

A HISTORY OF MEXICO: THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONHOOD

**T-Th 12:00-1:20, 185 Lillis Hall
CRN 15914/15915**

With "single party democracy" by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), at an end, Mexico is now ruled by an opposition President for only the second time since the Revolution of 1910. The first change came in 2000, when Vicente Fox, from the conservative PAN (Partido Acción Nacional), pledged to alter the way Mexico is governed and to restructure its economy. He promised to do away with what many Mexicans regard as a fundamental problem, a most vexing legacy of the long years of official party rule, the corruption which is found at all levels of government, politics, and business. This is proved to be a tall order, for Fox not only had to deal with the legacy of the recent past, but of a much longer stretch of time going back beyond the very roots of Mexican nationhood. Fox's successor, Felipe Calderón (also from the PAN) and Mexicans in general became embroiled in a conflict over the presidential election staged on July 2, 2006, in which a leftist challenger refused to admit defeat. Mexico is enduring a high-profile war against drugs and crime waged by Calderón's government, as well as the still unsettled political questions raised in 2006 and the growing global economic crisis.

How can we understand twenty-first-century Mexico? Why should citizens of the United States and, more particularly, students of the University of Oregon, care? Thousands of immigrants (undocumented and otherwise) cross into our nation on a daily basis. In Oregon, as elsewhere, their (often underpaid) labor helps our agricultural and forestry industries survive. Moreover, the political and economic health of Mexico and the United States are more closely linked than ever thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). On a more "cultural" level, many of us eat regularly at Mexican restaurants, buy prints and other items decorated with the art of Frida Kahlo, and celebrate Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican national holiday, with margaritas and partying. Yet few in the U.S. are aware of the historical processes that brought Mexico to its current situation; gringos often think of Cinco de Mayo as "Mexican Independence Day," though this is incorrect. There is little understanding here of the complexities of the Mexican cultural heritage, nor of the processes of invasion, colonialism, and

neocolonialism which have shaped Mexico for centuries. What passes for analysis in the U.S. media generally highlights the fragility of the Mexican economy, the poverty of its people, the corruption of its political system, and the crises facing its leadership.

History 480/580 begins with a very brief background look at the society and culture of early Mexican history, the course moves through a consideration of the importance of the independence struggles, the nineteenth century, the Mexican Revolution, and on to the issues of Mexican life in the present day. As much as possible, emphasis will be given to the historical experiences of the majority, especially people of indigenous and mixed ancestry, as they have struggled to come to terms with (or overturn) systems imposed on them by domestic and foreign elites.

REQUIRED READING

The following books are available at the University of Oregon bookstore:

William Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*

Jeffrey Pilcher, ed., *The Human Tradition in Mexico* (2003).

Sam Quiñones, *True Tales from Another Mexico*

John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*

Mary Kay Vaughn and Stephen E. Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (2006).

Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War*

I have put copies of these books on reserve in the Knight Library, as well as examples of several other "recommended" books about Mexican history and culture. You can see a list of these reserve items in the "Bibliography" feature of this Blackboard site, as well as a larger roster of works about Mexico that may be of use in your written projects. I have keyed a good, standard textbook, *The Course of Mexican History*, into the course calendar

as "recommended reading. Other recommended reserve books are listed with the appropriate days and weeks of the term in the "Reading Calendar" feature of our Blackboard site.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to participate actively in all phases of the course. You will see in the calendar below that several formal discussion sessions have been included, but it is hoped that there will be a significant amount of discussion during other class meetings, as well. Everyone should come to each class ready to participate; roll will be taken. All of you are expected to keep up with reading assignments, and to show evidence that you are doing so in class. Participation is worth 5% of your total course grade.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

There are no exams in this course. Instead, students will write three analytical essays. In the first one you will be asked to explain why you think it was so difficult for Mexico to achieve political stability during its first decades of nationhood. You will be asked to consider how and why Mexico came to be led by Antonio López de Santa Anna, why he led the nation to war against Texas, why Mexico lost its war with the United States, and what all of this meant for Mexicans of various kinds. Your lecture notes and Wasserman's *Everyday Life and Politics* will be important sources for this assignment. This essay is due in class on **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30**, and will be worth 30% of the course grade.

The second assignment will take the form of an analytical essay in which you are to grapple with issues related to the root causes (especially during the rule of Porfirio Díaz) and early effects of the Mexican Revolution. The essay will be centered around an analysis of *A More Detailed Description of this Assignment*. A more detailed description of this assignment will be distributed at the appropriate time. The essay will be due in class on **THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20**. The essay will be worth 30 percent of your course grade.

