

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

FALL 2011, HIS 320

History of Mexico and Central America

Prof. Peter B. Villella

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

Office Hours: M W 3:30-4:30pm and by appointment

Email: villella@uncg.edu

Welcome! This class will explore the unique and fascinating histories of the modern nations of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica from their original native civilizations, to their conquest and rule by people from Spain, to the independent republics of today. We will examine the region's culture, society, and politics, emphasizing its indigenous heritage, the legacy of colonialism and race-mixing, the influence of the United States and other foreign financial and military powers, and the challenges of modernity.

The history of Mexico and Central America is important to us today because our hemisphere is demographically, economically, and culturally integrated like never before. The United States is one of the world's largest Spanish-speaking nations, and Americans of Latin American background—most of whose families are from Mexico and Central America—constitute its largest ethnic minority. North America from Alaska to the Panama Canal is in many ways a giant free trade zone, with profound consequences for workers and consumers in each of its nations. And just as business is transnational, so are families and even individuals. Predominately Hispanophone cities such as Miami and Los Angeles are firmly within the Latin American cultural sphere, consuming the same media and participating in the same conversations. Students who complete this course will be in a better position to understand and navigate the transnational politics, culture, and economy of our present and future.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs):

As a GN marker course, HIS-320 addresses the following College-level SLOs defined by UNCG's General Education Program (see <http://undergraduate.uncg.edu/colleagues/gened.php>):

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures. **(LG1, LG3)**
2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world, focusing on cultures, nations or sub-nationalities in the Caribbean, Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands, or indigenous peoples around the world). **(LG1, LG3)**
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and perspectives to analyze issues. **(LG3, LG5)**

TEACHING METHODS FOR ACHIEVING LEARNING OUTCOMES: As an upper-level course designed primarily for history majors, the graded component will consist mostly of reading comprehension and writing. Grades will be given for: 1) attendance; 2) a geographical quiz on Mexico and Central America; 3) a number of short responses to reading assignments, posted to an online journal; 4) two essays (~5-6 pages) in response to the novels; and 5) a final paper treating both lecture material and class readings. See topical outline for explanations of learning outcomes.

EVALUATION AND GRADING: Grades are calculated according to the following scheme:

Attendance	10%
Map Quiz	10%
Short Assignments	20%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	20%
Final Paper	20%

A = fulfills assignment entirely while amply demonstrating **original insight and reflection**
B = fulfills assignment entirely and thoughtfully
C = mostly fulfills assignment, but without originality (e.g., merely echoes the instructor)
D = partially incomplete, or betrays non-comprehension of theme or issue
F = severely incomplete, irrelevant, plagiarized, or never turned in

TEXTS

This course requires heavy—but interesting!—reading. We will not be using a textbook; instead, we will explore a number of primary sources, fiction and nonfiction, written by and about the people we are studying at different moments in their history. The following three required texts are available at the UNCG bookstore; the rest I will post in pdf format to the course website.

- Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
- José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, *The Mangy Parrot (Abridged)*, translated by David Frye (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005).
- Mariano Azeula, *The Underdogs*, translated by Gustavo Pellón (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006).

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance at all class meetings is **mandatory, and I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences.** Understanding that life happens, all students will start with a “perfect” attendance score (that is, 100 points, or A+) and are allowed three absences without penalty. After that, I will subtract 20 points per missed class. I may drop any student with more than 6 unexplained absences. Since lateness is disruptive, I will also penalize excessive or habitual tardiness 5-10pts.

Students are expected to be attentive at all times and to participate in discussions and group activities. **Disruptive individuals may be asked to leave,** counting as an unexcused

absence. This includes (but is not limited to): talking loudly, texting, surfing websites unrelated to class, and sleeping. My main concern is not “forcing” you to learn, but how disruptive students affect others. If you do not wish to abide these rules, please consider another course.

Assigned readings are to be completed **before the class in which the material is discussed**. You cannot discuss the readings if you have not read them. I will deduct 5-10 points from students who are regularly unprepared to participate in discussions and group activities.

STANDARDS AND POLICIES FOR WRITTEN WORK

As historians, your ability to write in clear and articulate prose is very important. I expect the essays 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 will fail any student who has plagiarized, and report him or her to the dean.

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. The online journals are set up on the Blackboard platform. 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 ETIQUETTE

In this course we will often discuss sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as race, class, gender, imperialism, exploitation, and immigration. 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 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 think harder and question our own assumptions.

