

HISTORY OF MODERN MEXICO

HIST and LLAS 3635 – Spring 2015, T/Th 11:00-12:15, Laurel Hall 110

Professor Mark Overmyer-Velázquez



Mexican Revolutionary Leader Emiliano Zapata

(North) Americans have been obliged to rediscover Mexico since the late 1970s, in the wake of dramatic oil strikes, an increased influx of drugs and undocumented migrants, and more recently, the advent of “free trade,” the peso’s “meltdown”, peasant rebellion in Chiapas, Vicente Fox’s stunning victory over the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party in the 2000 presidential election (only to be retaken a dozen years later), and popular responses to recent state and narco violence. Nevertheless, few “United Statesians” really appreciate their neighbors’ historical struggles to achieve political stability and economic prosperity, or the complex role the United States has played in that process. No doubt part of the problem is North Americans’ penchant to generalize easily about “Mexico” and “Mexicans,” thereby eliding the important political, regional, class, ethnic, race, gender, and generational differences that have always figured prominently in the shaping of Mexican affairs. Since Mexico’s current problems and prospects have important transnational dimensions and are in great measure the product of the past, North Americans have a stake in learning more about the history of their “distant neighbor.”

Building upon the legacies of the colonial era, this course concentrates on Mexico’s history since the nineteenth century, from the wars of independence in the early nineteenth century to the globalization of the present. Rather than focusing on the confusing surface flurry of events and leaders, stress is placed on broader trends of economic, political, social, and cultural development, and on the patterns of conflict and negotiation that conditioned them. Throughout the course, we will consider the long history of Mexican emigration to the United States as an alternative narrative –at times parallel, at times convergent– to the traditional rendition of the Republic’s past.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

- Define and explain the diverse and interconnected histories of Mexico’s many regions and their inhabitants.
- Examine the enduring legacy of the Revolution and its multiple influences and incarnations.
- Identify key geographic and political features of the Mexican landscape.
- Examine the history of Mexico as a fundamental aspect of the transnational histories of the United States and Latin America.
- Explain how the initial colonial encounter of peoples has endured to shape the country’s complex racial and ethnic identities.
- Characterize the dynamic, historical relationship between U.S. labor and Mexican migration to the United States.

The course also provides students with the historical context to participate more fully in an optional field study course in Mexico. The UConn Migration Studies Seminar in Oaxaca, Mexico Study Abroad Program, will be offered during two weeks in May 2015. In addition to receiving an introduction to Mexico's history and culture, the study abroad program exposes students to the cultural and historical origins of Latin American and Caribbean migrants in the United States. Students visit community centers, talk with researchers studying migration in Mexico and observe the economic, environmental and social conditions that affect Mexican migrants at their points of origin.

Class Format

The course will combine a lecture and discussion format; student participation in class discussion will be expected and weighed in determining the final grade. In addition to standard historical texts, oral testimonies, works of literature and a collection of audio and visual materials –photos, political cartoons, revolutionary songs, and a series of short films and discussions– will be used to explore popular attitudes, values, and lifestyles.

Assignments

I. Participation

Consistent and thoughtful participation will determine a substantial part of your final grade. If discussion comes readily to you, look for ways to encourage others to participate. Absence from class precludes participation and has, therefore, an adverse effect on your grade. If you do miss a class meeting you will be responsible for finding out what was missed and for making up any assignments. Attendance will be taken during each class session.

II. Map Quiz

An in-class map quiz will ask you to identify key states, cities, and geographic features of Mexico. Identifiers can be found on the final page of this syllabus.

III. Newspaper Journal

In this assignment you will explore the ways in which media sources report on and interpret contemporary issues events (within last 5 years) in Mexico and the Mexican-origin community in the United States. Each week (including the first week) you will read two articles on Mexico and Mexicans and craft a brief (3-4 sentence) written summary of them in your own words. One of the articles must explore the relationship between Mexico and the United States (e.g. through politics, economics, migration); the other article can report any aspect of current life in Mexico. Please note the title, date and source of your newspaper articles (no need to include the url/web address). ****During the course of the semester, read and review a maximum of four articles related to drugs and the drug trade.**

The articles and summaries will be kept in an on-going journal and collected three times (every 5th week) during the semester. At the end of the semester students will have collected and penned thirty (two per week) articles and summaries. Please submit written or electronic version of journal to course TA.

