Discussion Questions (09/20)

Discussion Questions on Levine: (submitted by Ale)

1. How did the geopolitical situation of Rio Grande do Sul influence Vargas’ rule? What about his gaucho past?

2. Do you believe that the Liberal alliance coalition further reinforced the opposition to Vargas’ ruling or would you view it as a true political victory?

3. Do think that Vargas would have had the success he had without the help of the tenentes? Would it have been a better strategy for Vargas to ally himself with the paulista oligarchy?

4. On page 28 the author states “Vargas welcomed a benevolent, interventionist model of an organic state, viewing society as a collection of groups differentiated and ranked according to their productive or economic role.” How did this differentiation affect society? Would you consider it a factor further dividing the rich and the poor?

Discussion Questions on Furtado: (submitted by Jane)

1. Both the Furtado and the Levine chapters illustrate the importance of transition in the 1930s. Levine demonstrates the centralization of government and Vargas' rise to power. Furtado describes Brazil's evolution from an export economy to a domestic industrial market. What parallel elements are there in these two processes of evolution? How does one transition influence the other?

2. On page 219, Furtado describes how the fall of Brazil's coffee monopoly essentially led to further economic independence; an economy that could annul the outside effects of the depression, grow, and produce parts to foster domestic production. The ruin of Brazil's primary means of income allowed for the Brazilian economy to resist (more so than other countries) the harsh effects of the Great Depression. How was Brazil, a country economically dependent on foreign capital from exports, essentially able to arrive at greater economic independence after the depression while other countries, such as the United States, suffered the effects of the depression more severely?

3. When coffee production suffered its first crisis in 1893, plantation owners and the government interceded to create equilibrium between supply and demand, boost prices, and thus keep coffee exporting a main asset to the industry (195). In the next forty years, the implementation of defense plans to protect coffee production and maintain monetary income from the export center. What impact did this intervention have on Brazil's economic evolution? How would the economy transformed if the government and plantation owners had abandoned coffee as a primary source of income?

4. After the depression, there was new competition between domestic producers and importers, with each alternating control of the market in a cyclical pattern (223). This
exchange regulated equilibrium and effectively eliminated the export economy rooted in the colonial era. What impact did the competition between domestic products and import have on local employment? Based on the Levine article, can we see an impact from this competition on politics and the Vargas regime?