History of Mexico  
Spring, 2008  
Rhodes College  
Instructor: Michael J. LaRosa

Office: 311 Clough Hall  
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Hours: MWF 10-12 and by appointment

Description: This course will survey the history of Mexico from the period of Pre-Columbian cultures and civilizations to the present. The course will move more or less chronologically, but some important themes will be emphasized. Students will leave this course with a clearer understanding of the rich cultural heritage of Mexico, and the interconnectedness between the United States and Mexico in recent times (i.e., since the early 19th century).

Structure: The instructor will lecture on MW and on Friday, students will participate in a quiz, administered by students based on the week’s readings. Additionally, each Friday, a pair of students will make a brief presentation to the class (about 10 minutes) based on one of the following themes: a. Mexican cultural development; b. Immigration of Mexicans to the US; c. Mexican-US economic/political relations; d. Human rights in Mexico; e. The US-Mexican frontier. These presentations will begin during the second or third week of class and will require outside reading and research.

Requirements: Each student will submit a mid-term, final exam, an analytic essay and a research project dealing with immigration. These assignments will be weighed equally. About twenty percent of the final grade will be measured from attendance and participation, quizzes and oral presentations. All work will be accepted in either Spanish or English.

Grading and Attendance: There are no excused absences from this course, unless a student is participating in a college sponsored event. Attendance is mandatory, because much of the work is “in class” and attendance will be taken. All work must be handed in on time, no exceptions. Students must submit all work, under the conditions outlined above, in order to pass the class. Students who miss an unreasonable number of classes should not expect a satisfactory grade in this course and students who miss about a third of the course, will fail regardless of the reason, or quality of their work. Exemptions to all policies will be given as the instructor sees fit, and on terms defined by the instructor.

Email and office hours: I encourage all students to visit with me in my office during my hours. Email correspondence should be reserved for true emergencies (“hi professor LaRosa, I have a cold and won’t be in class today, sorry”) is NOT an example of either
an emergency or the intended use of the internet. I do not answer all emails, but, since we’re a small liberal arts college on 100 acres, I hope you’ll stop by to see me during my hours, or at other times, to discuss your participation in the course, or any other topic related to furthering your development as a student and citizen of the scholarly community.

Books: There are four assigned books for this course: Only three are available at the bookstore; the Castillo text should be purchased from Amazon, etc.


Meyer, Sherman and Deeds. *The Course of Mexican History.* (eighth ed.)

Pilcher, Jeffrey. *Que Vivan los Tamales.*

Extra credit: Students can earn extra credit for this course, or could be exempted from one of the papers, by participating in an approved “Service” project related to the theme of this course. Participation in the Tex-Mex Border program is an example, as is “sustained” involvement with a service organization during the course of the semester.

Lecture, reading and exam schedule:

**Week One: 9 Jan 2008**

Introduction to the Course:
Reading: MSD, Introduction

**Week Two: 14 Jan.**

Classical Mexico: The Mayan Civilization
Reading: Reserve.

**Week Three: 21 Jan.**

Aztecs and Invasion from Europe
MSD, chapters 4-7
No class, MLK Holiday

**Week Four: 28 Jan**

Church, women and race in Colonial New Spain
Reading: Intro and first half of Castillo.
Film: Yo la peór de todas”
Week Five: 4 Feb.

The Mexican path to political Independence
Reading: MSD, chapters 14-16

Week Six: 11 Feb.

Santa Ana and other caudillos in early 19th century Mexico
Reading: MSD chapters 18-19

Week Seven: 18 Feb

The US Takes Texas (and a little more!)
Reading: Howard Zinn, chapter eight from A People’s History of the United States. Mid-term exam: Friday

Week Eight: 25 Feb.

Civil War in Mexico and the Rise of Porfirio Díaz
Reading: MSD, chapters 23-29

Week Nine: 3 March

Spring Break, No class

Week Ten: 10 March

Mexico in Revolution.
Reading: MSD, chapters 30-35
Film: “Viva Zapata”

Week Eleven: 17 March

Indigenismo and the emergence of a Mexican cultural identity
Reading: MSD, chapter 39; start Pilcher

Week Twelve: 24 March

Mexico’s path to modernization
Reading: MSD, chapters 38-41; finish Pilcher

Week Thirteen: 31 March

Mexican Americans and the Border
Reading: Finish Castillo
Week Fourteen: 7 April

Issues of Immigration
Reading: MSD, chapters 44-45; start Fuentes

Week Fifteen: 14 April

Machismo, Mexico and Identity
Reading: Finish Fuentes
Film: “El Mariachi”

Week Sixteen: 21 April

Re-thinking NAFTA.

Reading: Reserve.

NB: The final exam for this course will be held during the regularly scheduled final exam period. The analytic essay (comparing Pilcher and Castillo) will be due on the last day of class. The research paper (about 10 pages) will be due during week 12, on Friday. Each student will present his research to the class in a 5-7 minute presentation; students must meet with the instructor during office hours to discuss the project during the first few weeks of class.