Examples of newspapers to peruse include but are not limited to the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and the Wall Street Journal. Their coverage is usually more complete (if not always more perceptive) than that of newspapers that simply subscribe to the wire-services. For those of you who read Spanish, there are also several good periodicals available; please see me if you are interested. Bring your journals to each class. We will begin each meeting with a brief news update.

IV. Mid-term Exam (in-class)

In preparation for the Final Exam, mid-term covers topics from the course until this point. In the role of professor you will develop a mini course on Modern Mexican History with three lectures. Your task is to compose an outline for each lecture and write a justification for the outlines. In the Final, take-home exam, you will build on this mid-term exercise to write out one of the *historically based* lectures in complete prose. Therefore, you must decide what the most important events, individuals, and long-term trends have been in Mexico, as well as how you would interpret these events, individuals, and trends. For this open-book exam, the course readings and assignments will prepare you; no extra reading or research is required.

V. Group Project and Presentation

In small groups, students will collaborate on the research, writing, revision, and presentation of one of the following topics from Mexico's cultural history. The final product will be a five page written essay examining the topic in historical perspective and a ten minute presentation in front of your fellow students during assigned class times (written essay due on last day of class). While the five page essay must follow a "traditional" format (e.g., a thoroughly edited and revised paper including: introduction, thesis, exploration and examination of thesis, conclusion, and citations), the ten minute presentation format must be "non-traditional" (e.g., musical or theatrical performance, interactive presentation, video, etc). Groups will discuss with me in advance to review appropriate formats. Group members will need to equitably divide the tasks of the assignment and will receive one collective grade. Individual efforts will be reflected in the participation grade.

Project topics, suggestions (no duplication of topics among groups permitted)

- Colonial era proto-feminist poet Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
- Life and times of a Mexican author/poet, past or present
- Marketing Mexico: Cinco de Mayo, Coronas, and Gringos on the Beach
- Soldaderas: Women Revolutionaries
- Mexican Cinema: a view on the history of the Republic
- Mexican Migration in film
- Chicano expressive culture: music, tattoos, and low riders
- La Virgen Guadalupe: The Aztec Goddess and the Christian Saint
- Rudos y técnicos: The History of Lucha Libre (wrestling)
- Hot tamales: Mexican food as state formation
- Cross-dresser, border crosser Guillermo Gomez Peña
- Sarapes, pottery, and masks: Mexican regional crafts
- Articles 27 and 123 of 1917 constitution
- The Revolutionary Pantheon: Zapata, Villa, Obregón, Madero
- The life and music of Lila Downs (or other Mexican(-American) artist/group)
- Your own selection!

VI. Final Exam

Exam covering topics from entire course. In the role of professor you will develop a mini course on Modern Mexican History with three lectures. Your task is to compose an outline for each lecture, write a justification for the outlines, and to write out one of the *historically based* lectures in complete prose. Therefore, you must decide what the most important events, individuals, and long-term trends have been in Mexico, as well as how you would interpret these events, individuals, and trends. The course readings and assignments will prepare you for the exam; no extra reading or research is required.

VI. Bonus Assignments

You may receive optional bonus grades for attendance at and brief (1 page) review of relevant campus or off-campus events, films, readings, etc (2 maximum). Please check with me in advance to review appropriate topics.

Grade Breakdown

Participation	15%
Map quiz	10%
Newspaper journal	20%
Mid-term exam	10%
Group project and presentation	20%
Final exam	25%
Bonus grades	+ ??

A's (90-100%) signify outstanding work, above and beyond course expectations. B's (80-89%) are for good work (demonstrating special effort, insight, creativity, thoroughness, clarity, etc.) C's (70-79%) are for satisfactory completion of course requirements. In order to receive full credit for your course work, you must turn them in by their specified due date. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (C+ to C, A- to B+) for every day late and an entire grade (B to C) if more than a week late. Time extensions and incompletes will be given only under exceptional circumstances.

