Geo-Political Issues in Central America
Monroe Doctrine at Work

• In 19th Century the United States Told Europe to stay out of American affairs in return the United States would stay out of European affairs
Involvement in the Cold War

- Unstable governments and proximity to United States made Central America a hot spot for the Cold War – CIA vs. KGB battles
  - Training of agents and fighters
  - Ex. Contras of Nicaragua
Fidel Castro

- Led overthrow of military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959
- Nationalized US owned industries in 1960 and limited private ownership
  - Led to US ending diplomatic relations
  - Many Cubans flee to United States
Che Guevara

- Revolutionary leader from Argentina responsible for many socialist revolutions across Americas
  - 1953 Guatemala
    - Stopped by CIA
  - Cuba 1959
    - Successful
  - Bolivia 1966
    - Executed 1967
Cuba and the Cold War

• Bay of Pigs Invasion
  – April, 1961
  – CIA trained fighters trying to overthrow Castro regime

• Cuban Missile Crisis
  – October 1962
  – Russian Long range missiles found in Cuba
Grenada

• Granada had been developing close ties with Cuba since independence in 1974
• Marxist coup in 1983
  – US Soldiers moved in to protect American Nationals
    • Used tourist maps since no other good maps existed
• Government deposed and free elections established
Banana Republic

• Term used to describe countries under the control of foreign companies
  – Often companies exploiting a country’s natural resources
    • Ex. United Fruit Company in Honduras
  – Take advantage of vulnerable governments

[Image of bananas being handled]
Commercial “Development”

- Countries hoping for foreign investment invited companies in with tax breaks
  - Countries hope companies will also build infrastructure

- Companies gain political power with control of economy
  - Influence legislation
  - Muscle out local competition
  - Profits go to company headquarters
La United Fruit Co. by Pablo Neruda

... The Fruit Company, Inc.

Reserved for itself the most succulent,
The central coast of my own land,
The delicate waist of the Americas.

- It rechristened its territories
  As the "Banana Republics",
  And over the sleeping dead,
  Over the restless heroes
  Who brought about the greatness,
  The liberty and the flags,

It established a comic opera. .
The School of the Americas

• Established in United States to train Latin American fighters
  – Used to train anti-communist and anti-narcotic fighters
  – Roughly 64,000 fighters

• Renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001

“The School of the Americas was biggest base for destabilization in Latin America.”
  - Panamanian President Jorge Illueca
Manuel Noriega

• Graduate of School of the Americas
• 1983 Noriega creates a military dictatorship in Panama
• United States intervenes
  – 1989 attempts to get a military coup
  – 1990 United States invades Panama
    • Arrests Noriega on drug trafficking charges
The Drug Trade

• Cartels in Latin America grow and illegally smuggle illicit drugs into United States
  – Mexico and Colombia especially
  – Cartels build private armies to fight governments
    • Ex. Zetas in Mexico and FARC in Colombia