

4. Questions for Review

Part One. Questions and Contexts

1. Why Latin America?

- What stereotypes have you encountered about Latin America or people from Latin America and the Caribbean? How can you account for them?
- What similarities exist between the history of the United States and the history of Latin America as you understand it? What might be some crucial differences?
- How and why have interpretations about Latin America changed over time?

2. The Colonial Foundations

- What factors and motivations led to Spanish and Portuguese expansion across the Atlantic Ocean?
- In what ways did the indigenous peoples resist and adapt to the European conquest of their territories?
- What kinds of racial and social hierarchies existed in colonial Spanish and Portuguese America? How did they change, if at all, over time?
- What were the varied roles of the Catholic Church in colonial Latin America?
- What were the economic strategies of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the different regions of Latin America?
- Compare and contrast independence movements in Mexico and Peru. In what ways was the path to independence different in Brazil?
- What colonial institutions continued after independence? What others changed or disappeared?

Part Two. Case Studies: Change over Time

3. Mexico: The Taming of a Revolution

- American schoolchildren often read heroic stories about “the Mexican-American War” of the 1840s, while their Mexican counterparts learn about the “War of the North American Invasion.” What is the meaning of this difference?
- What were the principal differences between the Liberal and Conservative parties by the mid-nineteenth century? How did these contrasts actually affect politics in Mexico?
- Porfirio Díaz is one of Mexico’s most controversial figures: many see him as a dictator, while others praise his promotion of economic development. Was tyranny a necessary price for progress?
- What were the causes and consequences of the Mexican Revolution? How did it change society and politics?
- What explains the rise and demise of the PRI? Are there reasons to believe that it might return to power?
- What should be done about illegal immigration from Mexico into the United States? What would be the most desirable policies, and what are the most plausible policies?

4. Central America and the Caribbean: Within the U.S. Orbit

- Why has the Caribbean Sea (plus the Gulf of Mexico) attracted so much attention from major world powers for so long? How and when did the United States become a dominant factor in this area?
- How did the Spanish penetration of Central America differ from the conquest of Mexico? What implications did this have?
- What are the defining features of “plantation societies”? How do these societies compare with late-nineteenth-century Mexico?
- How did the cultivation of sugar affect the social structure and demographic composition of the Caribbean? What were the similarities and differences between the significance of sugar in the Caribbean and coffee in Central America?

- What were the motivations behind Operation Just Cause? Was it absolutely necessary?
- What explains the emergence of armed guerrilla movements in El Salvador and Nicaragua? Why were the revolutionaries able to take power in Nicaragua, but not in El Salvador?
- Would Haiti be more prosperous and stable if it had become a U.S. “commonwealth” like Puerto Rico?

5. Cuba: Key Colony, Socialist State

- Why was Cuba seen as a “crown jewel” of the Spanish empire in the Americas?
- What led the United States to intervene in Cuba’s struggle for independence from Spain? How might the U.S. government have acted differently?
- Assess the U.S. role in Cuban politics from the 1930s through the 1950s. What were the most significant changes, and what were the underlying continuities?
- To what extent did the Cuban Revolution emerge from social and political conditions on the island—and to what extent was it a singular creation of Fidel Castro?
- What was the original rationale for the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba, and what explains its continuation to the present day?
- What are the principal achievements of the Cuban Revolution, and what are its most significant failures? Would Cuba have been better off today if there had never been a revolution?

6. The Andes: Soldiers, Oligarchs, and Indians

- Why were political leaders in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia unable to forge political unity after independence?
- One could argue that it is only logical that the Andean countries took advantage of their natural resources to develop their countries. What have been the benefits and problems in reliance on an export-based economy?
- What were the causes of the intense nationalist sentiments in the Andean region? In what ways has nationalism manifested itself differently in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador?

- What were the causes and the results of the Bolivian Revolution of 1952?
- In what ways has oil been a curse rather than a boon to the Ecuadoran economy?
- Some scholars point to an ongoing militant tradition among Bolivian peasants, miners, and workers. Do you agree with that assertion? What might explain the tradition of popular mobilization in that country?

7. Colombia: Civility and Violence

- Compare the European takeover of Colombia with the conquest of Peru. What were the long-term effects of these differences?
- What accounts for the collapse of Simón Bolívar's project for "greater Colombia"?
- How did the cultivation and exportation of coffee shape Colombian society?
- What were the causes and consequences of the *bogotazo*?
- Many have argued that Colombia's "National Front" was a keystone for the country's democratic development; others have insisted that it more closely resembled Mexico under the PRI. Discuss.
- How has illicit drug trafficking affected Colombian society and politics? Is there any end in sight?

8. Venezuela: The Perils of Prosperity

- If Venezuela was merely an outpost for the Spanish empire in America, why and how did Caracas become such a significant city?
- Define the form of political rule known as *caudillismo*. How does it apply to nineteenth-century Venezuela? Was Venezuela unique in this respect?
- What was the "Roosevelt Corollary," and what were its messages?
- What were the social and political consequences of Venezuela's reliance on petroleum exports throughout the twentieth century?
- What explains the demise of Venezuela's two-party system between the 1960s and the 1990s?

