

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

FALL 2011, HIS 239 / IGS 223

History of Colonial Latin America

Prof. Peter B. Villella

Lecture: MHRA 1215, T R 11-12:15; **Final Exam:** Tuesday, Dec. 13, 12-3pm

Office: 2108 MHRA | **Phone:** (336) 334 - 3986

Office Hours: Wed. 3 – 5pm and by appointment

Email: pvillel@uncg.edu

Most Sovereign Highness:

The most important event since the creation of the world – excepting, of course, the incarnation and death of Him who created it – is the discovery of the Indies, what is called the New World.

– Francisco López de Gómara, 1552

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome! This survey considers the origins of the diverse peoples and nations of what we today call “Latin America.” Beginning in 1492, for over three centuries men and women from four continents – all with their own languages, practices, and beliefs – converged, interacted, and intermixed, often violently, within the American empires of Portugal and Spain. The result was a bewilderingly complex, eclectic, and unique civilization.

Thus, we will approach colonial Latin America as one of the world’s first “modern” societies. Multiracial, multicultural, and economically globalized, colonial peoples grappled with many of the same social, political, moral, and religious issues we do today. For example, what is the nature of racial difference? Is it legitimate to wage war in order to “liberate” foreign peoples from tyranny? How do conquered and subordinated peoples respond to inequality and injustice? When is rebellion justified? Should local communities be allowed autonomy, or can educated authorities in capital cities better ensure the “common good?”

Moreover, the history of Latin America is also *our* history. North Carolina, after all, once belonged to the Spanish Crown. But more importantly, as one of the world’s largest Spanish-speaking nations, today’s United States hosts the northernmost “Latin American” society, with deep economic, cultural, and demographic ties to the rest of the hemisphere.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. *Identify* the major events and issues of colonial Latin American history;
2. *Perceive* the historical patterns shaping those events and issues;
3. *Explain* the origins of those patterns, and their expressions today; and
4. *Understand* the constant interplay between continuity and change over time in history.

TEXTS

This class requires heavy – but interesting! – reading. **All readings are mandatory.** In order to comprehend and follow classroom activities, students will need to complete each week's reading assignments *before* the corresponding lectures, as indicated in the course schedule.

While a modern textbook – *Colonial Latin America*, by Mark Burkholder and Lyman Johnson, 7th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) – will guide us, we will also focus on primary sources (that is, sources produced during the period we are studying) so as to emphasize the diverse perspectives of the men and women who reflected on the people, events, practices, institutions, and conflicts of their own times. One collection of sources is *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History*, edited by Kenneth Mills, William Taylor, and Sandra Graham (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002). I will post the rest, along with several maps and images, to the class website, under “Course Documents → Readings.”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Coursework includes the following: 1) a short map quiz, identifying the countries of modern Latin America; 2) attendance; 3) participation in discussions and a variety of short assignments; 4) a midterm (multiple-choice) testing for comprehension of lecture material; and 5) a final exam (cumulative) consisting of both multiple-choice and short essays. Students will need red bubble sheets and #2 pencils for the two exams, as well as blue books for the final exam.

Grades follow a “point system,” with each grade segment consisting of 100 points total.

Map Quiz	10%
Attendance	10%
Discussions and short assignments	25%
Midterm (Thurs., Oct. 6)	25%
Final exam (Tues., Dec. 13)	30%

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The reading assignments supplement rather than replace classroom activities, and the midterm and most of the final exam will be derived primarily from my lectures. Furthermore, I will present other information in class not covered in the readings, such as music and video, and allow opportunities for questions. Therefore, **attendance at lectures is essential** to performing well in the course.

Students may miss up to **three** class meetings without penalty; with each additional absence I will deduct 20 points off of the attendance score (beginning from 100). I reserve the right to drop students with more than six unexcused absences from the course. To be excused, students must either inform me *before* class of the reason, or else provide proof of an emergency *after* the absence.

Since it is disruptive, I will also penalize 10 points for habitual or excessive lateness.

DISCUSSIONS AND SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

At the beginning of the semester, students will be divided into groups of five. Discussions and other group activities addressing the course readings will be incorporated into class meetings. Since you cannot discuss what you have not read, you must complete each reading assignment before class.

Each week, **one student from each group** (on a rotating basis) will produce a short written assignment (2-3 pages) reflecting group discussions, due at the beginning of the next class. This means that every student will write two short papers during the semester. I will assess their thoughtfulness and comprehension according to the following scale: “check ++” (rare, 10pts); “check+” (very good, 9pts); “check” (acceptable, 8pts); “check-“ (poor, 7pts); and “incomplete” (fail, 5pts). Work that is late or never turned in will receive a zero. In some circumstances I may be able to accommodate those with true conflicts and emergencies, but only if the student alerts me *before* rather than *after* the deadline.

CLASS WEBSITE AND EMAIL

You must have a working email address, and check it regularly, as it is the main means of communication out of class. I will send out reminders, assignments, and other announcements regularly.

The website on Blackboard will also play a major role. I will post the mandatory readings, topics for short assignments, study questions, links, and other materials necessary to perform well. Occasionally, I will also use the website to follow up on themes covered in lectures and discussions, and respond to student questions. **You should check the website regularly for updates.**

CLASSROOM STANDARDS AND COURSE POLICIES

As historians, your ability to write in clear and articulate prose is very important. In every written assignment 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. Plagiarism – that is, when you quote or paraphrase somebody else’s words or ideas without crediting him or her – is the academic equivalent of lying, cheating, or stealing. **Every word you write in this class must be your own, not copied from any other source, whether in print or online**, unless clearly indicated. If in doubt, ask! The UNCG Academic Integrity Policy is online at <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu>. I reserve the right to fail any student who has plagiarized on an assignment.

All written coursework is to be typed in Microsoft Word (or its equivalent), in 12-pt New Times Roman font, with all the standard 1-inch margins. (Do not mess with the margins.)

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

- *Civility and Respect*

In this course we will often discuss sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as race, class, gender, and imperialism. We will also see and read primary materials representing archaic and (frankly) offensive perspectives. As they are part of our history (whether we like it or not), we will not censor or ignore them, and students should be prepared to address them directly and in a mature, academic fashion.

In discussions, we will not always agree with one another, yet we welcome diverse interpretations, as a discussion where everyone agrees is more of a pep rally than a classroom, unlikely to be enlightening. We aim, therefore, to foster an atmosphere in which all students feel free to express their ideas, and in which we can disagree and challenge one another openly without feeling threatened or disrespected. 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 ideas, not a cartoonish, simplistic, and easily dismissed version of them. This rule has the added benefit of requiring each of us to consider our own assumptions more critically.

- *Technology policy*

The proliferation of laptops, tablets, and other gadgets is a mixed blessing in university classrooms. While it can allow students to create and organize notes and documents more easily, it can also be the ultimate distraction, and their grades may suffer. Therefore, my laptop/tablet policy is as follows:

- **Students are adults**, and can decide for themselves whether to bring technology into the classroom, or if it would damage their class performance.
- **However, it is unacceptable to distract other students**. I reserve the right to ask students whose laptop/tablet activities are disruptive to others **for any reason** to either switch seats or, when appropriate, to shut down their machines and never bring them again.
- **Cell phone use – including texting – is always prohibited**. Students who disrupt class or who are otherwise not contributing positively may be asked to leave, counting as an unexcused absence.

- *Food and drink*

You may have drinks – but not food – in class, unless you bring enough for everybody, plus a double portion for the instructor.

Have a great semester!