Black Mexico – AAAS 380, HIST 387W, HIST 487
Spring 2022 syllabus - Prof. Pablo Sierra

Class: Wednesdays, 2-4:40 pm
Classroom: Bausch & Lomb 315
Zoom Meeting ID: On course Blackboard page

Office Hours: Mondays, 1-3 pm
In-Person: Rush Rhees 458
Virtual Meeting ID: On course Blackboard page

Description
In this multidisciplinary seminar we will analyze the immense variety of historical experiences that Africans and their descendants have had in Mexico from 1520 to 2020. From the “Black conquistadors” and maroon leaders of the colonial period to the recent arrival of migrants from Haiti, Honduras, and Congo, this course asks us to consider the many dimensions and limitations of the “Afro-Mexican” or afrodescendiente concept. Who claims these identities, when, why, and under what conditions? This is a capacious history, as it also necessarily involves those who do not claim blackness due to national policies, personal indifference, educational ideologies, and familial pressures. Thus, we will address questions of civic rights, racial mixture (mestizaje), community-making, migration and immigration, freedoms and unfreedoms, etc. We will also examine Black Mexicans’ complex relationships to the Caribbean, the United States, and to specific African-American communities and notable intellectuals. Building on film, anthropology, dance, photography, sociology, migration studies, art history, and food studies, this seminar is open to students of all academic disciplines.

Books


Kelly Book Fund
If you are an undergraduate student facing financial hardship in acquiring the books listed above, you may apply to the Kelly Book Fund. These funds are for undergraduate students in need to purchase books for their history courses; preference will be given to those majoring in history. Students may apply for these funds using this link: https://forms.gle/c2WArDa5g696oKeU6

Calendar

Week 1 – Jan. 12
Statistics and Existence
2020 Census: Black, Afro-Mexican, Afrodescendientes

Week 2 – Jan. 19
21st c. Perceptions
Gonzalez, Dancing Between Myth and Reality

Week 3 – Jan. 26
Black Conquistadors
Peter Gerhard, “A Black Conquistador in Mexico”
Matthew Restall, “Invisible Warriors”
Elena FitzPatrick Sifford, “Mexican Manuscripts and the First Images of Africans in the Americas”

Week 4 – Feb. 2 – First Response Due by 2 pm
Deep Mexico
Bonfil Batalla, Mexico Profundo

Week 5 – Feb. 9
Yanga and the Maroons
Adela Amaral, “Social geographies, the practice of marronage and the archaeology of absence in colonial Mexico”
Patrick Carroll, “Black-Native Relations and the Historical Record in Colonial Mexico”
Jane Landers, “From cimarrón to citizen”

Week 6 – Feb. 16
Unfreedoms
Walcott, The Long Emancipation
Week 7 – Feb. 23 - Outline due by 2 pm
Black Familia, pt. 1
  Bennett, Colonial Blackness

Week 8 – Mar. 2
Black Familia Pt. 2
  Sue, Land of the Cosmic Race

Week 9 – Mar. 9 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

SPECIAL EVENT I - “Black Mexico: Screening of Negra (2019)” | Tues March 15 @ 5-7pm | location TBA Feature (72 min.) and Q&A with director Medhin Tewold Serrano

SPECIAL EVENT II - “Migration, Identity, and Blackness in Mexico” | Weds March 16 @ 12-2pm | Humanities Center | Roundtable with Professors Christina Sue and Karma Frierson

Week 10 – Mar. 16
Afro-Mexican Identity in the 21“ century
  - Hettie Malcomson, “The Expediency of Blackness” in Afro-Latin@s in Movement, 35-60
  - Walter Thompson-Hernández, “…Blaxicans and Basketball in Mexico” in Afro-Latin@s in Movement, 109-130
  - Christina Sue, “Is Mexico beyond Mestizaje”

SPECIAL EVENT III - “Haitian Migrant Identities in the Americas” | Wed March 23 @ 12-2pm | Humanities Center Seminar led by Professors April J. Mayes and Jean Eddy Saint-Paul

Week 11 – Mar. 23 – Second Response due by 2 pm
Haitian Migrants in Mexico
  “Life Between Borders” (16 min., Ebony Marie Bailey, dir.)
    ○ https://vimeo.com/203384382

  Mayes reading TBD

  Saint-Paul reading TBD
Week 12 – Mar. 30
Your Research I

Monograph of your choice for research
- Prepare to present and discuss the central argument, source base, strengths and weaknesses of the argument
- How will you use this particular source for the research paper?

Week 13 – Apr. 6
Blackness, Mexico, and the United States

Theodore Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*

Week 14 – Apr. 13
Your Research II

First version of research paper due in class at 2 pm

In-Class exercise: *Mexico, Slavery, Freedom: A bilingual documentary history*

Week 15 – Apr. 20 – RESEARCH WEEK

- Identify three additional scholarly articles for your research
  - How do these sources alter your argument, source base, and the strengths and weaknesses of the paper?

Week 16 – Apr. 27
Diasporic Foodways... and Tamales


Finals Week – Revised Research Paper due Wednesday, May 4 at 2 pm
Course Policies

In accordance with the College credit hour policy, which awards 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week, students are expected to devote at least one hour each week identifying the main lines or argument in course readings, working alone or in groups. In this particular course this might require attending lectures, film screenings or other academic events related to the seminar.

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

This is a DACA/Undocu-friendly course. The UofR and I are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, other personal situations, and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class or if I can connect you to University resources. For more information see the Burgett Intercultural Center’s page: https://www.rochester.edu/college/bic/support-inclusion/international-students.html#Undocumented

Academic Honesty

The AS&E Academic Honesty Policy, in parallel to the College Statement of Communal Principles, recognizes our shared obligation to promote honesty and the related principles of respect and responsibility among all members of our institution. It establishes high standards of academic conduct, and requires that each individual meet those standards. All members of the College community further understand that adherence to our shared expectations for integrity requires not only clear communication about those expectations, but the individual and collective courage to uphold them.

As a writing-intensive seminar, there are no midterm or final examinations in this course. However, in your writing assignments you must be especially diligent in crediting the works, thoughts and concepts of other scholars. Students can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating the source of any idea or wording that they did not produce, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, and in a list of references (e.g., bibliography or works cited page). Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer’s own words. Direct quotes must always be placed in quotation marks in addition to the other citation information that is required. If ever in doubt, please see AS&E’s full Academic Honesty Policy: https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy.html