- What conditions led to the rise of Hugo Chávez? Is he an opportunist or a revolutionary? Compare his career and outlook with those of Fidel Castro.

9. Argentina: Progress and Stalemate

- Argentine leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century often stressed similarities between their country and the United States. What was the basis of this comparison, and where did it go wrong?
- What factors contributed to the formation and character of the working class in Argentina? How did it compare with working classes in, say, Peru and Mexico?
- What were the defining characteristics of the Peronist coalition?
- Why has the memory of Evita Perón retained symbolic significance in Argentina? Was she a pioneer for Latin American women?
- What were the defining characteristics of the “bureaucratic-authoritarian” regimes that dominated Argentina from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s?
- What accounts for Argentina’s transition to democracy in the 1980s?
- As the twentieth century drew to a close, Argentina appeared to have successfully resolved its crucial historical conflicts. Crisis then erupted in 2001. What happened? Was this a replay of longstanding problems, or was the country entering a truly new era?

10. Chile: Repression and Democracy

- In what ways was Chilean economic and political development different in the period after independence in comparison to its neighbors—Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru?
- What were the effects of the War of the Pacific on Chile, Peru, and Bolivia?
- How did minerals shape Chilean history in the twentieth century?
- Why did a militant trade union movement develop in Chile in the twentieth century?
- Were the populist movements in other parts of Latin America similar to or different from the leftist traditions in Chile?

- In what ways was the government of Frei a model for the Kennedy administration and the Alliance for Progress?
- Why was Allende elected and then overthrown?
- How did the Chilean economy change during the Pinochet years?
- To what extent did Pinochet bring about his own demise?

11. Brazil: The Awakening Giant

- How did the move by the Portuguese royal family to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 diminish sentiments toward independence, and to what extent did the presence of the monarchy in Brazil lead to a break with Portugal in 1822?
- In what ways did coffee prolong slavery in Brazil until 1888?
- How did the rule of Pedro II reflect continuity in Brazil and how did his reign mark a time of significant change?
- How has the “special relationship” between Brazil and the United States from the early 1900s until the present manifested itself, and how has it changed over time?
- What roles has the military played in Brazilian politics over the course of the twentieth century?
- How have different political regimes from the 1930s to the present employed nationalism as a means of mobilizing popular support? What have been the economic components of their political programs and policies in this regard?
- Many argue that Brazilian history is marked by peaceful transitions, conciliation among different political and social forces, and a spirit of compromise. Do you agree or disagree?

Part Three. Themes and Reflections

12. Strategies for Economic Development

- How did Latin America’s adaptation of economic liberalism differ from its application in Europe and the United States?

- What were the social consequences of Latin American liberalism? In particular, what kind of class structure did it engender?
- Describe the role and importance of ECLA. How did it affect debates over economic policy in Latin America?
- Import-substitution industrialization appeared to work well in some countries in the decades after World War II. What led to its demise?
- Evaluate the appeals of Marxist thought in twentieth-century Latin America. Do you think it has any relevance to present-day conditions?
- What were the ingredients of the “Washington consensus,” and why did it have so much influence throughout Latin America during the 1990s?
- Free trade agreements between Latin American countries and the United States have become increasingly common and increasingly controversial. What explains this paradox?
- To what extent can Latin American nations define their economic destiny? Or are they inextricably dependent upon the United States? What are the practical alternatives?

13. Dynamics of Political Transformation

- What were the principal characteristics of “oligarchic democracy” in Latin America? How did it differ from “co-optative” democracy?
- Define and describe the political roles of the military in Latin America.
- What were the political correlates of ISI? In what countries were they most apparent?
- What conditions led to the emergence of women as major political actors in Latin America?
- Why did revolutionary guerrilla movements succeed in Cuba and Nicaragua—but not in other countries of Latin America?
- What are the principal limitations of Latin American democracy today?
- How does the evolution of Argentina’s social structure compare with that of Chile? What were the political implications of these differences? (Apply the same question to any pair of countries presented in Chapter 13.)

14. Culture and Society

- How did many writers and artists express their ambivalent attitudes toward Spain and Portugal in the years after independence?
- In what ways were romanticism and naturalism similar to nationalism?
- Racial hierarchies remained strong in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. How did intellectuals, writers, and artists reshape national identities using symbols of the indigenous, Africans, and people of mixed racial background?
- How did the United States as the “Colossus of the North” affect cultural production in Latin America throughout the twentieth century?
- Why did the communist parties of Latin America have such a great appeal to so many intellectuals and artists for much of the twentieth century?
- Brazilian modernism looked to Europe for inspiration but then argued that artists should create their own unique Brazilian works. Explain this apparent paradox.
- How has globalization transformed Latin American culture? How have other cultures been transformed by Latin America?