

**Title: The Dynamics, Limits and Potential of Formal Liberal Democracy in Latin America**

**Suggested Category from the “Call For Papers”: 4. Governance and Multilateralism: Legitimacy, Participation and Democracy**

**Dr. Fred Judson, Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**

**Objective**

This paper is intended to consider the logical and potentially radical tendencies of “full” democracy and to contrast them with the patterns of power and the institutions of “bourgeois democracy” in Latin America. It places the evaluation of formal liberal democracy within a global conjuncture of three closely interacting matrices: a regime of globalizing capitalist accumulation; a regime of hegemonic global and globalizing security; and a hegemonizing ideological and discursive regime of formal liberal democracy. In that context, the structural profiles of Latin American social formations will be traced, in their dimensions as “regimes of accumulation” and as the political hegemony of capital, particularly in their institutionality (elections and electoral cycles, political parties, presidentialist political systems) and as ideological/cultural representations. The several insertions of Latin America (within the larger hemispheric dimension) into the global/globalizing security regime will be addressed as a structure within which formal liberal democracy proceeds as both practice and experience. Necessarily reference will be made to the notion of US hegemony or “hyper-power” status. The discursive dimension, i.e. the current hegemony of the discourses of liberal democracy, will be characterized as a structure. I will seek to identify various patterns of contradiction within these structural profiles, which have current meaning and implications for the near future of democracy. In particular, the apparent surge of both “neo-populist” and “left-of-centre” electoral outcomes in Latin America will be examined and interpreted.