

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

FALL 2010, HIS 508

**THE GREAT DEBATES OF COLONIAL LATIN
AMERICA, 1492 - 1830**

PROF. PETER B. VILLELLA

Lecture: MHRA 2208, M 6:30pm – 9:20pm

Office: 2129 MHRA

Telephone: (336) 334 - 5992

Office Hours: T, Th 12:30 – 1:30 and by appointment

Email: pbvillel@uncg.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an intellectual history addressing the legal, moral, and political debates arising from the European conquest and colonization of the Western Hemisphere after 1492, especially within the first great American empires, those of Spain and Portugal. For over three centuries in colonial Latin America, Africans, Europeans, and native peoples both fought and cooperated with one another, exploited and traded, and segregated and intermixed. In doing so, diverse thinkers of all backgrounds contemplated their societies and argued over, among other issues, the nature of racial differences, the morality of slavery, and the justice of European imperialism itself. Ultimately, this course will inform students of the early modern roots of many issues that concern us today, such as international law, race theory, political corruption, economic inequality, and religious toleration.

While historians have traditionally focused on the European participants in these debates, in this course we seek to represent the true diversity of colonial Latin America by also including and comparing the perspectives of native peoples, Africans and their descendants, mixed-race individuals, women, and foreigners.

This is an advanced course in history, requiring intensive reading, writing, and speaking. Classroom time will be divided between lectures, discussions, media, and group activities. Discussions and written assignments will involve the analysis of newly uncovered and translated primary sources. In lieu of a final exam, students will write an essay addressing one or more of the major themes of the class.

TEXTS

This class requires heavy – but interesting! – reading. **All readings are mandatory.** No textbook is required; all readings will be posted to the course website. In order to comprehend

and follow the material, students will need to access the website and complete each week's reading assignments *before* the corresponding classes.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance in class is essential to understanding the readings, as I will contextualize them and present supplemental information, including visual materials, music, and video. Just as important, each week we will devote a significant amount of class time to discussion, debate, group activities, and questions, and participation in these activities will account for a major part of students' grades. Therefore, **attendance in class is mandatory** and essential for performing well in the course.

Each class period will be divided into two halves, to allow time for food and a short break.

CLASS WEBSITE

The website on Blackboard will play a major role. Besides the mandatory readings, I will also post study questions, links, announcements, and other materials that will help you perform well. **You should check the website regularly for updates.**

Since this class deals with the history of ideas – with political issues, moral questions, and legal disputes – debate and discussion will be just as important to this class as my lectures. Therefore, I will organize online discussion boards for course credit. This will give everybody an opportunity to offer their perspectives in a thoughtful and considered way, at their own speed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Coursework includes the following: participation (which includes attendance, weekly classroom activities, and online discussions), an in-class presentation on a topic of the students' choosing, a midterm exam consisting of short answer questions, and a final term paper interpreting and analyzing primary sources.

Participation (includes attendance)	20%
Classroom presentation	15%
Midterm exam	25%
Final paper	40%

STANDARDS AND POLICIES

As historians, your ability to write in clear and articulate prose is very important. I expect you to meet basic university writing standards, especially regarding spelling and grammar. Proofread and spell-check everything, as clarity and quality will affect your grade.

Take special care not to plagiarize – that is, to quote or paraphrase somebody else's words or ideas without crediting him or her. (If in doubt, ask!) I am happy to meet with you during office hours to go over your outlines and drafts and to answer any questions you have.

Written coursework is due in class on the day it is listed on the course calendar. It should be double-spaced, in a readable and professional 12-pt font (such as Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. (Do not mess with the margins; nothing could be more obvious.) Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day. In some circumstances I may be able to accommodate those with true conflicts and emergencies, but only if the student alerts me sooner rather than later.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

In this course we will often discuss sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as race, class, gender, and colonialism. While we will not always agree with one another, we welcome diverse interpretations of the material, as a discussion where everyone agrees is more of a pep rally than a classroom, and unlikely to be enlightening. We aim, therefore, to foster an atmosphere in which all students feel free to express their thoughts, and in which we can disagree openly without feeling threatened or disrespected. To these ends, during class we will approach these issues as historians and scholars seeking truth, rather than as partisans with a specific agenda. Thus, **personal attacks and offensive language will not be tolerated**, since they obstruct honest debate.

A good rule to keep in mind: **when challenging another's arguments, try to do so in a way that assumes good faith on his or her part.** Address the strongest aspects of his or her arguments, not a cartoonish, over-simplified, and easily dismissed version of them. This rule has the added benefit of requiring each of us to think harder and question our own assumptions, and we all improve our own knowledge as a result.

Finally, **TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES.** No texting. You may have drinks in class; food – of the quiet kind – is only allowed during media showings and during break times.

Good luck and have a great semester!