

HIST 320-01: HISTORY OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Ver. 1



Fall 2012
Tuesday, Thursday, 14:00 to 15:15
MHRA 2207

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appointment

Course Description:

This course focuses on the histories of Mexico and Central America from antiquities to the second half of the 20th century. We will pay closer attention to Mexico than to Central America, as well as to the modern period in the region. We will examine how people from at least three continents worked together and contributed to the creation of the modern Mexican nation.

Beyond Latin America, this course is also about acquiring important academic skills such as primary source analysis, synthesis and criticism of secondary sources, articulating coherent arguments, and communicating all these effectively in written and oral forms.

Course Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain how and why the European colonial system in New Spain was established, maintained, changed, and collapsed.
2. Analyze the processes that shaped Mexico in the past three-hundred years
3. Explain the political, economic, and social challenges the people of Central America faced when they entered the global market, and their convoluted relations with the U.S.
4. Articulate, analyze, interpret, and use primary and secondary sources in academic writing.

In addition, the History Department identifies the following goals for all undergraduate history courses:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. (Historical Comprehension)
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. (Historical Analysis)
3. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. (Historical Research)
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. (Historical Interpretation)

Readings and Communication:

The following are the required textbooks and monographs for this class and are available in the college's bookstore:

- Colin M. MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 3rd Edition, Prentice Hal
- Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)
- Greg Grandin. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006)

In addition to these books, you will also be required to read additional articles and book chapters that are listed on the class schedule below. Some of these articles are accessible through the University's data bases (mainly JSTOR and Project Muse) and you should get them yourself. Others will be posted on Blackboard. Additional instructions on how to obtain these readings will be given in class. You should download these readings, actively read them before the class they are assigned to, mark them, write in their margins etc., and bring them to class.

Blackboard: We will be using Blackboard as the principle means of out-of-class communication. Please make sure you have access to our site, and set your personal settings to get notifications according to your preferences. Check the website often.

Grading and Assignments:

Assignments are both an assessment tool and a teaching tool. The assignments in this course are designed to help me evaluate your performance, to assist you in understanding the subject matter, and most importantly, to equip you with crucial academic skills.

Grading Policy: It is your responsibility to keep track of your own performance in the course. I am always willing to meet individually with students during the semester to suggest ways in which you can perform at your best. If you wish to discuss a grade that you receive during the semester, my policy is that: 1) you schedule an appointment to do so only 24 hours after receiving the evaluation of your work and 2) before the appointment, you submit a written statement explaining your question or doubts about the grade. It is your responsibility to save graded papers.

The following grading scale will be used:

A+ = 97-100	B-=80-82	D= 63-66
A = 93-96	C+ = 77-79	D-=60-62
A-= 90-92	C=73-76	F= 59 and under
B+ = 87-89	C-=70-73	
B= 83-86	D+ = 67-69	

Your grades will be derived from the following areas:

10%	Active Participation
5%	Map Quiz
30%	Two Short responses, 15% each, on sections I and II
30%	Two Book Reviews, 15% each, on monographs read during sections III and IV
25%	<u>Final Exam</u>
100%	Total

a) Active Participation (10%)

Participation is an essential part of learning. While passive forms of learning—e.g. reading and listening to a lecture—are important, active learning is more beneficial to the learner. Moreover, we all learn from each other, and your voice, interpretation, analysis, and opinions will contribute to the creation of a vibrant, open, diverse, and exciting environment of intellectual exchange, and this is what college is all about.

