This course examines the variety of experiences that gave rise to radical and revolutionary movements in Latin America in the 20th century. What exactly those terms—radical and revolutionary—mean is part of the purpose of the course. We will begin with no a priori definition of either but rather will attempt over the semester to determine what such ascriptions mean and to whom as well as how the very meaning of such terms change over time.

Questions we will consider include: Who defines what is or is not radical? What kinds of goals do radicals or revolutionaries have? What form does radicalism take and why? How do we explain the rise of revolutionary movements at certain points in time and not in others? In other words, how do we explain not only why people rebel, but why they do not? Where does radicalism come from? What is the relationship between experience and ideology in the process of radicalization? What is at stake in drawing out relations of cause and effect? Why? How are radical critiques and actions justified or explained? At the same time we will also consider more generally broader questions regarding ideology, culture, politics and the production of history.

Some background in Latin American history useful but not required. Spanish helpful but not required. Questions? Email Prof. Raymond Craib at rbc23@cornell.edu

Graduate students should enroll in Hist. 6590.