Section 1: The Curse of Wealth: Economics

1493 Columbus introduces sugar-cane in Hispaniola
1545 Silver discovered in Cerro Rico, Potosí
1690s Brazilian gold rush begins in Minas Gerais
1808-26 Latin American independence: Britain takes over from Spain as the major trading partner and foreign power
1922 Venezuela strikes oil
1929 Wall Street Crash and ensuing depression in the US and Europe pushes Latin America into industrialisation
1930s Great Depression – collapse of commodity prices
1938 Nationalisation of Mexican oil industry
1958 Brazil becomes Latin America’s leading industrial power
1973-74 First oil price rise leads to wave of loans to Latin America. Foreign debt soars.
Early 80s Beginning of cocaine boom
1982 Mexico defaults on interest payments on its foreign debt, swiftly followed by most other Latin American governments. Start of Debt Crisis and two decades of neoliberal reforms, including renewed emphasis on commodity exports
1982-91 Latin America pays a net US$219 billion in debt repayments to the North - US$500 for every Latin American
late 1980s Neoliberal reforms gather pace throughout Latin America
1989 Announcement of austerity package in Venezuela provokes riots in which at least 276 people die
1994 Start of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), between Mexico, the US and Canada enables Mexican economy to become effectively cheap labour addition to US, reducing its dependence on commodity exports. Mexican currency crisis and subsequent economic recession raises fresh doubts over neoliberal model
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Start of Mercosur, or Southern Cone Common Market, comprising Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-2</td>
<td>Crisis engulfs Argentine economy</td>
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<td>2001-3</td>
<td>One third of Mexico’s maquiladora assembly plants relocate to China</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>44% of Latin Americans (221m people) living in poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Annual wholesale value of US cocaine market reaches $35bn. Latin America is sole supplier. Only oil is worth more</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Global commodity price boom due to Chinese demand boosts Latin American growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Section 2: Ballots and Bullets: The State, the Military and Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1808-26</td>
<td>Wars of independence free Spanish America from colonial rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Brazil abolishes the monarchy and becomes a Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-17</td>
<td>Mexican revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Augusto César Sandino returns to Nicaragua to begin a guerrilla war against occupying US forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Caudillo General Plutarco Calles establishes the National Revolutionary Party (later the PRI) in power in Mexico; the PRI goes on to establish an effective one-party state</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Urbanisation and industrialisation produce new political parties, led by populists</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939-45</td>
<td>Second World War establishes US as dominant military power in Latin America</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Juan Domingo Perón elected president of Argentina</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>Costa Rica abolishes army</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>Brazilian Higher War School founded, becoming central to spread of Cold-War national security doctrine</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>The two main parties in both Venezuela and Colombia agree to share power in order to end decades of instability and military rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Cuban revolution marks first successful guerrilla campaign and leads to wave of foquista guerrilla insurgencies throughout Latin America. This is seen by military as proof of international communist conspiracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Military seize power in Brazil and rule for 25 years. The coup marks beginning of wave of military takeovers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Death of Che Guevara in Bolivia</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Medellín conference of Latin American bishops galvanises the left by creating Base Christian Communities across the region</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Peru’s Shining Path movement founded in remote Andean province. In Chile, Salvador Allende becomes the world’s first elected marxist president</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Allende murdered during the military coup which brings General Pinochet to power</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Argentina’s military seize power</td>
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<td><strong>end 1976</strong></td>
<td>At least two-thirds of people on mainland Latin America live under dictatorial rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Sandinista-led insurrection in Nicaragua becomes second guerrilla victory in the Americas. Founding of Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT), based on the support of the ‘new social movements’</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Founding of Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador</td>
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<td>1980s</td>
<td>Civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala marked by unprecedented human rights abuses by military. US backs Contras in proxy war against Sandinista government</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Argentina loses Falklands/Malvinas war, military government falls and democracy returns; senior officers subsequently imprisoned on human rights charges</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Chile’s Christian Democrats lead coalition that wins elections to end Pinochet presidency. General Stroessner ousted in Paraguay. US invasion of Panama. Fall of Berlin Wall marks end of Cold War; difficult times ahead for military in Latin America, and identity crisis on left</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Sandinistas voted from power in presidential elections</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Chile’s General Pinochet becomes the last of the military dictators to leave office</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Peace agreement in El Salvador following military stalemate between army and guerrillas. Military removed from politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. US troops intervene to oust military government in Haiti</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Hugo Chávez elected president in Venezuela</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>PRI loses in Mexican elections after 71 years in power</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Lula and the Workers Party (PT) win Brazilian presidential elections, beginning centre-left realignment across the region</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Every Latin American country except Cuba and Haiti ruled by elected leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Colombia only country in South America with an avowedly pro-US, right-wing president</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3: Land, the City and Environment

