The Mexican Revolution is one of a handful of monumental social, political and cultural movements which shaped the 20th century landscape. As such, not only has it generated a massive amount of historical writing, but it has also strongly influenced cinematic and other artistic movements, literature, music, and popular culture, both in Mexico and among a Mexican American population in the United States. One can as easily find portraits of Emiliano Zapata on low riders in Los Angeles as in the state of Morelos, Mexico, the heart of Zapatismo. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, those who write about the Mexican Revolution or otherwise seek to represent it disagree about its every aspect, including when it began and whether there ever was a Mexican Revolution.

The purpose of this seminar is not to answer these questions definitively -- which we cannot do -- but to introduce you to the Mexican Revolution as "history" and to "history" through the Mexican Revolution. To do this, we will be looking at how the Mexican Revolution has been represented over time. The basic organizing device for the course is historiographic chronology - not the chronology of the Mexican Revolution itself (e.g., tracing the course of the revolution from the 1910s, through succeeding decades), but the chronology of its representations in history texts, literature, photography, cinema, and other artistic production. In a relatively chronological fashion, we will trace the work of those who wrote about, produced films on, or studied the history of the Mexican Revolution from the vantage point of when they produced their work, suggesting that their (and our) understanding of the revolution is not just dependent on the availability and depth of its archives (the documentation we have at our disposal), but on the surrounding context which shapes these representations. In that sense, the prevalent interpretations of the revolution change over time, from more initial confusion in the midst of the revolution, to hopeful initial stages in the 1920s and 1930s, to much gloomier perspectives in the 1960s and, particularly, after the Plaza de Tlatelolco massacre in 1968. Because we are following the historiographic chronology, the course will have occasion to circle back on itself, covering historical events we seem already to have traversed, in order to locate new interpretations and arguments.

To repeat, then, this is a course about Mexico and the Mexican Revolution (i.e., about "history"), but just as importantly, it is a course about the narrativization of historical subjects (i.e., about "History").

The organization of this course presents a certain dilemma in terms of our starting off point. While many of you will have taken History 110 and will have a good background in Mexican history, others haven't. And even those who have taken 110 may not have the best background on the Mexican Revolution. We
will therefore begin by reading Alicia Hernández Chávez, *Mexico: A Brief History*. But this is not to suggest that hers is the definitive word on the topic, only to give you a sense of the ebb and flow of what has come to be called the "Mexican Revolution." Following that, we will deconstruct that history by examining its own construction over time.

**Course Objectives:**

To get a solid background in 20th century Mexico and the "Mexican Revolution";

To obtain a better understanding of "History" - the processes of representation, narrativization and remembering that takes place and changes over time;

To get a better ability to work with a wide range of "documents" (textual, visual, cinematic, etc.) while gaining understanding of a historical period, understanding the possibilities and limitations of each source;

To better understand what it means to put your education to the service of a wider audience.

**Assignments:**

**Participation:** As with any seminar, student participation is critical for the success of the course, i.e., for the ability of all of us to learn. It is important that you **take responsibility** for the class, that you assert your ownership over it. This includes doing the reading, even though there's a lot of it, so that when you speak you will be speaking from a well-informed basis, that you help the discussion leaders (see below), and that you decide that this is your education, not just a class that you're sitting in on.

**Weekly:** The class will be divided into 5 groups of 3 people each. Each group will be responsible for preparing and leading the discussion for a given week. Each group will be in charge of class twice during the semester. Preparation will consist of completing the reading early, preparing questions and suggestions for discussion, preparing any additional materials to present to the class, and organizing the seminar for that week.

**The Mexican Revolution in Prints and Paintings:** The Allen Memorial Art Museum is mounting a small exhibit of prints and paintings from Mexico in conjunction with this course. The show will go up on September 9. I will write the introductory text and Colette Crossman, the academic curator at the museum, will prepare "tombstone" labels for each of the works (artist, title, date, etc.). After that, the show is up to you. Each student will select one or more of the works to research. You will be in charge of preparing a slightly longer label for the show, and a 2-3 minute podcast about the work you have selected. We will discuss the nature of these podcasts in class, but they will allow you to talk about the work and to interview anyone you want about it (from art history experts, to fellow students, to children who have just seen the work for the first time). You will also be in charge of presenting the work you have selected to an "opening" which will be especially directed to the Mexican community in and around Oberlin, Lorain, and Cleveland.

Diego Rivera, "Escuela al Aire Libre: Maestra Rural" [Open Air School: Rural Teacher], Lithograph. 1932. Edition of 100. [314 x 416 mm].
Your work for this project will be due no later than October 7.