Participation in class is based on attending class and demonstrating that you've done all the readings and are ready to discuss them with your peers and the instructor. It is impossible to interact in class and comment on sources if you do not have them with you, so make sure you bring a hard copy. It is also impossible to participate if you are not present in class. Each absence above three (3) that is not excused by the Athletic Dept., Dean of Students, or medical doctor will result in one-third letter grade subtracted from the final course grade.

b) Map Quiz (5%)

People interact with, are influenced by, and shape their environment. Therefore, we cannot discuss past societies without having at least a general idea about the locations, areas and surroundings they operated in. The map quiz will help you familiarize yourself with the basic knowledge of our subjects' settings. There will be one map quiz on the political map of modern Latin America, with special focus on Central America and several Mexican states.

c) Two Short Responses (15% each, 30% cumulatively)

Written communication is a crucial skill both inside and outside the academy. Research expands existing knowledge through a creative analytical process. Writing these short responses will improve your abilities to synthesize existing knowledge and to voice your own learned opinion according to academic and disciplinary standards. You will be required to submit two short responses (3-4 double-spaced, 12 point font size, 1 inch margins, a stapled hard-copy), each of which will give you the opportunity to experiment with a different academic genre: source analysis, book review, and film review. Further instructions will be given in class and on Blackboard. I would allow replacing the two responses with one research paper. If you are interested, please schedule a meeting with me before the second section starts.

d) Two Book Reviews (15% each, 30% cumulatively)

Book reviews are an independent academic genre different from research papers. Writing a book review helps you reading a monograph and understanding its main arguments, contributions, and weaknesses. It also trains you in reading other book reviews, which with the abundance of books and scarcity of time is an essential skill. You will be required to write two book reviews during the course on the two monographs we will read. The review is due at the beginning of the class in which we will discuss the monograph. Each review equals 15% of the final grade. A book review should not exceed 1500 words. Further instructions will be discussed in class and will be available online.

e) Final Exam (25%)

In the information age it sometimes seems as the answer is only few clicks away (it is not, but let's put that aside for a moment). The bigger challenge, however, is to ask interesting and useful questions. The ability to ask questions, to analyze, and to identify patterns, anomalies, and connections is dependent on knowledge we actually keep in our heads. When thinking, our brain calls upon this knowledge and creates new understandings or poses questions. The preparation for in-class exam helps you store some of the class's subject matter in your head for future use. In-class exams are also an excellent tool to examine how one uses analytical tools we will learn on new situations. Further instructions will be given in class.

Other Course Policies

Late paper policy: for each day assignments are late, your grade for the activity will drop half a letter grade.

Drafts policy: I would gladly accept drafts of papers and reviews. The only condition is that these drafts should be handed to me in a hard copy not later than a week before the assignment is due.

Using Technology in Class: You may take notes on laptops and tablets if this is your preference, however, while in class these devices should be used for note-taking purposes only. Not surfing the web, not chatting, not playing etc. I reserve the right to ask students whose laptop/tablet activities are disruptive (to them, to me, to others), for any reason, to shut down their machines and, if the behavior repeats itself, to leave the classroom (and be considered absent). Don't use your cell phones. Do not text, do not check messages, and certainly do not talk. Simply leave it off the table in your bag.

Academic Integrity Policy: The maintenance of academic integrity is essential for each individual and for the academic community. Make sure you know and understand the UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>). By enrolling in the University, each student agrees to abide by the Academic Integrity Policy. By taking this course you reaffirm this commitment. Make sure you know what you signed for.

Students with disabilities: All students have the potential to succeed. If you need any academic accommodation contact the Office of Disability Services and follow their procedures (<http://ods.uncg.edu/>). Please do so well in advance, and not in the last moment before the assignment is due.

The Writing Center: You entered the university so you could grow, develop, and learn valuable skills. The University, its faculty and its staff, are all committed to help you achieve these goals and provide you with valuable resources to support you. The Writing Center is an important resource. No matter what you are writing and no matter where you are in the writing process (generating ideas, drafting, revising or proofreading), the peer tutors in the Writing Center can assist you. The center's tutors are friendly students and also excellent writers with special training as writing consultants. They would not grade or correct your papers; instead, they would coach you and help you become a better writer. I encourage you to use the Writing Center as much as possible. Go to their website to learn more about how they can help you: <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/default.php>.

This syllabus may be subject to revision. Any changes will be announced in advance, both in class and on blackboard