1519-35  Spanish Conquest: colonisers introduce new animals and crops and take back to Europe novelties such as tomatoes, maize, tobacco and potatoes; Spanish hand out land and forced labour to their officers through the encomienda system

1538  First slaves brought from Africa to work Latin America’s sugar plantations

1881  Communal land-ownership by indigenous peasants banned in El Salvador, enabling coffee plantations to expand onto indigenous lands

1899  United Fruit establishes a monopoly over Central American banana production

1917  Beginning of Mexican land reform - the greatest in Latin American history

1920  First shantytowns recorded in Rio de Janeiro

1930s  Industrialisation leads to explosion of shantytowns and environmental deterioration in cities. Start of industrialisation leads to mass migration to the cities

1950 41.2% of Latin Americans live in towns

1950s on  Expansion of commercial agriculture throughout Latin America

1952  Bolivian revolution redistributes land and ends the near-feudal status of indigenous ‘serfs’

1959  Cuban revolution: state farms take over sugar production

1960 500 people invade land in Lima to found the Cuevas settlement

1961  Washington launches Alliance for Progress, which supports land reform programmes throughout Latin America

1964  Military coup in Brazil: new government promotes agro-exports and the colonisation of the Amazon basin

1966  Brazil’s military government unveils ‘Operation Amazonia’ to colonise and industrially develop the rainforest

1970  Population of Cuevas settlement in Lima reaches 12,000

1978  Argentine military government bulldozes shantytowns in clean-up campaign before World Cup

1979  Nicaraguan revolution: half of the country’s farming land is included in a land reform

1980 64.7% of Latin Americans live in towns. Brazilian government decrees tax incentives for enterprises taking part in the Grande Carajas development programme

1980s 500,000 gold prospectors pour into the Amazon, bringing disease and destruction to the Yanomami people
1982 on Under pressure from debt crisis, governments try to increase agro-exports, in many cases by giving more power to large landowners. Debt crisis and ensuing neoliberal reforms lead to massive rise in informal sector

1984 Brazil’s Landless Workers Movement (MST) founded. Opening of giant Itaipú dam between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay

1985 US Congress forces World Bank to temporarily suspend road-building loans due to their environmental impact and include environmental criteria in its project assessments. Mexico City earthquake, thousands made homeless

1988 Chico Mendes, leader of Amazon rubber-tappers, assassinated by landowners

1990 Chilean government declares first ever ‘environmental state of emergency’ in Santiago

1992 World Summit on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro

1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico prompted by government’s attempts to privatise communal land-holdings

1998 90% of all soybeans grown in Argentina are genetically modified (GM)

2002 77% of Latin Americans live in towns

2004 Total remittances from 25m Latin Americans living abroad come to $46bn, more than foreign investment and aid combined

2005 Less than a quarter of Latin Americans live in the countryside, more than half of them below the poverty line. 16% of the Amazon rainforest now destroyed, and a further 3.5% (25,000 sq km) being lost every year

Section 4: Identity and Rights

c. 30,000 BC First people reach the Americas across the Bering Straits from Asia

1492 Columbus arrives in the Americas, to be met by the friendly Arawak people

1519 Cortés invades Mexico with 600 men

1535 Pizarro completes conquest of Inca empire

mid 16th C Arawak population of the Caribbean extinct within 50 years of Columbus’ arrival

1781 Tupác Amaru lays seige to Cusco, the former Inca capital, in indigenous rebellion. Amaru captured and executed

1930s on Mechanisation of agriculture and growth of cities encourages young women to migrate from the countryside to the towns
1960s
Officials of Brazil’s government agency for indigenous people use poison, machine guns and disease to ‘clear’ land for large landowners

