



CIVITAS Seminar

Luigi Sturzo Institute, Rome

and livestreamed on our Facebook and YouTube pages

Christian Democracy in Cold War Latin America

Seminar concept

The purpose of this seminar is to shed light on the complex relationship between Catholicism, Christian democracy, and the Cold War in Latin America. Without claiming to provide a uniform and comprehensive overview of the topic, we aim above all to examine certain aspects that we consider of particular interest from a historiographical perspective for some initial significant assessments.

The seminar aims to focus on the development of Christian-inspired ideas and political actors in Latin America during the Cold War years, beginning with the central role played by the Catholic world, understood in all its different forms. From this perspective, Latin American Christian democracies – in all their forms as groups, movements, and parties – are understood within the category of “political Catholicism,” that is, the umbrella term for all social and political actors who, in terms of identity and ideology, draw upon the Catholic faith. All the cases analyzed by the speakers will relate to this category – both to affirm its pertinence and to gauge the extent to which they diverge from it – while highlighting the distinct characteristics of each case studied. It is precisely the uniqueness of each national context – and, within it, of each entity under consideration – that aims to convey the pluralistic, highly diverse nature of the Latin American context, which is all too often portrayed as monolithic and uniform.

In this vein, the first session of the seminar focuses on Catholic-inspired politics – including the interactions of various social and political actors with the positions of the ecclesiastical hierarchy – in Latin America, and is structured around broad reflections on Pan-Americanism and political violence in relation to the reception of the liberation theology, anti-communism, and anti Protestantism, before turning its attention to political parties and social and political movements in specific national contexts. We have chosen to examine contexts that have received less attention in historiography, such as the distinctive cases of revolutionary Cuba and PRI-era Mexico, in order to enrich our understanding of individual national experiences.

The second session, on the other hand, aims to focus – from a perspective we might call Global Christian Democracy – on the transnational relationships between Europe and Latin America, examining the projects, institutions, foundations, and organizations through which European Catholics and Christian Democrats sought to develop and support Latin American Christian democracies. These are topics that have still been underappreciated by scholars of transnational history but which, in our view, represent a subject of considerable interest during the Cold War years, with significant influences on Latin American political developments.



CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN COLD WAR LATIN AMERICA

19 November 2026

2 pm	Welcome President of Civitas: Renato Moro President of Luigi Sturzo Institute: Nicola Antonetti	4 pm	Open discussion
2.30 pm	Keynote speech Piotr Kosicki (online)	4.30 pm	Coffee-break
I. Catholic-inspired politics in Cold War Latin America Chair Michael Borchard		II. Catholic-inspired politics in Cold War Latin America: parties and movements Chair Peter Heyrman	
3 pm	Daniel McDonald (Oxford University) <i>Catholic Pan-Americanism and Christian Democracy in Latin America</i>	4.50 pm	Massimo De Giuseppe (Iulm University) <i>El Salvador in the Global Catholic and CD mobilization</i>
3.20 pm	Gema Kloppe-Santamaria (University College Cork) <i>Cold War Entanglements: Diplomatic (Un)Responses to Anti-Protestant Violence in Early Cold War Latin America</i>	5.10 pm	Sam Kuijken (KU Leuven) <i>The Catholic Church, the Vatican, and the roots of Christian Democracy during the Cuban Revolution</i>
3.40 pm	Lucia Ceci (University of Rome, Tor Vergata) <i>Political violence and Liberation theology in Latin America</i>	5.30 pm	Julia Young (Catholic University of America) <i>A Holy War Against Communism: The Synarchist Social Project in Mexico</i> (online)
		5.50 pm	Open discussion

20 November 2026

III. Transnational networks for a global Christian Democracy Chair Renato Moro		11 am	Natalia Núñez Bargueño (KU Leuven) <i>Shaping Development and Democracy: Spanish and Latin American Lay Catholic Women in International Organizations during the first Cold War (1947-1965)</i>
10 am	Paolo Acanfora (Sapienza University of Rome) <i>The project of a Christian International News Agencies. The Inter Press Service in Latin America</i>	11.20 am	Lucio Piccoli (Freie Universität Berlin) Transnational Networks of Self-Help and Christian Democracy: Misereor, DESAL, and Development Cooperation between West Germany and Chile during the Long Sixties
10.20 am	Tania Hernández Vicencio (INAH, Mexico) <i>The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Mexico, 1980–2026</i> (translation from Spanish)	11.40 am	Coffee Break
		12 am	Open discussion
		12.30 am	President of Civitas, Renato Moro Co-organizers: Paolo Acanfora, Massimo De Giuseppe, Daniel McDonald Final remarks