

HIST 250/455 – Digital Paleography (2.0 credits)
Fall 2021 syllabus (TENTATIVE)
Prof. Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva

Class: Tuesdays 3:25-4:40 pm, Bausch & Lomb 315
Office Hours: Rush Rhees 458, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12-1 pm
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Disclaimer : I am not the person seen above.

Overview

In this course, you will learn to read, analyze, and transcribe Spanish writing from the 1500s-1700s. There are no lectures in this highly interactive two-credit class. Instead, we will meet once a week to allow you to put into practice your historical and linguistic abilities. For this iteration of the course, students should have a strong background in Spanish (or Portuguese). There are no History pre-requisites for this course. To the contrary, this course will serve as excellent preparation for classes on colonialism, the early modern period, religion, etc. Ultimately, this course readies students for historical research in digital databases, physical archives and specialized libraries.

Digital Paleography is designed as practicum of sorts, a space and community in which to sharpen individual and collaborative research skills. Our first sessions will focus on written culture in Spanish domains, how scribes mediated and transmitted knowledge, and how that information was preserved through the centuries and recently digitized (to the point that we can

now access it). In these first weeks, your “eyes” will gradually adjust to the techniques, spacing, and abbreviations that characterized writing in the early modern period.

In this course, you will learn to navigate a variety of digital archives that hold the records of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking communities throughout the world. The documents we will decipher touch on a wide variety of topics, including: witchcraft, piracy, free Black communities, exploration narratives, petitions to the Crown. Whether you are interested in the fall of the Inca, or the 18th c. botanical expeditions to Mexico, or Iberian perceptions of “the enemy,” this course is for you. We will develop a collaborative project over the course of the semester, however, the final project consists of the analysis of a digitized primary source of your choice.

Methodology

Paleography is the study of ancient (*palaeo*) writing (*graphein*). As such, it is an essential skill for understanding the historical experiences of societies and individuals who wrote or who were the subject of others’ writing. This was certainly the case of the populations who today inhabit Mexico, Spain, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Angola or the Philippines, to name but a few. Perhaps more importantly, paleography allows you (the researcher) to move beyond the printed word. From a research perspective, paleography enables you to access, analyze, and, ultimately, share, new information on the past. Before you can read about a historical figure in a book, article or Wikipedia entry, that person was necessarily studied by one or several scholars. Those scholars turned to older books, articles, primary source collections and archives. In this course, we will focus on these latter two. Your reading, transcription and analysis of documents in digital archives, will allow you to create and share primary sources for others to use.

Acquiring fluency in paleography will be an uneven process. Some of you will progress rapidly through military documentation, but struggle with Inquisition cases. Alternatively, you may find that you have a much greater command of spoken Spanish, only to be stumped by a vexing (and common) abbreviation in 17th c. letters. This is absolutely fine. This is why the collective aspect of our course will be so important. We will help one another, sometimes in pairs or with the collaboration of the entire class.

In this iteration of the course, we will focus on Spanish, although students of Portuguese are certainly also welcome to join. The Iberian handwriting of the 16th, 17th and 18th c. shares far more commonalities than we would imagine. You will be surprised to see how many concepts, terms, and structures both languages share in their early modern incarnations.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Collaborative Project (40%)

All students collectively transcribe, analyze, and annotate a group document via Google docs throughout the course of the semester. The group will produce a short introductory study on the document and prepare to share it as a digital, Open Access, primary source.

Individual Project (40%)

Each student will select a digitized document from PARES, AGNM, AGNSD, Roots Point Fondo Colonial, or the digital repository of their choice. This manuscript source (or a select

portion of the document) will be transcribed, analyzed, and annotated. The proposed project must be discussed with the instructor during research meetings.

- Undergraduate students will produce a 15-page annotated transcription with introductory remarks (included in page count).
- Graduate students enrolled in the HIST 455 section of the class will produce a 20-25 page annotated transcription, with introductory remarks and a select bibliography.

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Class meets once a week, which makes your timely and participation extremely important. One unexcused absence is allowed. Subsequent unexcused absences will result in a 10% deduction of the attendance and participation grade. If ill or in need of a Covid test, please notify the instructor before class.

Expectations

This course requires your timely and energetic assistance. Because we only meet once a week, I expect your focused participation and willingness to discuss the documents being analyzed. When stumped by a particular line of text, explain what the words look like, what letters you have been able to identify, how they differ from previous lines of text. This course requires a charitable, constructive approach to knowledge making. When working during collaborative times, assist one another. Some of you will invariably have a better grasp of early modern Spanish (or Portuguese) than others. Share your knowledge collectively.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Kathryn Burns, "Notaries, Truths, and Consequences", *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 350-379.

- handout on abbreviations, chronological techniques, headers (*encabezados*)

Week 2

1777, Carta del virrey de Perú.

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/3595225?nm>

Carta n° 93 de Manuel de Guirior, Virrey de Perú, a José de Gálvez, Secretario de Indias.

Week 3

1709-1715

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/1312475?nm>

Proceso de Fe de Petrona de Fuentes

Week 4

1701

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/7339973?nm>

Expediente para que los ingleses e irlandeses católicos que residan más de diez años o estén casados con españolas se les permita vivir en el Reino y comerciar libremente

Week 5

1677

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/397730?nm>

Carta de Don Juan de Padilla Guardiola y Guzmán, presidente de la Audiencia de Santo Domingo en interín.

Week 6

1668

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/1683194?nm>

“Libro de relaciones de causas de fe del Tribunal de la Inquisición de Cartagena de Indias”

Week 7

1648

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/243755?nm>

Méritos: Marcos de Vallecillo y Figueroa

Week 8

1639

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/423159?nm>

“Carta de vecinos de Macao sobre el rey de Japón”

Week 9

1631

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/97844?nm>

Bienes de difuntos: Cristóbal Alonso

Week 10

1588

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/127367?nm>

Captura de navío procedente de China por piratas ingleses

Week 11

1583

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/127517?nm>

Persecución de Martín Ochoa de Lacayo por piratas franceses

Week 12

1557

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/130420?nm>*“Concesión de escudo de armas”***Week 13**

1549

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/121751?nm>*“Declaración de Blas Arias sobre el Brasil”***Week 14**

1530

<http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/122021?nm>*“Descripción del Río de la Plata”***Week 15**

Presentation of final projects (individual and collective)

Course Policies

The College’s credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 2 credit hours for courses that require 340 minutes of average course work per week. Students enrolled in this course are expected to devote 265 minutes each week outside of class to identifying the main lines of argument in course readings, working alone or in groups, and to researching in depth their topics for their research projects.

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>