**Final Assignment:** Your final assignment in the course will be a major (15-20 page) research project on any aspect of the Mexican Revolution that we have covered in the course. We will discuss the final assignment more in class, but it will need to be essentially about Mexico during or after the Revolution, rather than a topic on the Mexican community in the United States, for example. All projects are due **no later than** 11:00 AM on Saturday, December 20. Projects turned in after that time which do not have an official incomplete in the course will not be read and will receive an "F".

**Plagiarism and the Honor Code:** "The word plagiarism derives from Latin roots: *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal. The expropriation of another author’s work, and the presentation of it as one’s own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship." [American Historical Association, Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct]. As much as I would like to say that plagiarism doesn't occur at Oberlin, I encounter at least one, if not more, serious incident each semester. It is always very straightforward: students copy sections of other texts and attempt to pass them off as their own work. Copying the work of others goes against everything that a liberal education is about. It is a serious affront to the other students in the course, to me as instructor, and to the plagiarizer him/herself. For further information on plagiarism at Oberlin, see the student **Honor Code**, pg. 1. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, particularly in the context of joint or collaborative projects, please see me or raise it in class.

**Grading:**

- Discussion preparation and leadership: 25% total (12.5% each)
- Work around the AMAM exhibit: 25%
- Final assignment: 35%
- Class participation: 15%

**Students with Disabilities:**

Appropriate accommodations will always be granted to students with documented disabilities. Any questions about the necessary process of documenting disabilities should be addressed to Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters G27-28; x5-5588).

**Language:**

Many of the readings are available in Spanish. If you would prefer to read in Spanish, that would be fine. Please see me if you want help locating a Spanish edition of the work.

**Books Recommended for Purchase:**

All required readings are available in the Reserve Room of Mudd. Some (see the syllabus) are available in electronic copies posted on the course site in Blackboard. Additional copies of the books in the course can be obtained through OHIOLink -- just make sure you request them with enough lead time. The following books have been ordered for the bookstore and can be purchased there as well as at on-line booksellers. Vendors such as Amazon or presses such as Seven Stories (both linked here) often offer used or less expensive new versions.


Anita Brenner and George R. Leighton, *The Wind that Swept Mexico: The*


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**Syllabus**

**September 2: Introduction - Revolution, Nation, and History**

Reading:


**September 9 - Some Background [NOTE: No class today - class will be rescheduled]**

Chronologies, from Benjamin, *La Revolución* (pp. 25-29; 79-83). [Blackboard and Regular Reserve]

**September 16 - Life a Leaf in the Wind**

Reading:


**September 21**: Tentative date for field trip to Detroit Institute of the arts to view the "Detroit Industry" murals by Diego Rivera.

**September 23 - The Revolutionary as Hero**

Reading:


Pancho Villa; photographer unknown

**September 30 - Art, Artists, and the Revolution** [NOTE: Class will begin at 8:00 PM; we will screen "Vamonos con Pancho Villa" [1936] at another time]

Reading:


**October 7**: All work required for Allen Memorial Art Museum exhibition ("The Mexican Revolution in Prints and Paintings") is due today. Exact requirements will be discussed in class.

**October 7 - The Revolution Will Be Photographed**

Reading:
October 14 - The Revolutionary as Villain: The Fernando de Fuentes' Trilogy

Reading:


October 21 - FALL BREAK

October 28: The Mexican as Chingado

Reading:

Octavio Paz, The Labyrinth of Solitude: The Other Mexico, Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude, Mexico and the United States, the Philanthropic Ogre (NY: Grove Press, 1994) [1950]. Read "The Labyrinth of Solitude" only (pp. 5-212).

November 4 - Initial topic for final research paper (one paragraph including the topic and why you want to work on it) at start of class.

November 4 - The Frozen Revolution
Reading:


Manuel Álvarez Bravo, "Obrero en huelga asesinado" [Striking worker murdered], 1934 [19.1 x 24.6]

**November 11 - The Revolutionary as Contemporary Radical**

Reading:


**November 18 - Refined topic for final research paper plus a preliminary bibliography due at start of class.**

**November 18 - The Revolution is Dead**

Reading:


**November 25 - There Was No Revolution [NOTE: We will arrange a screening of "Amores Perros" to be discussed in class]**

Reading:

December 2 - Fully developed thesis statement for project plus developed bibliography due at start of class.

December 2 - The Revolution Reborn

Reading:


December 9 - Conclusion

No reading assigned

December 20, 11:00 AM - Final Assignment Due. Your final assignment, a 15-20 page research paper on any aspect of the Mexican Revolution, will be due no later than 11:00 AM on Saturday, October 20. Any paper turned in after that time, unless you have applied for an official incomplete in the course, will not be read.