

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

HIS 239

History of Colonial Latin America

Prof. Peter B. Villella

Office: MHRA 2121 | Email: vilella@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 vast American empires of Portugal and Spain. The result was a complex, eclectic, and unique civilization that helped shape the world as we know it today.

In this course we approach colonial Latin America as one of the world’s first “modern” societies. Multiethnic, multicultural, and 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 cultural and ethnic difference? Is war legitimate to “liberate” foreign peoples from tyranny? How might conquered and subordinated peoples respond to oppression, inequality, and injustice? When is rebellion justified, and how might it be most effective?

This is not the history of a distant, exotic people. The history of Latin America is *our* history (North Carolina, after all, once belonged to the Spanish Crown). More importantly, as the world’s second largest Spanish-speaking nation, today’s United States owes much of its culture and history to colonial Latin America, and relies heavily upon its social and economic ties to the rest of the hemisphere.

The course counts for 3 credit-hours, and is intended for lower-level undergraduates of all majors. It fulfills the following General College (GEC) Requirements: GE core-**GHP**; GE marker-**GN**; College Additional Requirements-**GMO**. The course is also cross-listed with IGS (IGS-223). There are no prerequisites or co-requisites.

INTENDED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Goal 1. Foundational Skills: *Think critically, communicate effectively, and develop appropriate fundamental skills in quantitative and information literacies.*

LG3. Knowledge of Human Histories, Cultures, and the Self: *Describe, interpret, and evaluate the ideas, events, and expressive traditions that have shaped collective and individual human experience through inquiry and analysis in the diverse disciplines of the humanities, religions, languages, histories, and the arts.*

LG5. Personal, Civic, and Professional Development: *Develop a capacity for active citizenship, ethics, social responsibility, personal growth, and skills for lifelong learning in a global society. In so doing, students will engage in free and open inquiry that fosters mutual respect across multiple cultures and perspectives.*

As a General Historical Perspectives (GHP) course with a Global Non-western (GN) marker, HIS-239 emphasizes the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

GHP:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives. **(LG1)**
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing. **(LG3)**

GN:

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures. **(LG1)**
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). **(LG3)**
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and perspectives to analyze issues. **(LG5)**

REQUIREMENTS FOR ACHIEVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Coursework includes: 1) a short map quiz, identifying the countries of modern Latin America; 2) attendance; 3) several small online assignments addressing course readings; 4) an exercise in primary source analysis; 5) a short response paper (~4-5 pages) reflecting on the texts and their relationship to broader course themes; 6) a midterm assessing comprehension of lecture material; and 7) a final exam (cumulative) consisting of multiple-choice questions and short essays. Final grades are calculated according to the following scheme:

Map Quiz	5%
Attendance	10%
Primary source analysis	10%
Midterm	15%
Response paper	15%
Discussion section	20%
Final exam	25%

EVALUATION SCHEME

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., echoes the instructor)

D = incomplete, or betrays non-comprehension of or non-engagement with theme or issue

F = severely incomplete, irrelevant, plagiarized, or never turned in

TEXTS

This course requires heavy—but interesting!—reading. **All readings are mandatory.** 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.

We will emphasize primary sources—texts, images, and other artifacts produced by the historical men and women we are studying. **The primary sources are posted to the course website.** These include texts, maps, and images, all of which we will discuss in class.

The textbook is *Latin America in Colonial Times* by Matthew Restall and Kris Lane (Cambridge University Press, 2011), available both in print as well as in an electronic format.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The reading assignments supplement rather than replace classroom activities, and the midterm and most of the final exam primarily cover the lectures. During class we will also encounter artifacts and sources such as music and video, and there will be time for discussions and questions. Thus, **attendance at lectures is essential** to performing well in the course.

I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Recognizing that life happens, students may miss **up to three** class meetings without penalty. Each additional absence will deduct 10 points off of the final attendance score (beginning from 100/A+). **I reserve the right to drop students with more than eight unexcused absences** from the course. Since it is disruptive, I will also penalize 10 points for habitual or excessive lateness.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS

Discussion sections will be led by an advanced graduate student in History and will take place on Fridays. This will be the time and place devoted to more in-depth discussions and assignments regarding the major themes addressed in the course. The goal will be to connect the history we are studying to the broader, universal human experience by way of the thoughtful and systematic analysis of primary and secondary sources. Discussion section grades will be based on attendance, participation, and a series of short assignments to be completed both in and out of class. See the separate discussion section syllabus for more detail.

CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN WORK

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. **I do not accept late papers.**

As historians, your ability to communicate in **clear and articulate prose** is very important. In every written assignment, whether on paper or online, I expect you to meet basic university writing standards regarding spelling and grammar. Clarity and quality affect grades.

Take special care not to plagiarize. Plagiarism—quoting or paraphrasing the words or ideas of others without giving credit—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 on any assignment, however small, and will contact the dean.

COURSE WEBSITE AND EMAIL

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

The course website on Canvas will also play a major role. **You should check the website regularly for updates.** I will post the mandatory readings, 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.

CLASSROOM STANDARDS AND ETIQUETTE

Civility and Respect

In this course we will discuss sensitive and emotionally charged topics, such as race, class, gender, and imperialism. We will also encounter 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. 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 and explore their thoughts, 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 of thumb: **when challenging one another, assume good faith.** Address the strongest aspects of the contrary position, not a cartoonish straw man version. This encourages us to reflect upon our own assumptions more critically, a central goal of liberal arts education.

Technology

The proliferation of laptops, tablets, and other gadgets is a mixed blessing in university classrooms. While they allow students to keep and organize notes and documents more easily, they are also distracting, and students' grades may suffer. My technology 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 respectfully ask students who use laptops to sit in the back of the class where flickering screens will not disrupt others. I may also ask students with gadgets to switch

seats **for any reason** or, when appropriate, to shut down their machines and never bring them again.

- **Texting is always prohibited.** I may ask students who are disengaged or not contributing positively to leave, counting as an unexcused absence.

Food and drink

You may have drinks in class. Food is not allowed, unless you bring enough for everybody, plus a double portion for the instructor. I prefer salty snacks and/or chocolate.

Have a great semester!