Winter 2019: Mexico: Past & Present
(Chc/Lat 169 / Hist 169 / Intl St 179 / Soc Sci 189)

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Course Description:

Mexico is an enigma—from tropical rainforests to searing deserts, pinnacles of wealth to depths of despair, it is a land of extremes. On the verge of collapse more than once, Mexico now boasts one of the world’s largest economies. This course introduces students to the story of Mexico’s formation and evolution from colonial times to the present. This will be a broad analysis of the place that history has played in national political structures, economic formations, and social movements. We will examine the indigenous roots of pre-Columbian Mexico, the impact of conquest and colonization, the struggle of nation-building, revolution, reconstruction, and development. Particular attention will focus on the forces and processes—both internal and external—that have contributed to shaping a Mexican identity. These issues will be covered through lectures, videos, and primary/secondary readings. Along the way, students will gain practical skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing through assignments that will stress identifying and building arguments, analyzing and presenting evidence, and employing effective writing styles.

Required book:


Selected articles: available on Canvas website

Requirements:

Each class will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and videos. Grading is based on a midterm (25% / February 8), a final (35% / TBA), one 4-5 page paper based on the readings (25% / March 1), and attendance as well as participation in discussion sections (15%). Exams will combine short identifications and longer essays based on the assigned readings and material covered in lecture and discussion section. Students, therefore, must attend lectures, finish all readings by the assigned date, and be prepared for classroom discussion.
Course Schedule

Week 1:

January 7) Introduction: Vital Statistics, Geography, & Resources
January 9) Pre-Columbian Civilization in Mesoamerica
January 11) Indigenous Imperialism: The Mexicas in Context

Readings:


Week 2:

January 14) The Spain that Encountered Mexico
January 16) Cortés & the Conquest of Tenochtitlan
January 18) The Spiritual Conquest

Readings:

Week 3:

January 21) Martin Luther King Holiday
January 23) Consolidating an Empire: The Political Economy of Mexico
January 25) Race, Gender, & Family in Colonial Mexico

Readings:


Week 4:

January 28) Late Colonial Mexico & the Rise of Identity
January 30) The Meaning of Independence
February 1) Creating an “Imagined Community” in Mexico

Readings:


Week 5:

February 4) Instability, Wars, & Invasions, 1824-1854
February 6) Juárez, Liberalism, & Mexico’s Second Empire

February 8) Midterm

Readings:


Week 6:

February 11) Order & Progress: Authoritarianism in the late 19th Century

February 13) Order & Progress: The Porfirian Economy

February 15) The Wind that Swept Mexico (Part 1)

Readings:


Week 7:

February 18) President’s Day Holiday

February 20) The Wind that Swept Mexico (Part 2)
February 22) Institutionalizing the Revolutionary State: 1920-1940

Readings:


Week 8:

February 25) Consolidating the Revolutionary State: 1920-1940

February 27) Urbanism & the Growth of Mexico City

March 1) Modernization & the Mexican Miracle (paper due)

Readings:

- Doremus, Anne T. "Authenticity, the Pelado and the Mexican National Identity: Essay versus Film during the 1930s and the 1940s," *Confluencia* 16:1 (Fall 2000), pp. 35-48.

Week 9:

March 4) Breakdown of the Institutionalized Rule: The “Lost Decade”

March 6) Free Trade & the Transition to Democracy

March 8) A Nation on the Move

Readings:
Week 10:

March 11) Distant Neighbors
March 13) The Drug War
March 15) Conclusions: Mexico in the 21st Century

Readings:


- Selected current news