Collaboration and Academic Honesty

There are great educational advantages to collaborative learning. I encourage you to work together on the assignments for this course, many of which are appropriate for study groups. It is certainly advantageous to exchange drafts of your papers for constructive criticism before you submit them to me. Such collaboration is quite consistent with academic honesty; indeed, the two go together. Having said that, academic dishonesty, whether cheating or plagiarism, is a serious offense and will result in automatic failure of the assignment and perhaps further action. Please see the section on "Academic Integrity" in The Student Code. For a discussion of plagiarism at UConn, see the following site:

http://web.uconn.edu/irc/PlagiarismModule/intro_m.htm

Readings

The texts are at the UConn Coop and available on independent book seller powells.com and amazon.com. Individual articles and chapters (listed below after "CP") are on the class HuskyCT under "Mex Course Readings". For those who read Spanish, there are also materials on the subject from Mexico; please see me in you are interested.

Texts

- Joseph and Henderson, eds., *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (ISBN # 0822330423) (MR)
- Hernández Chávez, *Mexico: A Brief History* (ISBN # 0822330423) (MBH)

Course Pack (CP)

- Assorted articles
- Overmyer-Velázquez, ed., *Beyond la Frontera: The History of Mexico-US Migration* (BF)

Optional Texts: An effort has been made in the syllabus to provide short background readings for each period of Mexican history. Nevertheless, students who have no background on Mexico and would feel more

comfortable supplementing class readings with a text book might consult either Michael Meyer and William Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History*, or Colin MacLachlan and William Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*. The former is a bit more straightforward and readable; the latter pays more attention to the most recent scholarship and the history of Mexico's northern frontier/border with the United States. These titles have been placed on 3 hour Reserve at Homer Library.

Contact Information

Office: Ray Ryan Phone: (860) 486-5508; mark.velazquez@uconn.edu
Office Hours: email for appointment

Other Numbers

Counseling and Mental Health Services 860-486-4705 www.cmhs.uconn.edu
Alcohol and Other Drug Services 860-486-9431 www.aod.uconn.edu

Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships

The University is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination or discriminatory harassment directed toward any person or group within its community – students, employees, or visitors. Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate Romantic relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate Romantic relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. More information is available at <http://policy.uconn.edu/?p=2884>.

Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

To protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report assaults they witness or are told about to the [Office of Diversity & Equity](#) under the [Sexual Assault Response Policy](#). The University takes all reports with the utmost seriousness. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials who can help. More information is available at <http://sexualviolence.uconn.edu/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1

Jan 20

Introduction and Course Objectives

Examining Stereotypes: A Cathartic Cultural Exercise

Jan 22

The Lay of the Land: Touring “Many Mexicos”

Map and Slide Presentation

Reading: MR, 1-54

Week 2

Jan 27

Before Mexico: Indios, Africans, and Spaniards

Reading: MR, 55-60; MBH, 1-26; “Negro? Prieto? Moreno? A Question of Identity for Black Mexicans” http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/world/americas/negro-prieto-moreno-a-question-of-identity-for-black-mexicans.html?emc=edit_tnt_20141027&nlid=40439169&tntemail0=y#

****Map quiz****

Jan 29

Film/Discussion: “History of Mexico – Part 1” (60 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idLrPQISQiU>

Reading: MR, 79-85, 92-94; MBH, 27-50

Week 3

Feb 3

Mexicans and the Colonial Period

Reading: MR, 95-104, 109-121, 156-168; MBH, 51-97

Feb 5

Independence and Return of the Empire

Reading: MR, 169-205, 265-269; MBH, 98-116; “50 Years Ago, A Fluid Border Made The U.S. 1 Square Mile Smaller” http://www.npr.org/2014/09/25/350885341/50-years-ago-a-fluid-border-made-the-u-s-1-square-mile-smaller?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=20140925; “Women and the War” <http://library.uta.edu/usmexicowar/index.php>

