

Course Syllabus

History 132: Modern Mexico: From Revolution to the Rise of the Cartels

Location: Center 214

Professor Matthew Vitz

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00, or by appointment in H&SS 4063

This course follows the major political, economic, social, and cultural trends of modern Mexican history including the rise of commercial capitalism at the end of the nineteenth century, the Mexican Revolution, postrevolutionary nation formation, urban and industrial growth, environmental change, and cold war politics. A chief purpose is to explore how people in a variety of Mexican locales participated in, resisted, and, in some cases, transformed the larger structures that governed Mexico. With this in mind, we will discuss the causes of the Mexican Revolution, the varying motives of its participants, as well as the day-to-day experience of living through such a tumultuous and violent ten years. The revolution, a momentous event as it occurred, has become even more significant in historical memory and legacy. We will explore how both the post-revolutionary state and its adversaries have mobilized memories of the revolution to meet their particular political and social ends. The radical populist agenda of Lázaro Cárdenas, political culture under PRI rule, and the Mexican dirty war of the 1970s will take up several weeks of the course. After completing a chronological history of twentieth-century Mexico, we will engage in other important themes of modern Mexico: the urban experience, environmental deterioration, immigration to the U.S., and the drug war that has ravaged Mexico over the past 7 years. We will read primary sources, articles and essays by regarded historians, as well as journalistic accounts of contemporary Mexico.

Structure

This is a lecture course, and while lecture will take up a majority of class time, I will integrate other activities as well: reading discussion, “one-minute papers” to review lecture material, the occasional film or other multimedia presentation, in-class primary source readings, and other activities. Discussions of the readings will take place the day the reading is due and will frequently address questions that I assign to you beforehand. Note that I will often have you discuss the readings in small groups first and then proceed to a full class discussion. Your participation grade, therefore, is important.

“There is no thought without words,” as Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure remarked, so much of this class will be dedicated to you thinking for yourself, developing your own informed arguments, and making your own sense of history in order to come to grips with the world we live in. This requires your participation in class (I will offer you numerous opportunities in small and large groups, the “one-minute papers,” questions during lecture, etc.) as well as your ability to write critically, convincingly, and coherently about the past (see below).

Course Objectives:

--Effective and critical thinking about the past to understand the myriad ways in which humans have related to and interacted with one another, the way inequalities and social hierarchies are constructed, contested, and maintained over time, and the lives of individuals and groups within these structures of power

--The capacity to read primary source material and compare events across time and space

-- Grow knowledge of Mexican culture, history, and politics (Mexico is, after all, just 30 minutes down I-5!).

--Become a more conscious citizen of the world. Explore commonalities and differences in the diverse human experience, between countries and world regions. Be able to understand social problems and be knowledgeable about ways to solve them. Liberal education, such as this history course, is crucial for a functioning democracy. Citizens must be informed and critical of the societies in which they live and must have comprehension of other cultural experiences.

-- Ability to write coherently analytically, and convincingly about the past

--Effective public speaking skills

(These last two course goals are essential for basically any career you end up choosing)

Brief Note on History

History deepens our understanding of the present. History shows us how and why we are what we are today. History also gives us meaning. For example, our understanding of who we are as Americans today comes from our understanding of how the United States came to be, that is, its past. History also helps us understand the paths not taken. Why do we organize governments and economies a certain way and not another? Why are some cultural practices deemed important while others are deemed less important, or are banned. History helps us with these and other questions.

History is much, much more than the rote memorization of dates, names and facts. History is about grasping cause and effect; change over time; why and how people have rebelled, warred, and conflicted with each other; and why they have come to political agreements and/or sought common cultural and political bonds. History is about understanding the interaction of numerous social forces that produce an effect. It is about seeing connections across time and space while also discerning differences. History is also a window into the use of power, social exclusion, and inclusion.

History is, in many ways, a synthesis of structure and experience. Through history we learn about the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that have come to govern societies, and we, in turn, learn about the ways that ordinary people adapt

to, contest, and even transform those structures. In this way, we learn about interesting characters, we learn about the key decisions they took, we learn about the lives of common people, and we learn about how even the poorest and most marginalized groups have shaped history.

History is not something that exists outside human interpretation. Politicians, writers, historians, journalists, and others “make” history in the sense that they produce interpretations of the past using primary documentation that itself was the product of earlier interpretive work. We (usually) know that certain events happened (e.g., World War II, the Mexican Revolution), but their interpretations shift depending on who is doing the interpreting, the historical moment, and the documents they use to write their histories.

A Brief Note on Note-Taking

Come to class and take good notes. Understand the key themes and argument of each lecture, the key people involved, and the key terms. I will provide a list of key terms at the beginning of each class. In your exams, you will need to use evidence in the forms of historical examples and cases from the lectures and readings. This is how I know you understand the material. Use the key terms as a guide for your note taking. If you are confused during lecture, raise your hand.

Course Grading:

Map quiz: 10% (During the second week, there will be an in-class map quiz where you will need to identify all 32 states and 18 of the state capitals).

