

History 401 - Mexico: Identity, Nation, and Beyond

Wednesdays 7-9 pm, King 337 (Fall 2013)

Professor Melanie Huska

Office Hours: Mondays 4-5:30 and Fridays 10:15-12 and by appointment, Rice 309

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Eloy Torrez, "Cultural Identity Indicating Time in Perpetual Movement," 2001; Kinetinox, Made in Mexico logo

This course explores how Mexicans have constructed their collective identities across time. It examines the ways in which social markers of difference, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and place influence conceptions of identity in Mexico. We will consider topics such as struggles between regional and national politics and culture; national culture as a tool of state-craft used by the ruling party in the 20th century; the primacy of modern visual culture in the construction of Mexican identities; and how collective identities have altered as Mexicans increasingly move abroad.

The course is divided into three units: pre-Columbian, colonial, and nineteenth-century identities; the Mexican Revolution and its institutionalization; and the collapse of the ruling party in the late twentieth century. Starting with in the 16th century, we will examine government officials' attempts to foster a colonial identity that would link the diverse population and promote identification with the Spanish crown or religious figures such as the Virgin Mary. For the post-independence period, we will investigate the new nation's struggles to fashion a shared national identity that would unite diverse regions and cultural groups. As is evident from the main course units, much of our focus will be on the twentieth century, particularly what influence the Mexican Revolution had on defining what it meant to be Mexican and how those ideas changed in the second half of the century.

As a historiography class, the course is concerned not only with the changing ways in which Mexicans have constructed their identities, but also how historians' and scholars' work on this topic has changed over time.

Course Objectives/Learning Goals

By the course's end, students should be able to:

1. Identify the broad contours of Mexican history.
2. Identify the major factors and events that have influenced the diversity of Mexican identities and understand how they vary across time, space, and experience.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of historical argumentation and understand how different types of primary sources influence analysis.
4. Understand how historical analysis changes over time, often influenced by the political and cultural climate in which historians write.
5. Communicate effectively both in written and verbal form, particularly at presenting clear, reasoned arguments supported with evidence.

Required Texts

Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs: Pictures and Scenes from the Present Revolution: a Translation of Mariano Azuela's Los De Abajo, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006).

John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

Louise Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

** All additional readings will be posted on our Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

- 1) **Informed class participation:** Class Participation will be worth 35% of your final grade for the course and is will be evaluated based on 4 components: attendance, participation, discussion leading, and critical reflections posted on Blackboard.

Attendance: Because we only meet for thirteen substantive sessions and because participation in discussions is so central to this class, you are permitted only two absences before your grade will be adversely affected. Please see me if you plan to be absent for a session or have been absent. If you have a planned excused absence, assignments and responses are still due on time, so plan your time accordingly.

Participation: Your success in this course will rely on your active participation. You will be expected to take an active role in both larger class discussions and smaller group work,

and to actively participate in other in-class activities and assignments. Please bring any notes you take while reading, the assigned course readings for the day's discussion, and talking points and/or questions that you have regarding the week's topic. Remember, participation is not about just how often you speak, but also what you have to say. Asking an intelligent and thought-provoking question can be as much of a contribution as answering one.

Critical Response papers: To encourage reflective reading, no later than by MONDAY at 4 pm of each week (starting Mon, Sept 16th) you are expected to post on the Discussion Board section of the course's Blackboard website a short reflection of around 500 words on the week's readings. You are invited to comment there on what others in the class have written, but it is not required. You may also use the forum to raise questions if you would like help from me or from fellow students. You are responsible for reading the forum before each class.

Discussion Leading: Twice over the semester you will work in pairs or triads to lead discussions on the assigned readings. You and your partner(s) are required to meet with me no later than the THURSDAY before you are scheduled to lead discussion in order to go over your proposed questions. As discussion leader, you should be prepared to guide the class through the key issues of the assigned reading for that day and offer both praise and critique of the author's analysis of the topic at hand.

When reading and preparing for class, consider these questions:

1. What is the major argument of each article or the book? What argument is the author making about Mexican identity and culture in this reading and how does it compare to previous readings?
 2. What is the historiographical context of the book? For example: Where do the authors place themselves within the literature? What key concepts, conversations, and arguments do they draw upon?
 3. What sources, methodologies, and analytical frameworks do they employ to support their arguments?
 4. What did you like and dislike about the reading? Think about this in terms of the questions the authors ask, the theoretical and methodological approach, the sources used, and your critical response.
- 2) **Book Review** (3-4 pages): Review of *Que vivan los tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*. **Due: Thursday, Oct 17 by 5 pm**
- 3) **Revolution in Identity?** (4-5 pages): This assignment requires you to draw on both primary (including *The Underdogs* and paintings from the Allen museum) and secondary sources to analyze how the Revolution altered collective identity in Mexico (or did not). **Due: Wed, Nov 13 in class.**
- 4) **Historiography Paper** (8-10 pages): The assignment requires that you identify and select an appropriately narrow topic and consult materials outside the course (library and online) in order to familiarize yourself with how historians engage in scholarly conversations on particular topics and how those change over time.

