

**Violence and Citizenship in Post-Authoritarian Latin America**  
**Overview of Conference**  
**Princeton University, March 7, 2008**

The transition to democracy has witnessed the construction of new constitutional orders, an overall decline in human rights abuses, and the formal subordination of the military to civilian rule. These democratic advances, however, have been unevenly institutionalized – a point that has been widely addressed in the literature on regime types and the quality of democracy.

Indeed, violence has mounted in parts of Latin America (i.e., Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala), Africa (South Africa), and the former USSR (Russia). Third and fourth wave democracies have demonstrated an uneven ability to contain this violence; indeed in some cases state organizations and/or actors are implicated in the very violence they are supposed to limit; in some cases, judicial and police institutions are captured, wracked by corruption, staffed by poorly trained personnel, running with limited resources, and/or subject to political whim. Moreover, we have seen the emergence and growth of parastatal organizations – some illicit (gangs, organized crime) others not (local community organizations). How do we explain this turn of events? Why has violence increased in the contemporary period in some countries (and not others) and what are the implications for democratic citizenship and security?

The time is ripe to host a comparative workshop that reassesses violence and citizenship in new democracies. Scholars and policymakers have begun to tackle these questions, but more comparative fora are needed to share work and probe comparative dynamics. Our aim is to advance this dialogue by bringing together colleagues who will discuss the comparative empirical and theoretical contours of contemporary violence in Latin America; evaluate the contemporary role of the police and prisons in securing/undermining citizen security; and probe the analytical and theoretical implications of these dynamics for democratic citizenship and state formation. The conference will largely focus on Latin America but we hope to probe the degree to which Latin America is (not) part of a broader global dynamic.

The workshop will be organized in four panels.

1. *The Changing Face of Violence and Inequality* will assess the violent patterns and trends that have emerged in the region;
2. *Illicit Economies and Organizations* will probe the evolution, growth, and practice of illicit economies and organizations;
3. *Police and Prisons: Advancing Citizen Security?* will analyze the outcomes and consequences of police and judicial reforms for citizen security and violence; and
4. *Violence Law and Citizenship* will evaluate the implications of this new complex of violence for citizenship security and democratic practices in the contemporary period.

We have invited experts from the Americas to take part in this conference. Each participant will write an 8-10 page memo (or paper, if one is already available), to be distributed in advance of the conference. At the conference, each participant will present for 15-20 minutes, followed by a general discussion. We hope that participants will present their own empirical research, discuss the theoretical implications of their work, and identify areas that require additional research and debate.

