HISTORY 335b: Topic: The Spanish Conquest of America

Spring 2007
Department of History
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar explores the Spanish conquest of Native American societies. Readings focus on the military, ideological, religious economic and biological consequences of the Spanish conquest.

BOOKS REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE: The student is required to obtain and read the following five books as well as the packet of photocopies.

- Symcox, Geoffrey and Blair Sullivan, eds., Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies: A Brief History with Documents, Boston: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2005.
- Photocopy packet of required readings to be purchased in history office. Readings are indicated in the syllabus by asterisks (***)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Weekly Reaction Papers: Students will be required to write short reaction papers (2 pages) to each week’s readings to be submitted in class on the day the readings are assigned. (See attached guidelines) In addition to the brief “reaction,” students should prepare 3 to 4 broadly conceived questions that can be used to help spark class discussion.

Longer Reaction papers: Over the course of the semester, each student will select three weeks in which he/she will write lengthier reaction papers of roughly 5 pages. These are similar to the weekly papers but will develop the issues more extensively.

Examinations: None.

Research Paper: Each student will write a research paper on some aspect of the Spanish Conquest. Students may select their own topics (with professor’s advance approval) or choose one of the proposed topics (see attached guidelines) Either way, students should submit a paper proposal accompanied by a bibliography (see immediately below) by week 6. Final papers should be roughly 9 pages and use at least 6 different sources. Consult syllabus for deadlines.

Paper Proposal: Students are expected to submit a 500 word proposal for their research papers by no later than week 6 (proposals are welcome earlier). Proposals should indicate the topic of the paper, preliminary thoughts and findings as well as a thoughtfully selected bibliography of related works that will be used in drafting the final paper. I expect that students will have spent considerable time reading and carefully selecting works appropriate to their topics before submitting their proposals.
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• LATE PAPERS: Papers submitted late will be penalized one full grade per day. (From A to B for example). Papers are due IN CLASS. Anything handed in after class will be treated as late.

• PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a serious offense. Students caught plagiarizing will be failed for the course.

Class Participation: Attendance is mandatory but not sufficient. Effective oral participation in class is also expected of all students. Effective participation means that students come to class well prepared and contribute extensively to class discussions. A significant percentage of the final grade depends on this oral participation. Students will be penalized for unexcused absences or coming to class unprepared. Students with more than two absences will be failed for the course.

Research Presentation: Students will present their research projects in the final weeks of the semester. Details will be provided in class.

GRADES: Final grades will be determined as follows:

- Class preparation & participation (3% per class) 36%
- Weekly short reaction papers (2% each) 18%
- Longer reaction papers (6% each) 18%
- Paper proposal 5%
- Research Paper & presentation 23%

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1 (1/18): Introduction

No reading

Week 2 (1/25): Spain Prior to 1492

***Henry Kamen, Spain, 1469-1714, chapter 1.

Week 3 (2/1): America Prior to 1492

***Lockhart and Schwartz, Early Latin America, ch. 2.

Week 4 (2/8): Christopher Columbus and the Era of Exploration: Part 1


Week 5 (2/15): Christopher Columbus and the Era of Exploration: Part 2

Symcox & Sullivan, pp. 101-76.

***El Requirimiento (The Requirement)
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Week 6 (2/22): The Conquest of Mexico: A Modern Perspective
Hassig, pp. 45-194.

- Paper proposals due in class if not already submitted.

Week 7 (2/29): The Conquest of Mexico: Participants’ Perspectives: Part 1
Schwartz, pp. 15-99.


Week 8 (3/8): The Conquest of Mexico: Participants’ Perspectives: Part 2
Schwartz, 100-220

***Matthew Restall, “Under the Lordship of the King: The Myth of Spanish Completion,’ in Restall, Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest, ch. 4.

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 (3/22): The Conquest of Peru
***Kenneth J. Andrien, Andean Worlds, ch. 2.


Week 10 (3/29): Conquest and Gender Ideologies in Peru
Silverblatt, chapters 1-5. Visiting professor Dr. Kenneth Andrien, Professor of History OSU.

Week 11 (4/5): The Inca Under Spanish Rule
Silverblatt, chapters 6-10.

Week 12 (4/12): Biological Conquest of America
Crosby, chapters 1-3

***Mann., Charles C., ”1491,” The Atlantic Monthly; March 2002; Volume 289, No. 3; 41-53.

Week 13 (4/19): Native Resistance & Accommodation to Spanish Colonialism


- Final paper due on Monday April 30th at 4PM (or before) in my office.

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Reaction Papers

Each week students will submit brief papers (2 pages typed) in which they will “react” to the week’s assigned readings. Students should comment on the authors' arguments, bring up points that were not entirely clear, and give general assessments of the "success" of the readings. These are not intended to be formal papers rather the student should use them to think about and reflect on the readings and their significance and to better prepare themselves to participate thoughtfully in class discussions.

Some questions to ask yourself as you read the assignments and prepare your “reaction papers.”

1. What is the central focus of the piece (or pieces) that you have read?
2. What is the author’s main argument or objective in writing the piece?
3. What preconceptions (assumptions e.g.) does the author have?
4. Regarding the primary sources, in what ways are the arguments influenced by the authors’ biases (cultural, economic, ethnic, etc.)
5. What facts or evidence does the author bring to bear in support of his/her arguments? Does the factual evidence seem valid? Well chosen? Complete?
6. What are the work’s strengths or weaknesses?
7. Given the evidence presented, what alternative interpretations or arguments might be possible?
8. In what ways are the issues raised and arguments made important?
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Possible research paper topics (you may propose alternatives to the professor)

1. Discuss the causes and theories for Amerindian depopulation.

2. Selecting either Mexico or Peru, discuss the process, successes and failures of evangelization (religious conversion) in the early colonial period.

3. What religious and political justifications did the Spaniards employ in their American conquests?

4. How did such a small number of Spaniards succeed in defeating such great American empires? (consider either Peru or Mexico, but not both).

5. Discuss the relative importance of the variety of Spanish motivations in the conquests of America.

6. Discuss Bartolome de las Casas and his struggle for justice in America.

7. What are some of the common myths about Columbus? From where might these myths come and are they accurate?

8. Discuss the legend of Quetzalcoatl-Cortes. What are its origins? Is it credible? What evidence have historians and chroniclers presented for its existence?

9. What factors motivated Christopher Columbus to partake in his journeys?

10. How did the goals of secular and religious conquerors differ or conflict? Discuss some of the conflicts. In what ways did they reinforce one another?

11. Discuss the environmental consequences of the Spanish conquest of America.

12. Discuss the institution of encomienda. Why and how was it used to organize early colonial society?