The historiography assignment is completed in stages in order to foster positive research and writing habits, including: 1. **Topic proposal** (Mon, Sep 23, 9 am); 2. **Thesis** (Tues, Nov. 1, 9 am); 3. **Historiographical paper** (Dec. 11); 4. **Oral presentation** (Dec. 11).

Grades for the course will be apportioned as follows:

Participation		40%
In-class participation	10%	
Discussion Leading (5% x 2)	10%	
Critical Response Papers/Online comments	20%	
Book Review		15%
Revolution/museum Assignment		20%
Historiography paper		25%
Proposal	P/F	
Thesis	P/F	
Paper	20%	
Oral Presentation	5%	

* All assignments must be completed to receive credit for the course.

** All work is governed by the Honor Code and must state, "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment" at the top of the first page of all written work. For more information, see http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html.

Format: Unless noted otherwise, your assignments should be double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, and use Chicago Style citations. Include your name, date, course information, course assignment, and honor code on the upper left hand corner. There is no need for a title page.

Late Work: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on their due date. No assignments will be accepted electronically. Late work will be graded as submitted and penalized 1/3 letter grade for each day late. For example, a B paper handed in 1 day late would earn a B-.

Support for Student Writing: I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center and to meet with their writing associates to hone your skills. For more information, see <http://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/departments/rhetoric/writing-associates-program/writing-center.dot>

Disabilities: I am committed to working with students with disabilities to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements.

If you feel emotional or mental distress this semester, you are welcome to talk to me about your situation. However, I am not a therapist and will most likely try to inform you to the best of my ability of the resources we have on campus, because your health is key to your success.

Classroom Conduct: It is our responsibility to foster a safe classroom environment which is conducive to learning. Although lively discussion and disagreement with your colleagues can and should be part of the learning process, students who create a hostile environment for others through discourteous, threatening, harassing, or aggressive behaviour will be asked to leave and counted absent. Nor will students be permitted to sleep in class, read non-class materials, dispute grades, talk or text message on cell phones, listen to iPods, or surf the internet. During class, please do not engage with your phone in any manner. If this policy is violated, I will ask you to leave for the class period. You may use a laptop computer to take notes, provided that it is not used for Facebook, etc. However, if you abuse this privilege by surfing the internet, checking your email, or engaging in any non-class related activities, all computer privileges will be withdrawn for the rest of the semester.

Contacting me: I am delighted to be teaching this course, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better. Please visit me during office hours with questions or concerns about the course. If your schedule conflicts with my posted office hours, please email me or speak to me following class to set up an alternate meeting time. Please note that I will not be checking my email after 6 pm and on the weekends, so plan accordingly.

I am happy to discuss your assignments or review papers with you. However, I will not review any assignment within 24 hours of the due date. If you have a question about your grade you must set an appointment with me at least one day after receiving your graded paper. At the appointment I expect you to have read all the comments on your paper and to have specific questions that you wish to discuss.



Zapatista Mural on wall of the *Oficina del Consejo Autonomo Municipio de Magdalena de la Paz*, Caracol de Oventic, Chiapas

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Wed, Sep 04 – Introduction

UNIT 1: PRE-COLUMBIAN, COLONIAL, AND 19TH C IDENTITIES

Week 2: Wed, Sep 11 – Collective Identities before the Nation-State

Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 1-44 (Intro and Chps 1, 2).

Susan Kellogg, “Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 12.3 (2000): 69-92.

Magali Carrera, “Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico,” *Art Journal* (Fall 1998): 37-45.

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT DUE: At the beginning of class, please submit a short reflection of 1-2 pages on your personal learning goals for this course: What goals do you have for this course? What do you want to learn? How does this course fit into your education plan at Oberlin? Think not just about content but more broadly: skills, approaches, types of interactions.

Week 3: Wed, Sep 18 – Crafting an Identity for the Emerging Nation

*****Critical response papers start**

Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra “Racial, Religious, and Civic Creole Identity in Colonial Spanish America,” *American Literary History*, 17.3 (2005): 420-437.

