

**History of Contemporary Mexico**  
**HILA 132, Spring 2009**  
**Monday and Wednesday, 5:00 – 6:20 p.m.**  
**Peterson Hall 102**

**Zachary Brittsan, Department of History**  
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**Course Profile:**

This course provides an introduction to the history of Mexico during the twentieth century, about from the eve of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 to sometime around the election of President Vicente Fox in 2000. Emphasis will be placed on social, economic, and political developments within the very diverse political boundaries of Mexico, but I will also delve into relevant events occurring on the U.S. side of the border. This course seeks particularly to explore the violent destruction and reconstruction of stable government during the Mexican Revolution, the rise and fall of the PRI as a political party, and changes within Mexican society represented in its *campesinos*, mass media, city dwellers, and ever-increasing cultural and economic links with the United States.

**Course Format:**

Three hours of lecture per week; discussion of books and other readings in class as appropriate; maybe a guest lecturer or two.

**Required Materials:**

I have constructed a diverse reading list for this course that represents a variety of topics and genres. Careful reading and comprehension of the required texts is vital to your success in this class.

The required books are available in paperback at the UCSD Bookstore; all are on reserve in the Geisel Library. Since there is no textbook, students may wish to consult a general work on the history of Mexico on a strictly voluntary basis.

1. Michael J. Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002)
2. Paul Vanderwood, *Juan Soldado: Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, Saint* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004)
3. Elena Poniatowska, *Massacre in Mexico* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; Reprint edition, 1992)
4. Sam Quinones, *True Tales from another Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; 2001)

## **Exams and Assignments:**

Exams: Two exams will be administered over the course of the quarter. The mid-term exam on Wednesday, May 6 will be an in-class exam consisting of ID and essay questions. The final exam will be in the form of a take-home essay and will be due Friday, June 12. It will be cumulative, so you will be responsible for bringing material from throughout the course to bear on your responses. Please bring a bluebook to the mid-term exam. **Your responses to all questions must be drawn from the lectures and readings.**

Assignments: We will watch a couple of films during the course of the quarter. Since it is important to develop a critical eye for popular representations of Mexico, you are required to write a 4-5 page review of two films that will be shown during weeks 3 and 8. Each review is due in class on the Monday following the film's showing.

Format: The film reviews must be typed in 12 point font, Times New Roman, on 8.5"x11" white paper, double-spaced; margins should be 1". Papers must be stapled; no cover sheets please. The first page should include your name, assignment identification, course number (HILA 132), and date.

Guidelines: The review should not be a comprehensive outline of the film; instead, it should be a reflection on the themes, ideas, and messages of the movie. Remember that you are looking at it primarily as a work of historical re-creation, not purely as a form of entertainment. Use a critical point of view. As you write your review, be sure to include an introductory paragraph complete with thesis statement and a brief conclusion.

To help you situate the film in its field and develop a critical opinion of it, here is a tip: you might look up some reviews, but be sure to cite the source if you draw from any of them; lengthy direct quotes from uncited sources will be treated as plagiarism and dealt with accordingly.

The paper should engage the following questions, though not necessarily in this order:

- 1) What central idea(s) did the film attempt to convey? Without summarizing the entire film, describe how important scenes or plot points make its central argument(s).
- 2) How does the film relate to themes or ideas discussed in lecture? Are there direct or indirect connections? Are there contradictions?
- 3) Did you find the film to be a convincing portrayal of historical events? Why or why not? In what ways was the film successful? What were its faults?
- 4) State your opinion of the film. What did you like? What did you not like? Do you think the film is original? Did any of the outcomes surprise you?

**Evaluation:**

Film reviews: see above guidelines; 30% (15% each)

Mid-term exam: essay and short answer, in class, about 1-1/4 hours long; 30%

Final exam: take-home essay; 40%

**Instructor’s Policies:**

- 1) No “Incompletes” will be given except for compelling personal/medical reasons.
- 2) Papers must be typed; handwritten papers will not be accepted; late papers will be accepted for up to a week after they are due; late papers will be penalized at the rate of 2 points per day.
- 3) Exams must be taken in bluebooks, which the student is expected to supply.
- 4) Roll will not be taken, but regular class attendance is strongly recommended.
- 5) Think twice, or even three times, before you consider plagiarism of any form. If I discover it, the penalties will be harsh.

**Reading and Lecture Topics; Calendar**

This is an *approximate* schedule of lectures, which may vary according to my ability to stick to the schedule and invitations to guest lecturers; but you should follow the recommended reading schedule.

| <b>Meeting</b>   | <b>Recommended Reading Schedule</b>                                       |
|--|---|
| Week 1: Revolutionary Beginnings                                   |   |
| 03/30 Introduction and course overview                             |   |
| 04/01 Revolution, 1910 - 1917                                      | <i>The Mexican Revolution</i> , 1 - 111                                   |
| Week 2: Is the Revolution Over?                                    |   |
| 04/06 Revolution, 1910 - 1917 (continued)                          |   |
| 04/08 Revolution, 1917 - 1927                                      | <i>The Mexican Revolution</i> , 112 - 220                                 |
| Week 3: Challenges to Consolidating Political Control in the 1920s |   |
| 04/13 <u>Film #1</u>   |   |
| 04/15 <i>Cristeros</i> and <i>agraristas</i>                       | <i>The Mexican Revolution</i> , 221 - end<br><i>Juan Soldado</i> , 3 - 72 |

Week 4: Implementing a Revolutionary Program in the 1930s

04/20 Plutarco Elías Calles, Jefe Máximo

*Juan Soldado*, 73 - 248

04/22 Lázaro Cárdenas and revolutionary redemption

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Week 5: Making Miracles after 1937

04/27 Oil expropriation and WWII

*Juan Soldado*, 249 - end

04/29 Mexico on the move at mid-century

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Week 6

05/04 Book discussion w/special guest Paul Vanderwood; study guide distributed

*Massacre in Mexico*, 325 - 333

05/06 Mid-term exam; bring bluebook

and 1 - 167

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Week 7: Maintaining Miracles in the 1950s and 1960s

05/11 Political compromise in the 1950s

*Massacre in Mexico*, 169 - 323

05/13 Female suffrage, middle class consumerism

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Week 8: Miracles Shattered: Reforming a Revolutionary Government; Film #2

05/18 Counterculture and dirty war in the 70s

*True Tales from another Mexico*, 1 - 116

05/20 Economic struggles and political opening in the 80s

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Week 9: Abandoning Ideas of Revolution under Carlos Salinas de Gortari;

05/25 No class: Memorial Day

*True Tales from another Mexico*, 117 - 232

05/27 Free trade and armed rebellion

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Week 10: New Century, New Directions

06/01 Down with the PRI, up with the PAN

*True Tales from another Mexico*, 233 - 332

06/03 Drug war renewed

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Finals week

Final exam; essay: **Due Friday, June 8, 7:00 p.m.**