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


** 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 just about 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**
- 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](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](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).


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


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


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

“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


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

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).


BOOK REVIEW DUE BY THURSDAY, OCT 17 AT 5 PM
Week 9: Wed, Oct 30 – Race and Ethnicity in the Postrevolutionary Period


Facilitators:

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

***No response paper due


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


Facilitators:

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

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


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


Week 15: Wed, Dec 11- Choose your own adventure...
Presentations of historiographical papers