

Colonial Latin America

HIST 150 / AAAS 150

Fall 2023 syllabus
Prof. Pablo Sierra



Diego Rivera, detail of "La Gran Tenochtitlán" (1945)

“Gazing on such wonderful sights, we did not know what to say, or whether what appeared before us was real, for on one side, on the land, there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake itself was crowded with canoes, and in the Causeway were many bridges at intervals, and in front of us stood the great City of Mexico, and we,—we did not even number four hundred soldiers! and we well remembered the words and warnings given us by the people of Huexotzingo and Tlaxcala and Tlamanalco, and the many other warnings that had been given...”

- *Bernal Díaz del Castillo*, recounting events in 1519

“And everywhere on the great canals they [the Spaniards] stood guard and looked out for where the Blacks would come from who were coming to kill the Spaniards, because it was said that the Black renegades who had established themselves at Acapulco would come from the seashore, and that some Blacks who had turned renegade and run away from Mexico here, leaving their masters behind, would come here from Veracruz.”

- *Don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpabín Quauhtlehuāniztzin*, recounting events in 1612

Course description

Welcome! This introductory survey will cover the unequal encounter of Africans, Europeans, Native Americans, and Asians in the vast area that we know today as Latin America. The latter term, by the way, is open to debate. Whether we think of it as Anáhuac, Tawantisuyu, or by any other name, Latin America was arguably the site of the most intense exchange of cultures, technologies, diseases and religions in the world from the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This course will cover three centuries of change, accommodation and negotiation that defined the region from 1492 up to the Independence movements of 1810. As a result, we will understand the vicerealties, audiences, and kingdoms that gave way to the nations that we know as Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, etc. However, to properly understand “Latin America,” we must look past the Spanish America to include the history of Haiti (Saint-Domingue), Jamaica, and Brazil.

Our course privileges the experiences of common people. Our interest lays not so much in the political projects of the colonial elite (which we will learn about, of course), as in the everyday letters that Spanish and Portuguese carpenters, sailors and musicians wrote to their lovers, cousins and business partners. Many of the assigned readings for this course come from the pens of indigenous people in Peru, Mexico, and Guatemala and explain how Native people understood the colonial experience. We will also attempt to reconstruct the motivations and family strategies of Africans and their descendants by studying freedom letters, marriage papers and the demands of runaway communities. Throughout the course, we will address topics not traditionally associated with the Latin American region, such as the prohibited existence of Jewish communities throughout the colonial period. All of the cases listed above can be studied through primary source materials, which you will learn to analyze throughout the course.

There are two examinations, one outline, and one research paper in this course. The choice of topic for the research paper is yours. You will spend the last third of the semester developing your essay. With this choice, however, it is also your responsibility to identify the necessary primary sources to develop your paper. All papers for this class must be written in English. However, you are more than welcome to cite documents, books and chapters in other languages that advance your research.

Course Information

Class Location : Bausch & Lomb 270

Class Times : Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:25-4:40 pm

Email: pablo.sierra@rochester.edu

Office Location: Rush Rhees 461

Office Hours: Mondays, 1:15-3:15 pm

Grading

- 10% Attendance
 - one unexcused absence allowed per semester
 - loss of one attendance percentage point for every subsequent absence

- 20% Discussion Board - due Tuesday nights by 11:59 pm
 - personal reactions, questions, and criticisms for the weekly readings
 - each student will write 8 posts during the semester, 200-250 words each

- 10% Exam 1 – Wednesday, Sept. 27 during class

- 15% Exam 2 - Wednesday, Oct. 25 during class

- 15% Essay Outline – due Friday, Nov. 10 by 11:59 pm
 - organized into introduction, three sections, and conclusion
 - minimum of 3 primary sources, 3 secondary sources

- 30% Research Essay - Wednesday, Dec. 17 by 11:59 pm
 - 9-10 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font
 - thoroughly revised, proofread and polished

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.

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>

Course Expectations and Essay Policy

This course is designed as lecture-discussion hybrid. Mondays will feature lectures, while Wednesdays will be devoted to group discussions, primary source activities, and debates. All students are expected to complete the assigned readings in time for our Wednesday in sessions.

The research paper for this course has been scheduled very carefully to allow for sufficient preparation and feedback. Any papers received after the deadline will automatically receive a full letter grade reduction (A- to B-). Papers received 24 hours after the deadline will receive two letter grade reductions (A to C) and so forth for every day it is late. In essence, make sure to turn in your papers on time. **All papers or communication for this class must be sent to pablo.sierra@rochester.edu as PDF or Word documents.** I will not accept links to Google Docs.

Required Books

Bialuschewski, Arne. *Raiders and Natives: Cross-Cultural Relations in the Age of Buccaneers*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2022.

- E-book also available via Library website

Lane, Kris. *Potosí: The Silver City that Changed the World*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.

- E-book also available via Library website

Soriano, Cristina. *Tides of Revolution: Information, Insurgencies, and the Crisis of Colonial Rule in Venezuela*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018.

