

Essay and Discussion Questions

The Americas Higher Education Questions

Help students understand the Americas through these essay and discussion questions.

Question 1

What is the state of democracy in Latin America today? What have been the societal, political, and economic effects of democratic backsliding in Latin America?

- What led to increased democratization in Latin America during the 1970s?
- What, according to the readings, are some of the root causes of democratic backsliding in the region?
- Why have civil societies been unable to halt these developments?
- How are informal groups stepping up to replace the functions of ineffective governments?
- Should the United States play a role in protecting Latin American democracies?

Question 2

Compare and contrast U.S. involvement in the construction of the Panama Canal to China's influence and investment in the region today.

- How did the opening of the Panama Canal transform the global economy?
- How did the Panama canal assist the United States on its rise to being a global superpower?
- Did the maintenance of the Panama Canal infringe upon Panama's sovereignty?
- What eventually led the United States to return the Panama Canal to Panama?

Question 3

Has United States interventionism in Latin America had a net-positive or net-negative effect on the region? What effect does United States foreign policy in the region continue to have on the governments of Latin America today?

- How did the United States involve itself in Latin America during the 20th century?
- What goals was the United States pursuing through its involvement in Latin America?
- How successful was the United States in pursuing those goals?

Question 4

How do politics and religion intersect in Latin America? What effects might a closer relationship between the two have on governments and societies in the region? How does this compare to other global experiences of religion and politics?

- What are the recent trends in Latin America's religious composition?
- What are some of the root causes of these trends?
- What populations are most affected by an increased politicization of religion?

Question 5

How does the economic and geopolitical dominance of the United States in Latin America influence the economies, societies, and political systems of other countries in the Americas? Is China on a path to threatening

this dominance? What effects would this shift in power have?

- How does the United States currently assert its leadership in the region?
- What role has history played in the geopolitical balance of the region?
- Why is there a lack of meaningful regional cooperation in the Americas and how does this influence geopolitics in the region?

Question 6

Why does climate change pose a greater threat to certain parts of the Americas than others? What historical factors have contributed to this disparity? Does climate change also create new economic, social, or political opportunities for the regions most threatened?

- What challenges does climate change pose to the Americas?
- How is climate change shaping the economies of the region?