

History 365: Conquest and Colonization of Latin America time place

Professor Joan Bristol

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Office hours: Mondays 10-11 and by appointment other times (email me to set up an appointment).

This course examines processes of invasion, conquest, and imperialism in Mesoamerica and the Andes from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, using the examples of the Aztec, Inca, and Spanish empires. We will try to de-center Spanish colonization but placing it within a longer context of political change in the Americas. While Europeans considered the Spanish invasion and colonization a watershed moment that does not mean that Indigenous Americans felt the same. The terms “conquest,” “colonial,” and “empire” both reveal and conceal ambiguous and contested processes that continue to affect all people living in Latin America and the rest of the world.

Books, all available through the library:

D’Altroy, *The Incas*. Available online through library.

Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. Available online through the library

Carrasco, *The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction*. Available online through the library.

Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City*. Available online through the library.

Additional Readings:

Readings available on Blackboard are identified with (BB) on the syllabus. Readings available through the library databases are noted on the syllabus.

Assignments and grading:

1) Three 5-7 page papers (20% each). The due dates are noted on the syllabus. You will receive specific instructions for the papers. These papers will give you a chance to reflect on the readings and develop your own interpretations of the texts.

2) In-class activities (20% total). Some weeks we will have a short in-class writing exercise, open-book quiz, or other activity, or you may be asked ahead of time to hand in notes on the reading (there is a note-taking sheet at the end of this syllabus). You cannot make these up if you miss class but I will drop the two lowest grades.

3) Participation (20% of final grade):

You are expected to attend all meetings of the course. To participate effectively you must read and think about the assigned reading before you come to class and be prepared to ask questions, think critically about the material, do in-class writing, and talk to your fellow students and instructor. The best way to do this is to take notes as you read. If you are uncomfortable speaking in front of the group or have trouble

contributing to the discussion that is not a problem at all, just talk to me about it and we can figure out ways to participate.

If you attend class and pay attention (e.g. you look at the person who is speaking, you look at the slides during lecture, you do not sneak peeks at your phone, you do not fall asleep) you receive an 80 for the day. (It is so easy to get an 80!) If you speak up and make comments that are relevant to the class discussion your grade goes up from there.

Class policies:

- 1) You may only use electronic devices (laptop, phone) if we are discussing readings that are available online and you need to refer to them. If you have the reading open on your laptop I expect you to be an active participant in the class discussion, because you will have immediate access to the texts.

Studies have shown that classroom use of electronics lowers student grades and opportunities to learn and I want to provide you the opportunity to succeed in this class. (Patterson and Patterson 2016, 2017)

- 2) Please arrive in class on time and stay for the entire class period. If you know you will be late to class or will need to leave early let me know ahead of time.
- 3) Turn off cell phones during class.
- 4) If you hand in a late paper you must contact me to make arrangements with me to hand it in. I will only accept late papers with prior arrangements.
- 5) I can only correspond with you through your GMU email address. Please use that to contact me and please check your email daily.
- 6) I would like to use the names and pronouns that you prefer so please let me know your preferred name and pronoun by email or in person.

Academic Accommodations/Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please go to <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about registering with Disability Services. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu, Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Honor Code:

George Mason has an honor code and you are expected to adhere to it.

<https://oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/>

All work you submit must be your own, completed without using AI tools or copying the work of other people, whether published or unpublished. If you use the work of others to

support your own ideas (for example if you use information from an assigned reading as evidence in your written work) you must give credit to the authors by using proper citation, which we will discuss further in class.

If you are unsure about how to avoid plagiarism please consult the English Department Statement of Plagiarism <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/citing-sources/plagiarism>. I am also happy to talk to you about it.

If I suspect plagiarism or the use of AI (artificial intelligence, e.g. ChatGPT or similar) I will submit my findings to the Honor Committee immediately. Thus it is best if you consult me with any questions before you hand in an assignment, rather than afterwards because I cannot help you then.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Part I: Thinking about history

Week 1 (1/17): Introduction

No reading assignment.

1/23: Last day to add classes.

Week 2 (1/22 & 1/24)

Read Schrag, "How to Read a Primary Source," on *HistoryProfessor.Org*
<https://historyprofessor.org/research/how-to-read-a-primary-source/>

Read Trouillot, "The Power in the Story," in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, pp. 1-30.

