

HITO 192, Winter 2008

Senior Seminar:

Death and a Long View of Mexican History

Selected Wednesdays, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

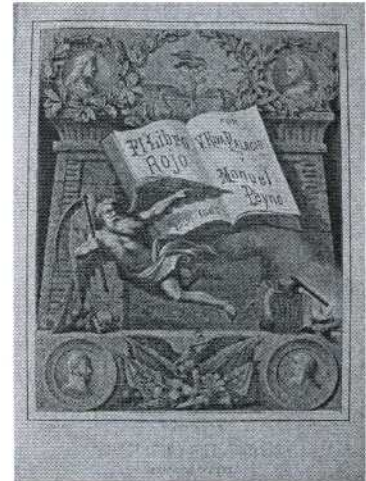
HSS 4083

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Office Hours, Mondays 2:30-4:00 p.m.

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Senior Seminar: Death and a Long View of Mexican History

...our relations with death are intimate – more intimate perhaps than those of any other people – but empty of meaning and devoid of erotic emotion. Death in Mexico is sterile, not fecund like that of the Aztecs and the Christians.

– Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 1949.

This seminar will explore this history of imagining the history of Mexico. That is to say, it will examine how different generations and peoples in the physical space that we know as “Mexico” imagined their own histories, and how they remembered and rewrote them, over a very long period of time – five hundred years! We will emphasize cultural conflicts that arose over Christian evangelization, and, later the secularization of images and texts, death and rebirth, by Liberals and revolutionaries. The seminar should help students of the History of Mexico to appreciate the telling of Mexican History in a civilizational scope (rather than simply as national history) and to see the global context in which the history of Mexico has developed and been remembered. In even broader terms, the course will explore what “history” means and how its related to things like memory and identity, pictures and texts. At a more basic level, it should provide a basic understanding of things like the celebration of the Day of the Dead, the writing of patriotic history, and the relationship between Mexico and the rest of the Western world.

*There are no writing assignments for this course. The primary goal of the seminar is to provide you with an opportunity to discuss the big ideas from a lecture course in a more intimate setting, and to get to know an individual professor better. Given the flexibility of the writing assignments for HILA 131, there are not necessarily any new readings for the course either, so long as you choose to write your papers for the course about the books assigned for the seminar. The books that I have chosen for this seminar are huge, both physically and conceptually. Each one takes one basic theme and pushes it through a very long period of history, and each explores the relationship between images and the written word. They’ll surely be a challenge to read, but they will also make you think, if not blow your mind.

Books:

1. Enrique Florescano, Nancy Hancock trans., Raúl Velázquez drawings, *National Narratives in Mexico: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006).
2. Serge Gruzinski, *Images at War: Mexico From Columbus to Blade Runner (1492-2019)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
3. Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2005).

Schedule of Meetings**Wednesday, January 16**

Florescano, *National Narratives*, xi-126.

Wednesday, January 23

Florescano, *National Narratives*, 127-281.

Wednesday, January 30

Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*, 11-222.

Wednesday, February 13

Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*, 223-412.

Wednesday, February 20

Gruzinski, *War of Images*, 1-95.

Wednesday, February 27

Gruzinski, *War of Images*, 96-227.