****Feb 5: Constitution Day****

Week 4

Feb 10

Film/Discussion: Remember the Alamo! (60 min)

Reading: CP, Santa Anna, “Their Decision Irrevocably Sealed Their Fate”; CP, Griswold del Castillo, “The Chicano Movement and the Treaty”; CP, NYT article, “Forget the Alamo!”; MBH, 117-163

Week 10
Mar 24 **The Legacy of the Revolution**
Film: "The Storm that Swept Mexico, Part 2"

Mar 26 **The Second Coming of Zapata: Chiapas and the Rise of Civil Society**
Reading: MR, pp. 638-654; CP, Preston and Dillon, *Opening Mexico*, 229-256; CP Subcomandante Marcos, "Why We are Fighting: The Fourth World War Has Begun"; BF, Fox, "Indigenous Mexican Migrants"

****Newspaper Journal – 2nd Installment****

Week 11
Mar 31 **Environmental History and the Border**
*Guest lecturer: Shaine Scarminach, History

Apr 2 **Student Movements**
*Guest lecturer: Ilan Sánchez, El Instituto

Week 12
Apr 7 **Drugs and Guns: Mexico and the US's Crossborder Narco War**
Reading: Excerpts from Ioan Grillo's "El Narco" (Parts 1 & 2)
<http://www.pbs.org/pov/reportero/book-excerpt-el-narco-ioan-grillo.php>; "Inside Mexico's Drug War", Tomas Kellner,
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/wpj/summary/v027/27.1.kellner.html>

Video: "War Without Borders"
<http://www.nytimes.com/video/2009/05/30/us/1194840597846/war-without-borders.html>

Apr 9 ***Group Project Presentations – Review with MOV at El Instituto office***
(submit title, thesis statement & outlines by **Apr 7**)

Week 13
Apr 14 **Al Norte del Norte: Migrants and the New England Border**
*Guest lecturer: Jennifer Cook, Anthropology
Reading: MR, 717-756; BF, Overmyer-Velázquez, "Histories and Historiographies of Greater Mexico", Massey, "The Past and Future of Mexico-U.S. Migration", "Chronology of Mexican Migration"; CP Gabany-Guerrero, "Connecticut"; Bacon, "Globalization and NAFTA caused Migration" <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2014/10/11/globalization-and-nafta-caused-migration-from-mexico/>

Music: Los Tigres del Norte, "La Frontera"; Maná, "Pobre Juan"

Apr 16 **No Class – Prepare Group Project Presentations**

Week 14

Apr 21 **Film/Discussion/Debate:** The Other Side of Immigration (55 min)

Apr 23 **Group Project Presentations – Part I**

Week 15

Apr 28 **Group Project Presentations – Part II**

Apr 30 **Workshop: Class Summary and Final Exam Review**

Reading: CP, Berman, “Mexico’s Third Way”; CP, Preston and Dillon, *Opening Mexico*, 477-516; MR, 687-756; BF, Saragoza, “Cultural Representation and Mexican Immigration”

****Newspaper Journal – 3rd Installment****

Map Quiz Identifiers

Districts and States

Modern boundaries of:

Veracruz (state)

México DF

Chihuahua

Yucatán (state)

Oaxaca

Guerrero

Guanajuato

Michoacán

Sinaloa

Guanajuato (state)

Jalisco

Zacatecas

Nayarit

Coahuila

Morelos

Chiapas

The extent of Mexico in 1824

Cities

Mexico City

Guadalajara

Mérida

Veracruz

Oaxaca City

San Cristóbal de las Casas

San Luís Potosí

Nogales

Tijuana

Ciudad Juárez/El Paso, TX

Monterrey

Acapulco

Hartford, CT

Chicago, Ill

New York, NY

Los Angeles, CA

Geographic features

Yucatán Peninsula

Baja California

Sierra Madre Oriental

Sierra Madre Occidental

Isthmus of Tehuantepec

Río Bravo/Grande

Chihuahua Desert