José María Morelos, “Sentiments of the Nation, or Points Outlined by Morelos for the Constitution,” *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 189-191.

Agustín de Iturbide, “Plan of Iguala,” *The Mexico Readers: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 192-195.

Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*, 45-76 (Chp. 3).

Alan Knight, “Peasants into Patriots: Thoughts on the Making of the Mexican Nation,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 10.1 (1994): 135-161.

Facilitators:

Week 4: Wed, Sep 25 – Regional and National Identities in the Mid-Late 19th Century **HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PAPER TOPIC DUE: MON, SEP 23, 9 AM**

John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 1-58 (Intro and Chp. 1).

“Mexican Views of the Mexican-American War (1850),” *Mexican History: A Primary Source Reader* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), 223-228.

Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*, 77-97 (Chp. 4).

Library Presentation (in class 7-8pm)

Facilitators:

UNIT 2: THE REVOLUTION AND ITS INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Week 5: Wed, Oct 02 – Picturing Mexicanidad

*****MUSEUM VISIT – MON, SEP 30, 12-1 or 12:30-1:30**

***** No response paper due**

John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 59-106 (Chp. 2).

Mark Coffey, “A Patriotic Sanctuary,” *How Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 78-126.

Week 6: Wed, Oct 09 – In the Belly of the Beast

Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs: Pictures and Scenes from the Present Revolution: A Translation of Mariano Azuela's Los de Abajo, with Related Texts* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006).

Facilitators:

Film: *El Compadre Mendoza* (alternate viewing time?)

Week 7: Wed, Oct 16 – Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender

Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*, 99-121 (Chp. 5).

Rick Lopez, “Ethnicizing the Nation: The India Bonita Contest of 1921,” *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 29-64. (available electronically at library)

Mary-Lee Mulholland, “Mariachi, Myths and Mestizaje: Popular Culture and Mexican National Identity,” *National Identities*, 9.3 (2007), 247-264.

BOOK REVIEW DUE BY THURSDAY, OCT 17 AT 5 PM



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Week 8 - Fall (Reading) Break
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Week 9: Wed, Oct 30 – Race and Ethnicity in the Postrevolutionary Period

Didier T. Jaén (trans.) “Introduction,” *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), ix-xxxiii.

José Vasconcelos, “The Cosmic Race,” *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 15-19.

Alexander S. Dawson, “From Models for the Nation to Model Citizens: Indigenismo and the 'Revindication' of the Mexican Indian, 1920-40,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 30.2 (1998), 279-308.

Schiavone Camacho, “‘We Want to be in Mexico:’ Imagining the Nation, Performing Mexicanness, 1930s-Early 1960s,” *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 135-154.

Facilitators:

Week 10: Wed, Nov 06 – Changing Gender Identities in the Postrevolutionary Period

*****No response paper due**

Anne Rubenstein, “The War on ‘Las Pelonas’: Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,” *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 52-80.

Marjorie Becker, “Torching la Purísima, Dancing at the Altar: The Construction of Revolutionary Hegemony in Michoacán, 1934 – 1940,” *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 247-264.

Octavio Paz, “The Sons of La Malinche,” *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 65-88.

REVOLUTION IN IDENTITY PAPER DUE IN CLASS

UNIT 3: COLLAPSE OF THE PRI

Week 11: Wed, Nov 13 – The 1968 Student Movement and its Repercussions

Louise Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-44 (Intro and chp. 1).

Elena Poniatowska, "The Student Movement of 1968," *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 555-569

Victim's Coordinating Council, "After the Earthquake," *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 579-590.

Facilitators:

Week 12: Wed, Nov 20 – Intellectuals Reconsider Mexican Identity

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL THESIS DUE: TUES, NOV. 1, 9 AM (EMAIL)

Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, "The Problem of National Culture," *México Profundo: Reclaiming A Civilization*, trans. by Philip A. Dennis (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 61-9.

Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, trans. by Christopher J. Hall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-10, 75-81, 137-142.

Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 247-260 (Chp. 15).

Facilitators:

Week 13: Wed, Nov 27 – Mexican Miracle and Bust

Louise Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968*, 75-103, 143-205 (Chps. 3, 5, 6 and Conclusion).

Carlos Monsivais, "Identity Hour or, What Photos Would You Take of the Endless City," 31-35

Facilitators:

Week 14: Wed, Dec 04 – Identity in Mexico and Beyond

John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico: Modern Visual Culture and National Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 201-250 (Chp. 5).

Robert Smith, "Dual Contexts for Transnational Life," *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 18-52.

Week 15: Wed, Dec 11- Choose your own adventure...

Presentations of historiographical papers