The third assignment is a paper focusing on "Revolutionary" Mexico in the later twentieth century. You will be asked to center your discussion around appropriate sections of *and True Tales from Another Mexico*. You will also

be asked to do a certain amount of library and web-based research. Exact topics to be explored in the paper will vary with individual student interest. Once again, more detailed instructions will be circulated at the appropriate time. This paper, which stands in place of a final exam, represents 35 percent of your course grade. It is due by 5:00 P.M. on **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10.**

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Graduate students enrolled in HIST 580 must complete all of the assignments described in this syllabus. Their final research paper project must be of greater length, weight, and depth than the undergraduate version of this assignment. In addition, graduate students must read the "recommended" textbook, *The Course of Mexican History*, which is to be found on reserve for our course in the Knight Library; specific assignments are keyed into the course calendar, below, and may also be found in the "Reading Calendar" section of our Blackboard site. Graduate students will complete one further, brief written assignment: an analytical book review of a work of their choice dealing in some way with Mexico history, culture, etc. This book may be selected from the "recommended" list of works held on reserve for our course or from the larger roster of things about Mexico found in the "Bibliography" section of our Blackboard site. The due date for this review will depend on the specific topic of the work selected (for instance, a review of a book dealing with the nineteenth-century in some way would be due on **Thursday, November 6**; graduate students should clear their choice of book with me early in the quarter, ideally no later than **Thursday, October 9**). Finally, graduate students are expected to attend my office hours regularly to discuss issues raised in the class and in the assigned reading.

GRADING SCALE

Grading is carried out on a 100-point scale: 100-93 = A, 92-90 = A-, 89-87 = B+, 86-83 = B, 82-80 = B-, 79-77 = C+, 76-73 = C, 72-70 = C-, 69-67 = D+, 66-63 = D, 62-60 = D-, 59 and lower = F.

WARNING: ASSIGNMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DUE DATE BUT AFTER OUR CLASS MEETING HAS ENDED WILL BE FINED 3 POINTS. A FINE

OF 5 ADDITIONAL POINTS PER DAY WILL BE SLAPPED ON ALL LATE WORK! NO WRITTEN COMMENTS WILL BE MADE ON LATE PAPERS. STUDENTS WHO DO NOT COMPLETE ALL WORK FOR THE QUARTER WILL BE GIVEN A GRADE OF "F" UNLESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN INCOMPLETE HAVE BEEN MADE IN ADVANCE.

COURSE CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

T 30 Introduction: Many Mexicos.

Reading: *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, xiii-xxvi

OCTOBER

Th 2 The Roots of Mexican History

Reading: *Everyday Life and Politics*, 3-14; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 1-21

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 12-15

T 7 The Attempt at Social Revolution

Reading: Begin *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 23-56

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapter 16

Th 9 The Achievement of Political Independence

Reading: Continue with *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 23-56

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapter 17

T 14 Nationhood and the Apostle of Instability

Reading: Continue with *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 18 & 19

Th 16 Bad Neighbors: Texas and the United States

Reading: Continue with *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapter 20

T 21 The United States Invades Mexico

Reading: Continue with *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapter 20 (cont.)

Th 23 Life Amidst the Ruins

Reading: Complete *Everyday Life and Politics*, 17-90; begin *Judas at the Jockey Club*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapter 21

T 28 Discussion: The Rocky Road to Nationhood

Reading: Continue with *Judas at the Jockey Club*; begin *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 57-89

Th 30 From Empire to Liberal Dictatorship

Reading: *Everyday Life and Politics*, 93-157; continue with *Judas at the Jockey Club*; and *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 57-89

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 22-25

*****FIRST ESSAY DUE*****

NOVEMBER

T 4 The Age of Porfirio Díaz

Reading: *Everyday Life and Politics*, 161-223; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 91-135; and complete *Judas at the Jockey Club*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 26-29

Th 6 The Mexican Revolution

Reading: *Everyday Life and Politics*, 223-232; *Insurgent Mexico*; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 137-148; begin *The Eagle and the Virgin*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 30-32

T 11 The Mexican Revolution, cont.

Reading: Complete *Insurgent Mexico*; continue *The Eagle and the Virgin*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 33-35

Th 13 "Revolutionary" Mexico from 1920-1940.

Reading: Continue *The Eagle and the Virgin*; *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 149-163

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 36-39

T 18 Discussion: How Revolutionary was the Mexican Revolution?

Reading: Complete *The Eagle and the Virgin*

Th 20 The Dream and Reality of the Post-WW II Boom Years

Reading: *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 165-209; begin *True Tales from Another Mexico*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 40-42

*****SECOND ESSAY DUE*****

T 25 Life Amidst the Ruins, Part II

Reading: *The Human Tradition in Mexico*, 211-233; continue *True Tales from Another Mexico*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 43-44

Th 27 **THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS**

DECEMBER

T 2 A New Age for Mexico?

Reading: Continue with *True Tales from Another Mexico*

Recommended Reading: *The Course of Mexican History*, Chapters 45-46

Th 4 Discussion: Twenty-First-Century Mexico

**W 10 FINAL PAPERS DUE IN 355 MCKENZIE HALL BY 5:00 P.M.
NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED. EARLY SUBMISSIONS CHEERFULLY
RECEIVED.**