Mid-term essay: 25% (take-home, 4-5 page essay answering a question I ask ahead of time. You will need to use and analyze evidence from lectures, readings, and discussions)

Class Attendance/Participation: 15% (I will be grading attendance and participation with short in-class writing assignments, roughly 9 over the quarter. These will be short answer questions regarding lectures, readings, or other course material. I will grade based on your submission of the assignment and the quality of your answer). You will be allowed one missed assignment. Further absences will begin to affect this part of your grade).

Response Papers: 15% (You will have to come prepared to discuss the readings for each day there is a reading assignment due. On 3 of the reading assignments, you will write a two-page “response paper” on the corresponding TritonEd assignment. The response papers are due before class, and you will not be able to upload them after class starts. See syllabus for due dates.)

Final Exam: 35% (Same format as the midterm, only the paper will need to be 5-6 pages)

Class participation and readings are a crucial component of your final grade. Participation and reading responses are critical to your success on the final exam. We may also occasionally read and discuss a short primary source reading in class.

Office Hours and Availability

If you cannot see me during office hours, please send me an email to arrange an alternative time. I want you to do well in this class, so please stay in touch with me throughout the quarter. If you are confused about the material or if you're having trouble keeping up in class, do not hesitate to see me.

Academic Integrity

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. You may work in groups or consult with other classmates for assignments, but all work in the end must be your own.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. There are two kinds of plagiarism: copying the work of another person word for word (a sentence, part of a sentence or more) and the use of idea(s) that you do not attribute to its author with a citation). If I catch an act of plagiarism, I will consult with university authorities (The Academic Integrity Office). This could result in automatic failure of the class or the assignment, depending on the severity of the case, as well as additional administrative sanctions.

Accessibility

Students with disabilities enrolled in the course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, unless university assistance is needed to implement a requested accommodation.

Required Books

Books are available for purchase at the UCSD bookstore. These three books should also be available shortly on Library Reserves. All other readings are on Ted under "Content."

Gilbert Joseph and Timothy Henderson, *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, and Politics* (Duke, 2002)

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

Judith Hellman, *Mexican Lives* (New Press, 1995)

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Tuesday, January 10: Introduction and Key Concepts

Thursday, January 12: The Porfiriato: Development for Whom?

Tuesday, January 17: The Coming Storm

Response journal due (2 pages)

Readings: Gilbert Joseph and Timothy Henderson, *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, and Politics* (Duke, 2002) 9-40; 273-78; and 285-291

Thursday, January 19: The Mexican Revolution of 1910

Map quiz

Tuesday, January 24: The Mexican Revolution

Readings: Gil Joseph and Timothy Henderson, *The Mexico Reader* (Duke Univ. Press) 335-338 and 357-371

Film: “The Storm that Swept Mexico”

Thursday, January 26: The Postrevolutionary National Project of the 1920s

Tuesday, January 31: The Postrevolutionary National Project Continued

Reading Response Journal due

Readings: *The Mexico Reader* 403-05 and 411-17; Stephen Lewis, “The Nation, Education, and the ‘Indian Problem’ in Mexico” in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution, 1920-1940* ed. Stephen Lewis and Mary Kay Vaughan (Duke Univ. Press, 2006); and Katherine Bliss, “For the Health of the Nation: gender and the Cultural Politics of Social Hygiene in Revolutionary Mexico” in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution, 1920-1940* ed. Stephen Lewis and Mary Kay Vaughan (Duke Univ. Press, 2006).

Thursday, February 2: The Radical Reforms of Lázaro Cárdenas

Tuesday, February 7: Reading Discussion on Mexico under Cárdenas

Response Journal due

Readings: *The Mexico Reader*, 421-25 and 445-55; and Michael Snodgrass, “We Are All Mexicans Here: Workers, Patriotism, and Union Struggles in Monterrey” in *The Eagle and the Virgin*.

Instructions for take-home exam

Thursday, February 9: Memorializing the Revolution and the Rise of the PRI
Exam prep

Tuesday, February 14: Mexico’s Economic Miracle
Exam due

Thursday, February 16: The Miracle Reconsidered: Worker and Peasant Discontent

Tuesday, February 21: Film: “La Ley de Herodes”

Readings: Robert Alegre, “Las Rieleras: Gender, Politics and Power in the Mexican Railway Movement, 1958-1959” *Journal of Women’s History* 23, 2 (Summer, 2011); and *The Mexico Reader*, 465-69; 482-91; and 500-510.

Thursday, February 23: 1968, The Dirty War and Renewed Populism

Tuesday, February 28: Oil Boom, Bust, and Neoliberal Economics

Readings: Start *Mexican Lives*

Thursday, March 2: The Zapatistas of Chiapas and Democratic Transition

Readings: *Mexican Lives* (Pages TBD)

Tuesday March 7: The Making of Mexican Environments

Readings: Short readings TBD on the Zapatistas and maquiladora industry

Thursday, March 9: A Modern History of Mexico City
Film clip: “Baja All Exclusive”

Response Journal Due

Readings: *The Mexico Reader*, 520-35; and 536-44; and *Mexican Lives* (TBD).
Be prepared to write out answers to in-class questions about the readings

Tuesday, March 14: Cartel Violence, Immigration, Drug War, and the Return of the PRI
Final essay prompt

Readings: Short readings to be determined on Drug War, violence, and immigration

Thursday, March 16: Wrap up, Reading Discussion and Exam Prep

Final Exam due Friday March 24 by 6pm.