



VII INTERNATIONAL COURSE

Democracy, Transitions and Gender in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean

November 6 to 10, 2023

PRESENTATION

This course aims to examine the processes of recovery and implementation of democratic government systems in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1980s and 1990s, after a long period of repression of the civilian population carried out by civil-military dictatorships, minority regimes or after the end of civil wars.

Ending these processes of repression and terror demanded a deep collective effort, not only to remove the dictatorships from power, but also to find out the victims' fate, identify and punish those responsible for serious human rights violations, and dismantle the main repressive mechanisms used against the citizens.

Building these young democracies was a complex task. There were, and still are, constraints on the full exercise of democracy by citizens, encouraged by both military and civilian forces. This generated controversies that marked the transitions and subsequent years, and which were fought out in different contexts.

In addition to the possibility of ensuring the right to the truth about the fate of the victims and the trial of those responsible for human rights violations, the economic policies of the oppressive regimes, based on wealth concentration, workers and country people's control and disciplining, severe external indebtedness, loss of labor rights, limited access to land. In short, a series of measures that generated structural inequalities that are still hard to revert today, are a subject of great controversy.



The evolution of these issues is at the heart of the transition processes, a key concept on which this course intends to reflect. Rather than assuming it as an agreement between leading social sectors, we are interested in discussing the role played by many political, economic, social and cultural groups facing dictatorial regimes and in the democratization process.

Thus, starting from Argentina, we will approach from the best-known cases, such as human rights organizations, to those that, despite their great importance, remain even less visible, such as feminist organizations. Both share the crucial role of women's participation, since it was their active presence and involvement that made the transition process a suitable scenario for claiming long-awaited rights in the gender field.

Argentina's 40th anniversary of the return of democracy is an encouraging moment to examine the traces of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes by examining those marks of the recent past that, as a legacy, have not yet been overcome by democracies. These include deep economic inequalities, regressions in labor rights and legislation, the prevalence of a culture of individualism and indifference to the collective, and the stigmatization of pauperized sectors -especially young people-.

The transition process in this country implied a set of particularities that provide a basis for comparative studies with other countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, such as the persistence and deepening of socio-economic inequalities, the threats to their political stability due to pressures from the military and civilian sectors in favor of authoritarian and negationist regimes, the advances of right-wing and ultra-right organizations, the growing criminalization of social protest and the stigmatization of the most poor sectors of the population through racialized and xenophobic discourse. Likewise, the critical analysis of the transitional processes in a comparative and transnational perspective is deeply enriched by the gender perspective,



which reveals the weight of patriarchy in its course, as well as the central role of women's, feminist and sexual diversity movements in the strengthening of democracy.

The topics in this course focus on the conceptualization of the transition to democracies, pointing out the incidence of gender in its definition, but also offering a detailed analysis of certain dimensions. Specifically, we will examine the participation of women's and feminist movements in the struggle for rights, neoliberalism, foreign debts, and the economic and social inequalities in force in democracies. They will also be the subjects for critical analysis, as well as the respect for human rights, with emphasis on the exercise of institutional violence against people. Finally, we will focus on the place of war in the traditions and current political agendas of African, Latin American and Caribbean nations. The approach to these topics will take place during 5 (five) consecutive days through synchronous meetings with the participation of specialists from different regions and scientific disciplines, and with a selection of specific bibliography. In addition, there will be asynchronous activities articulated around films and virtual guided visits to museums.

In short, this course seeks to critically explore the current situation of democratic regimes in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting their main achievements, as well as their challenges in terms of respect for human rights, gender equity and wealth distribution.

Based on UNESCO's global priorities - such as Africa and gender equality - and on the goals of the organization, especially the promotion of intercultural dialogue and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, this International Course aims to contribute to this horizon by examining democratic transitions in the light of topics selected for both their political and current relevance. It is organized by the International Center for the Promotion of Human Rights under the auspices of UNESCO, headquartered in Buenos Aires, Argentina.