

CACI Teaching activity: The US and the growing influence of China in Latin America in the 21st century.

1) Goal of the Activity:

- (a) This activity will primarily focus on contemporary issues surrounding China's influence in Latin America, with a focus on the Panama Canal and President Donald Trump's efforts to reclaim it, 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 has challenged the U.S.'s long-standing hegemony in the region. Additionally, this activity will help students to identify how and why China has become one of the main U.S. competitors in Latin America.
 - o This activity aligns with this course, as it demonstrates that U.S. leaders have consistently identified international threats that needed to be eliminated under the justification of protecting the Western Hemisphere against external influence, while asserting American hegemony.

2) Prerequisites

NB: This activity will be conducted during one of the last classes of the course, where I will include China studies content. 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 will 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
- b) Instructor:
 - Will prepare a brief lecture that provides historical context for the conflicts over the Panama Canal, specifically focusing on China's growing presence in the region, and rising conflicts with the US over influence in Latin America. Prepare also a PowerPoint presentation with the main points of the lecture and photos of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), political leaders, and some of the infrastructure built through the BRI in Panama, such as the Amador Cruise Terminal.

4) In-Class Activities: Reading and discussing news articles.

Phase 1: Assigning the news articles

- Students will form groups of four, and each group will receive a number corresponding to a news article on China's influence in Latin America. There are six articles available on Brightspace. The students will have 7 to 10 minutes to read the article assigned to their group.
- The groups will have about 10 minutes to discuss the article: What is it about? When was it published? Who are the main actors? How does it relate to the content of the class?

How does it help us understand China and the US conflicts for influence in Latin America, and how has it affected the region?

Phase 3: Discussion

- Each group will share its answers to the questions and its critical opinion of the article.

5) Post-Class Activities and Assessment

a) **Activity:** No post-class activity is required.

b) **Assessment:**

- **Formative:** Each group will hand over a sheet listing the members' names and answers to the activity's questions, which will be used to assess students' understanding of the class topic and content.
- **Summative:** The sheet will be collected and added to the students' records to count for potential extra credit that will be added to their final grade.

6) Materials for the activity: contemporary news articles.

1. "China spent years building ties in Latin America. Can Trump make room for the US?" *BBC*, March 6, 2026.
2. "China in Latin America: February 2026," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 26, 2026.
3. "Chinese firms target Brazil as it becomes a magnet for expansion," *South China Morning Post*, April 14, 2026.
4. "Latin America in vise: the 'Trump Corollary' vs China's 2025 policy paper," *Realtime Economics*, February 26, 2026.
5. "Trump takes forceful steps to pressure Latin American leaders to reduce China ties," *The Associated Press (AP News)*, March 5, 2026.
6. "Panama deal allows US to deploy troops to canal, but no permanent bases," *Le Monde*, April 11, 2025.

7) Learning goals

The class activity will help students think more critically about how China's growing influence in Latin America has challenged the United States' hegemony in the region and its impact on US-Latin American relations. It will also help them understand, analyze, and compare the approaches of Chinese and American leaders toward Latin American nations and the reactions of Latin Americans to those approaches.