

CACI Teaching activity: China's influence in Latin America-US relations in the 21st century.

1) Goal of the Activity:

- (a) This activity will primarily focus on contemporary issues surrounding the Panama Canal and President Donald Trump's efforts to reclaim the canal, alleging that China has taken over the canal. Through this event, students will learn and critically analyze the relationships between the U.S., China, and Latin America from a three-way perspective. The primary goal is for them to develop their own thoughts on how China's presence in Latin America poses a challenge to the U.S.'s long-standing hegemony in the Western Hemisphere and identify how and why China has become one of the main U.S. competitors in the region.
- (b) As this course also traces and analyzes the U.S.' growing influence in Latin America and covers the international threats to American interests in the Western Hemisphere since the mid-19th century, which the U.S. has sought to eliminate, such as European Empires and Communism, bringing the growing Chinese influence in Latin America will show how the U.S. has identified China as a contemporary threat to its interests in the region.
 - This activity aligns with this course, as it demonstrates that U.S. leaders have consistently identified international threats that needed to be addressed in order to protect Latin American nations and assert their hegemony in the Americas.

2) Prerequisites

NB: This activity will be conducted in the last classes of this course. By then, students will have become familiar with the main concepts related to foreign policy. No specific tools are needed for this activity.

3) Pre-Class Activities:

- a) Students should read and watch the following before class:
 - Reading: Joseph Ledford, "Trump's Americas Doctrine Starts at the Canal," *Hoover Institution* (February 2025). Available on Brightspace.
 - Video: We're taking back the Panama Canal by Donald Trump: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHTr0Cd_XA
 - Students should write at least three thought-provoking questions related to the material assigned and bring them to class.
- b) Instructor:
 - Prepare a brief lecture that provides historical context for the conflicts over the Panama Canal, specifically focusing on the U.S. diminishing influence in Latin America and China's growing presence in the region, and a summary of the assigned reading.
 - Prepare a presentation with photos of the contemporary Panama Canal and data on the Chinese investments in the region.

4) In-Class Activities: "Friendsgiving"

Phase 1: *Reflection - Write your deep thoughts about the subject (10 minutes).

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- Students will write their thoughts and key takeaways from the reading, video, and lecture.

Phase 2: Group Work (10 minutes)

- Students will work in pairs to exchange their thoughts and key takeaways from the topic.

Phase 3: Discussion (for the remainder of the class – usually 20-25minutes)

- Students will share their peers' thoughts with the whole class.
- Students will ask the questions they brought to class to keep the discussion engaged.

*Asking students to write their thoughts and share them with their peers helps them process the content, internalize knowledge, and feel more encouraged to engage in discussions. This is a free writing exercise.

5) Post-Class Activities and Assessment

- a) **Activity:** No post-class activity is required, as students have already written a reflection in class.
- b) **Assessment:** The reflection will be collected at the end of class for attendance.
 - **Formative:** Feedback on reflection papers will be provided, focusing on identifying how the students understood the topic and their critical analysis of the content.
 - **Summative:** The reflection and the questions they had to bring to class will count as extra credit that will be added to their final grade.

6) Materials

- PDF of the assigned reading Joseph Ledford, "Trump's Americas Doctrine Starts at the Canal," *Hoover Institution* (February 2025). Available on Brightspace. (uploaded).
- YouTube video link: We're taking back the Panama Canal by Donald Trump:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjHTr0Cd_XA
- PowerPoint presentation with photos and data (will be brought to class);
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-943c9a5e-32c0-4eae-8abb-4d9c4c6eae1e>

7) Learning goals

The class activity will help students think more critically about China's role in Latin America and its impact on the relationship between the U.S. and Latin American nations, which has pushed the U.S. recently to 're-establish' military bases in Panama. Students will be able to:

- Put into historical context, the tensions surrounding the Panama Canal that emerged in the late 19th century persist to this day.
- Identify a new actor (threat) to U.S. interests in Latin America and connect/compare to past threats.
- Analyze China's growing influence in Latin America and its impact on U.S.-LA relations and the consequences to the region.
- Think critically about how China has challenged U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.
- Compare the attitudes of the Chinese and American leaders towards Latin American nations.