Have a great semester!

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TOPICAL OUTLINE

PART ONE: ORIGINS

19 Aug – Introduction to themes and course requirements

21 Aug – Mesoamerican civilizations

READ: Mesoamerican folklore and wisdom (online)

26 Aug – “Modernization” 1.0: Anáhuac

READ: Schwartz, ed., *Victors and Vanquished*, 1-28

28 Aug – Iberian expansion

READ: Schwartz, 40-78

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #1

Intended student learning outcomes for all thought questions: GN SLOs 1, 3, & 5: find and evaluate information on diverse cultures, describe interconnections among regions of the world, and use diverse cultural frames of reference and perspectives to analyze historical issues.

2 Sept – NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

4 Sept – Invasion: Native perspectives

READ: Schwartz, 29-39, 91-99, 119-26, 128-32, 162-67, 177-81, 189-96, 211-13. **MAP QUIZ.**

Map quiz intended learning outcome: GN SLO 1: find and report information on diverse cultures

9 Sept – The conquest of Mexico: Spanish perspectives

READ: Schwartz, 80-91, 103-115, 133-55, 167-77, 217-21

PART TWO: NEW SPAIN

11 Sept – “Modernization” 2.0: Spiritual conquest and syncretism

READ: Toribio de Benavente Motolinía; *Nican mopohua*; Paz, *Solitude* (online)

16 Sept – TBA

18 Sept – Colonial government and law: paternalism and indirect imperialism

READ: Lizardi, *The Mangy Parrot*, 1-53

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #2

23 Sept – Baroque society and art: hierarchy and mestizaje

READ: *Mangy Parrot*, 53-103

25 Sept – Colonial economies: peones and patrones

READ: *Mangy Parrot*, 103-150

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #3

30 Sept – Creoles and Creolism

READ: *Mangy Parrot*, 150-97; Francisco Xavier Clavigero and Servando Teresa de Mier (online)

2 Oct – “Modernization” 3.0: the Bourbon Reforms

READ: *Mangy Parrot*, 198-228

PART THREE: INDEPENDENCE AND ANARCHY

7 Oct – Independence: Conservative and Liberal

READ: Finish *Mangy Parrot*.

9 Oct – From Two Republics to One Divided

ASSIGNMENT: FIRST ESSAY DUE

Response paper intended student learning outcomes: GN SLOs 1, 2, and 3: students will find and evaluate information about non-Western peoples, reveal their connections to the rest of the world, and interpret and consider diverse perspectives and cultures.

14 Oct – NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

16 Oct – The Disunited States

READ: Lucás Alamán (online)

21 Oct – An Imbalanced Continent, 1835-57

READ: Justo Sierra, *Political Evolution of the Mexican People* (online)

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #4

23 Oct – “Modernization” 4.0: The Liberal Reform of 1857

READ: Sierra, *Political Evolution of the Mexican People* (online)

28 Oct – Conservative Backlash, 1860s

READ: *Political Evolution of the Mexican People* (online)

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #5

PART THREE: STABILITY, DEMOCRACY, PROSPERITY—CHOOSE ANY TWO

30 Oct – One Man to Unite them All: The Porfiriato

READ: Percy Martin (online); Paz, *Solitude* (online)

4 Nov – Isthmian Politics to 1914

READ: Azuela, *The Underdogs*, 1-26; appendix 1 (pp. 89-111)

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #6

6 Nov – The Mexican Revolution of 1910

READ: *Underdogs*, 26-61.

11 Nov – Post-Revolutionary Politics and Thought: Indigenism and the PRN

READ: *Underdogs*, 61-87

13 Nov – Banana Republics and War

ASSIGNMENT: SECOND ESSAY DUE

PART FOUR: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

18 Nov – “Modernization” 5.0: “Institutional Revolution”

READ: Paz, *Solitude* (online)

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #7

20 Nov – Revolutions and Contreras: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua

READ: Rigoberta Menchu; US anticommunism (online)

25 Nov – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

2 Dec – “Modernization” 6.0: 1994, 2000, 2006. Contemporary Issues. Middle-class Mexico? Or more of the same?

READ: The Zapatistas; Gustavo Arellano; news articles (online)

ASSIGNMENT: Thought question #8

9 Dec – FINAL PAPER DUE