Whitehead, Neil. *Of Cannibals and Kings: Primal Anthropology in the Americas*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011.

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>

Module I – Conquest and Extraction

Week 1 – Introductions – Aug. 30

Inspirations, memories, biases

In-class primary source exercise

Week 2 – Al-Andalus and “the Indies” – Sept. 6 (No class Monday, Sept. 4 – Labor Day)

Of Cannibals and Kings, Intro, pp. 3-47, and Doc. 1a and 1b, pp. 49-70

Mesoamerican Voices, Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-20 *

Week 3 – Making Quisqueya Caribbean – Sept. 11 / 13

Discussion Board 1

Ida Altman, “The Revolt of Enriquillo and the Historiography of Early Spanish America,”
The Americas Vol. 63, no. 4 (2007): 587-614 *

Juan José Ponce Vázquez, *Islanders and Empire*, pp. 22-56 *

Of Cannibals and Kings, Doc. 2 and 3, pp. 72-112

In-class Primary Source Exercise: *Of Cannibals and Kings*, Doc. 4, pp. 115-119

Week 4 – Military Conquest – Sept. 18 / 20

Discussion Board 2

Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, Chapter 1 and 3, pp. 1-26 and 44-63 *

Primary sources: *Letters & People*, Docs. 1-4, pp. 2-24 *

Primary sources: *Mesoamerican Voices*, 23-42, pp. 62-77 *

Week 5 – Brazilian Counterpoint – Sept. 25/27

John Monteiro, *Blacks of the Land*, Ch. 1, pp. 7-48 *

Alida Metcalf, “The Entradas of Bahia of the Sixteenth Century,” pp. 373-400*

In-Class Exam 1 – Wednesday Sept. 27

Module II – The Spanish American Empire: Mighty and Fragile

Discussion Board 3

Week 6 – Making Ports, Making Colonies – Oct. 2 / 4

Alejandro de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic*, Ch. 1-2, 1-50 *

Joseph Clark, *Veracruz and the Caribbean*, Ch. 2-3, pp. 49-104 *

Week 7 – Silver Mountains — Oct. 9 / 11

Discussion Board 4

Kris Lane, *Potosí, the Silver City*, Introduction-Chapter 4, pp. 1-116

Week 8 – Decolonizing the Future – Oct. 18 only (No Class on Oct. 16 for Fall Break)

Special guest lecture with Prof. Iris Morales, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 3:30-5:00 pm

Optional: Documentary viewing at Hipocampo Books, Thurs. Oct. 19, time TBD

Week 9 – The Global City – Oct. 23 / 25

Kris Lane, *Potosí, the Silver City*, Chapters 4-6, pp. 92-117

Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Sea*, Chapters 3-4, pp. 67-121 *

In-Class Exam 2 – Wednesday, Oct. 25

Week 10 – Pirates and Plunder – Oct. 30 / Nov. 1

Discussion Board 5

Arne Bialuschewski, *Raiders and Natives*, Intro-Conclusion, pp. 1-122

Documents 5-10 in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era*, 9-25 *

Documents 22-32 in *Piracy in the Early Modern Era*, pp. 58-96 *

Week 11 – No Class on Nov. 6 or 8

Research week, visit the stacks, meetings with research librarians, work on your project

Research outline due Friday, Nov. 10 by 11:59 pm

Send PDF or Word doc to pablo.sierra@rochester.edu

UNIT III – The 18th Century: Reforms, Rumors, and Revolution

Week 12 – Pombaline and Bourbon Reforms – Nov. 13 / 15

Discussion Board 6

Kris Lane, *Potosí, the Silver City*, 117-185

Kenneth Maxwell, “The Spark, Pombal, the Amazon and the Jesuits,” pp. 168-183 *

Screening of *The Mission* (1986), directed by Roland Joffé

Week 13 – The Fall of the Jesuits and the Mission – Nov. 20 (No Class on Wed., Nov. 22 for Thanksgiving)

James Schofield Saeger, “The Mission and Historical Missions,” pp. 393-415 *

Barbara Ganson, “The Guaraní in the Aftermath,” pp. 117-136 *

Screening of *The Mission* (1986), directed by Roland Joffé

Week 14 – Dangerous Books, Songs, and *Chismes* – Nov. 27 / 29 **Discussion Board 7**

Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution*, Chapters 1-3, pp. 15-116

Week 15 – Rumor, Rebellion and Revolution – Dec. 4 / 6 **Discussion Board 8**

Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution*, Chapter 4-5, pp. 117-182

Week 16 – Ghosts of Haiti - Dec. 11 / 13

Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution*, Chapter 6-Conclusion, pp. 183-213

- In-class exercise: The 1804 Declaration of Haitian Independence

Final paper due Wednesday, Dec. 13 by 11:59 pm
Send PDF or Word doc to pablo.sierra@rochester.edu