Week 3 (1/29 & 1/31)

Read Mann, "A View from Above," from *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, pp. 1-27. (BB).

Read Harris, "The Coming of the White People: Reflections on the Mythologisation of History in Latin America," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 1995, vol.14 no. 1, 9-24. Available online through the library.

Part II: Indigenous Imperialism in Mesoamerica

Week 4 (2/5 & 2/7)

We will discuss the first paper assignment in class.

Read Kilroy-Ewbank, "Mesoamerica, an introduction,"
<https://smarthistory.org/mesoamerica-an-introduction/>.

Read Koontz, "Periods in Mesoamerican history," <https://smarthistory.org/periods-mesoamerican-history/>.

Read Mollenhauer, "Olmec Colossal Heads," <https://smarthistory.org/olmec-colossal-heads/>

Read and watch the video by Kilroy-Ewbank and Zucker, "Olmec Mask (Offering 20 from the Templo Mayor)," <https://smarthistory.org/olmec-mask/>

Read and watch the video by Harris and Kilroy-Ewbank, "Coyolxauhqui Monolith," in *Smarthistory*, <https://smarthistory.org/coyolxauhqui-monolith/>

2/7 – 2/20 *Unrestricted withdrawal period (you may withdraw (no tuition refund) but there are certain restrictions. Speak with your advisor about this.)*

Week 5 (2/12 & 2/14)

Read Carrasco, *The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 1-91. (This is the whole book.) Available online through the library.

Part III: Indigenous Imperialism in the Andes

Week 6 (2/19 & 2/21)

Paper 1 is due on Blackboard Friday February 23 at 5 pm.

Read Scher, "Introduction to Andean Cultures," <https://smarthistory.org/intro-andes/>.

Read D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3, pp. 1-90. Available online through the library.

Watch "Inca Khipu: The record and writing system made entirely of knots | Curator's Corner S6 Ep9," British Museum, <https://youtu.be/HrfKOQKyffE?si=4-XupHLk7OeUcHQL>

Week 7 (2/26 & 2/28)

Read D'Altroy, *The Incas*, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, pp. 91-197. Available online through the library.

Part IV: Spanish imperialism in the Americas

Week 8 3/4-3/6

We will discuss the second paper assignment in class.

Read Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, pp. xiii-63. Available online through the library.

Week 9 SPRING BREAK

Week 10 3/18-3/21

Read Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, Epilogue, pp. 64-157. Available online through the library.

Week 11 3/25-3/27:

Paper 2 is due on Blackboard on Friday, March 29 at 5 pm.

We will watch and discuss *La Otra Conquista* (Mexico, 2000) in class.

No reading.

Week 12 4/1-4/3

Read Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, pp. 1 - 71. Available online through the library.

Week 13 4/8-4/10

Read Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City*, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, pp. 72-127. Available online through the library.

Week 14 4/15-4/17

We will discuss the third paper assignment in class.

Read Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, The Life of Mexico City*, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10, pp. 128-212. Available online through the library.

Part V: Legacies of Colonialism

Week 15 4/22-4/24

Read Norton, Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3 (June 2006), pp. 660-691. Available online through the library.

Read Malintzin's *Choices*, "Introduction," in *Malintzin's Choices*, pp. 1-10. Available online through the library.

Read Trouillot, "Good Day, Columbus," in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, pp. 108-140. Available online through the library.

Week 16 4/29

Paper 3 is due on Blackboard on Friday, May 3, at 5 pm.

Read Megan Flattley, "The History of Mexico: Diego Rivera's Murals at the National Palace," <https://smarthistory.org/mexico-diego-rivera-murals-national-palace/>.

Note-taking sheet (occasionally you may be asked to hand this in, I will let you know ahead of time). You may not be able to answer all these questions every time, but this gives you a sense of what to look for when you read.:

What is the title of the reading?

Is this part of a book? A journal article? A video?

Who is the audience for this text? (General audience, academic audience, students, etc.)

When was it published?

Who wrote this text?

What is the reading about, in the most general sense? (Topic, place, time period, etc.)

What are the most important keywords? (What terms does the author return to, what terms does the author define, why does the author emphasize these terms?)

Is there an argument to this text? (The answer is always yes, but it can be difficult to figure it out, so just try to think about it.)

What evidence does the author give us to understand the argument?

What sources is the author using?

Is this text similar to others we have read? Is it different? Is the author responding to other authors we have read?