1961
Paraguay becomes last Latin American country to give women the vote

1971
US Peace Corps expelled from Bolivia, accused of sterilising indigenous women without their knowledge

1975–85
UN Decade for Women encourages some improved legislation on gender issues

1975
Cuban government passes law making childcare and housework equal responsibility of men and women

Late 1970s
Women in Brazil’s Cost of Living Movement lead opposition to military rule

1976–83
Argentina’s Mothers of the Disappeared lead opposition to military rule, inspiring similar movements in Central America and the Andes

1979
Nicaraguan revolution: women head health ministry and police and government bans use of women’s bodies in advertising

1982 on
Debt Crisis and neoliberal reforms make life harder for women

1982–83
In Guatemala, 400 indigenous villages destroyed, 40,000 killed in counter-insurgency operations

1990
Violeta Chamorro wins Nicaraguan presidential elections

1992
Indigenous groups throughout the Americas condemn the official celebrations of the quincentenary of Columbus’ arrival in the Americas. Rigoberta Menchú wins Nobel Peace Prize

1993
Proportion of female-headed households now stands at one in five across Latin America

1994
Indigenous rebels from Mayan groups lead Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. In Ecuador, indigenous organisations cut off cities in protest at economic structural adjustment measures

1995
New quota rules in Argentina ensure that one in four Congresspeople is a woman – one of the highest proportions in the world

2000
Alejandro Toledo elected president of Peru, after stressing his indigenous origins during the campaign to oust Alberto Fujimori

2003
Average Latin American woman has 2.5 children, down from 6 in the 1950s

2006
Evo Morales inaugurated as Bolivian president – the first indigenous head of state in South America
Section 5: Culture and Religion

1494 In the Treaty of Tordesillas the Vatican divides up the New World between Spain and Portugal

1826 on Independence leaders sign concordats with the Vatican, maintaining Catholicism as the state religion

1896 First moving picture shown in Buenos Aires

1910-17 Mexican revolution begins attempt to construct a new mestizo consciousness, especially through the work of muralists such as Diego Rivera

1923 Brazilian government sets up country’s first radio station, which soon bows to popular demand for broadcasts of samba music

1926-29 Mexican Church suspends public worship to protest at state harassment. Ninety priests executed during the ‘Cristero rebellion’

1959 Cuban revolution promotes attempt to build a radical and distinctive Latin American cultural movement

1960s on Born-again Protestant churches begin to expand rapidly throughout Latin America

1962-65 Second Vatican Council commits the Church to work for human rights, justice and freedom

mid 1960s First telenovelas broadcast in Brazil and Mexico

1967 Gabriel García Márquez publishes One Hundred Years of Solitude, which sells more than twenty million copies worldwide

1968 Latin American bishops, meeting in Medellín, Colombia, adopt a ‘preferential option for the poor’

1971 Cuban government arrests the dissident poet, Heberto Padilla

1973 Singer Víctor Jara killed by the army following military coup in Chile

1978 John Paul II becomes Pope and leads conservative offensive within Church against ‘liberation theology’

1979 Nicaraguan revolution provides state support for poets and artists

1980 Assassination of radical Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador

1982 General Efraín Ríos Montt seizes power in Guatemala, becoming the region’s first evangelical dictator. García Márquez wins Nobel Prize for literature

1989 In El Salvador, Army assassinates six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter, leading to the withdrawal of
US support for the military and the end of the civil war
Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa loses presidential elections to Alberto Fujimori
Guatemala’s Jorge Serrano becomes the region’s first elected evangelical president
Columbus quincentenary prompts continent-wide soul searching. Televisa’s soap ‘The Rich Also Weep’ takes Russia by storm
Zapatista rebels in Chiapas use the Internet to bypass government censorship
90% of Latin Americans have access to a TV set
Pope John Paul II dies, to be replaced by even more conservative Pope Benedict XVI. No let-up in sight for Latin American progressive Church. Estimated number of Protestants rises to 60 million, from 5 million in 1970. 56 million Latin Americans (10% of the population) have access to internet
Further Reading

Section 1: The Curse of Wealth: Economics


Section 2: Ballots and Bullets: The State, the Military and Politics

