

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA – GREENSBORO

SPRING 2011, HIS 239 / IGS 223

History of Colonial Latin America

Prof. Peter B. Villella

Lecture: BRYN 105, M W F 11-11:50am

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome! This survey considers the origins of the diverse peoples and nations of what we today call “Latin America.” For over three hundred years, from 1492 to the mid-nineteenth century, men and women from four continents – all with their own languages, practices, and beliefs – converged, interacted, and intermixed (often violently) in the context of European colonialism. The result, as we will see, was a bewilderingly complex, eclectic, dynamic civilization. Thus, we will approach colonial Latin America – multiracial, multicultural, and economically globalized – as one of the world’s first “modern” societies.

In this sense, far from being a mere historical curiosity, we will learn that Latin America’s colonial peoples grappled with many of the same social, political, moral, and religious issues we read of in the news today. How, for example, can people of different cultures, faiths, and races live together peacefully? When is war (or rebellion) justified? Should authority be centralized, or is greater local autonomy the ideal?

Finally, the history of Latin America is also *our* history. The United States, after all, is one of the world’s largest Spanish-speaking nations, and much of the country – including parts of North Carolina – was once part of Latin America.

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 historical origins and contexts behind many of today’s issues facing Latin America;
4. *Understand* the relationship between chronology and context in history, as expressed by the paradox of constant change within persistent continuity

TEXTS

This class requires heavy – but interesting! – reading. **All readings are mandatory.** In order to comprehend and follow the material, 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 lived in colonial Latin America and 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 – as well as several maps and images – to the class website, under “Course Documents → Readings.”

ATTENDANCE

The reading assignments supplement rather than replace my lectures, so attendance is essential to understand the readings. Furthermore, I will present other information in class not covered in the readings, including visual materials, music, and video, as well as allow opportunities for questions and discussion. Therefore, **attendance at lectures is essential** to performing well in the course.

DISCUSSION SECTION

Participation and attendance in Friday’s discussion sections are **mandatory** and make up a significant portion of your grade. Students with more than three unexcused absences at discussions may be dropped from the course. Your Teaching Assistant (TA) will also be grading your written work, so it is important to attend discussions to know his or her expectations. Since you cannot discuss what you have not read, it is important to have completed each week’s assignments before attending discussion sections. Please give your TA the respect and courtesy he or she deserves.

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. There may also be online assignments, such as reading quizzes and other activities. **You should check the website regularly for updates.** Occasionally, I will use the website to follow up on themes covered in lectures and discussions, and respond to student questions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Coursework includes the following: a short map quiz, identifying the countries of modern Latin America; attendance, participation, and short assignments in your discussion sections; a midterm consisting of multiple-choice and short-answer questions, a written response to specific questions addressing broad course themes (5 pages), and a final exam (cumulative) consisting of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Students will need red bubble sheets, #2 pencils, and blue books from the UNCG bookstore for both the midterm and final.

Map Quiz	10%
Discussion section	25%
Midterm	20%
Response paper	20%
Final exam	25%

CLASSROOM STANDARDS AND COURSE 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. 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. Thus, **every word that 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.

Online work will have clearly listed deadlines and parameters. **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. I am always happy to meet with you to go over your outlines and drafts and to answer any questions you have.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

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 of the material, 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. 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 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, making us all smarter as a result.

Finally, **TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES.** No texting. Students who disrupt class or who are otherwise not contributing positively may be asked to leave, counting as an unexcused absence on your grades. You may have drinks – but not food – in class.

Good luck and have a great semester!



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