary literature; 2. By week eleven you will produce a detailed tentative outline; 3. By week thirteen the first draft is due. 4. By week fifteen you will present your work to the rest of the class; a second draft is due; 5. A revised final version of your research paper is due on May 16th. I will comment on each one of your written pieces. Every course participant is supposed to make constructive comments on classmates’ presentations.

Additional information about these written assignments will be provided in class. Students must complete all written assignments to pass the course.

3. Class participation:
It is my intention to run this course in colloquium format. Consequently readings must be completed prior to class. You should come to every class, be prepared with questions and thoughts about the readings and participate fully in the discussions. I strongly recommend writing a commentary, paragraph, several questions or a brief outline stating your initial reaction to the assigned reading in order to facilitate your participation in class discussions. Active participation is vital to receiving a good final grade. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

4. The History Department affirms the following student learning goals specific to the study of history:
• Students will recognize and appreciate the differentness of the past and the diversity of other cultures and peoples, and gain an understanding of the processes and causes of change and continuity over time.
• Students will acquire foundational knowledge of, and learn the issues, debates, and interpretations of historians for the complex making of historical processes.
• Students will develop the ability to evaluate critically the arguments and analytical methods of historians, and learn to assess critically the evidence of the past through first-hand exposure to primary sources and historical research.
• Students will develop the skills of clear and coherent historical writing as
well as confident oral presentations.

Course Schedule.

Week 1
January 19
Introduction

Week 2
January 26
Before the military coups
Paul Lewis, Guerrillas and Generals: The Dirty War in Argentina (*)
Luis Alberto Romero, Contemporary History of Argentina (*)
Chile: The Allende Years, the Coup under the Junta (*)
Esparza, Marcia (ed.), State Violence and Genocide in Latin America: The Cold Years (*)

Week 3
February 2
Authoritarian states and military dictatorships
Chavkin, Samuel, The Murder of Chile. Eyewitness of the Coup (*)
Policzer, Pablo, The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile (*)
Silva, Patricio (ed.), The Soldier and the State in South America: Essays in Civil– military Relations (*)
Collier, David, The New Authoritarianism in Latin America (*)

Week 4
February 9
Daily life under terror
Corradi, Juan (ed.), *Fear ad The Edge. State Terror and Resistance in Latin America* (*)

Taylor, Diana, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina’s “Dirty War”* (*)

Wight, Thomas, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (*)

**Week 5**
**February 16**

Counter revolutionary war and national security doctrine

Menjivar, Cecilia (ed.), *When States Kill: Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror* (*)


**Week 6**
**February 23**

Regional coordination and military repression. The Condor Operation
Kornbluth, Peter, *The Pinochet File. A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (*)

Dinges, John, *The Condor Years. How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (*)

Dinges, John and Landau, Saul, *Assassination on Embassy Row* (*)

McSherry, J. Patrice, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (*)

Huggins, Martha, *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America* (*)

**Week 7**
**March 2**
Memories
AA.VV, “Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America”, *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 34, no 4 (*)

Cavalaro, James and Brewer, Stephanie, “‘Never Again?’: The Legacy of the Argentine and Chilean Dictatorships for the Global Human Rights Regime”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2008, vol 39 (*)


Stern, Steve, *Remembering Pinochet’s Chile* (*)

Johnson, Eric, *Murder and Violence in Modern Latin America* (*)

Lessa, Francesca, *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentia, Chile and Uruguay* (*)

Crenzel, Emilio, *The Memory of Argentine Disappearances. The Political History of Nunca Más* (*)

**Week 8**  
**March 9**  
**Spring Break**

**Week 9**  
**March 16**  
Research proposal due, including identification of primary sources and secondary materials.

**Week 10**  
**March 23**  
No class  
Individual meetings by appointment

**Week 11**  
Detailed tentative outline due

**March 30**  
No class  
Individual meetings by appointment
Week 12
April 6
No class
Individual meetings by appointment

Week 13
April 13
First draft due

Week 14
April 20
No class
Individual meetings by appointment

Week 15
April 27
Second draft is due. In-class students’ presentations about their research projects. Please send by email a written, draft version of your presentation to all course participants no later than April 23rd, Noon.

May 16th
Final version of research paper due