

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30PM-3:15PM

Monday and Wednesday 10:45AM-11:30AM

Or by appointment.

Course description

In this course we will use research, writing, discussions, debates, and other activities as a laboratory for exploring some of the most challenging questions in the history of colonial Latin America:

- Early European colonization of the Americas was accompanied by one of the greatest demographic catastrophes in human history, with population declines of up to 90% in some regions. How do Spanish, Portuguese, and Indian sources engage this demographic collapse?
- The year 1492 saw not only Columbus's voyages, but also the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and the publication of Antonio de Nebrija's *Gramática castellana*, the first grammar of a modern European language. How are these four pivotal events connected?
- From the sixteenth through early nineteenth centuries, the trans-Atlantic journey from Spain to its American colonies was difficult, dangerous, and slow, often requiring several months. How did the Spanish Crown maintain its authority over its far-flung colonies for some three hundred years? What were the limits of this authority? How did this authority change over the three hundred years of Spanish rule? How did non-Spanish peoples and non-elites understand their relationship to the Spanish Crown?
- Religious language in colonial Latin America sought to connect social and cosmic order. How was this language used to support their claims on, about, or against the Spanish and Portuguese colonial orders? How were these connections drawn and claims made in different time periods and regions, and among different social groups?
- What was the relationship between Spain far-flung American empire and the much smaller British colonies in North America and the Caribbean? What stamp did the Spanish colonies in the present-day southeastern and western United States leave on the later history of the United States?
- Many historians describe a "second conquest" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose impact on many Indian communities was often more devastating than the first. What were the origins and impact of this "second conquest"? How did Indian communities engage it?
- As we saw in our discussion of the Vespucci and Waldseemüller texts, the term "America" had pejorative connotations when it was first coined in the early sixteenth century. How did these negative understandings of "America" help underwrite the Spanish and Portuguese colonial orders in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries? How and why did *criollo* leaders in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries begin to identify themselves as "American" and redefine "America" as a term of pride?

These explorations will allow us to accomplish the following:

- Develop a familiarity basic facts, questions, and ideas in Mexican history and culture.
- Develop nuts-and-bolts historiographic skills, including research, analytical thinking, writing, and teaching.
- Develop real-life skills that will continue to serve us long after we leave Moravian—wherever our personal journeys lead us, and whatever careers we choose. These skills include analytical thinking, research, persuasion, teaching, and time management.
- Look at our world and lives with unfamiliar eyes and become deeper, richer human beings.

Grading, evaluation, and course requirements

I do not assume that you have any knowledge of Latin American history when you begin this course. Readings generally will be around 100-150 pages a week. You should be prepared to commit approximately nine hours a week to this course in addition to the scheduled meeting times. Moravian College expects its students and faculty to maintain a high level of academic honesty. Questions of academic honesty and plagiarism are addressed in the Student Handbook under the Academic Standards sections. All members of the classroom community should treat each other with respect at all times.

Based on your feedback, grades will be based on the following criteria:

- ❖ Responses to course readings and lectures (30%). These responses will take many forms, including in-class discussions and debates, short writing assignments, and possibly quizzes. I will grade your responses based on your understanding of the course readings; your creative engagement with the questions raised in class discussions, lectures, and study guides; and the clarity of your written and spoken discussions. You may miss three response assignments, no questions asked, without any adverse effect on your grades.
- ❖ Biography presentations (30%). Over the course of the semester, you will do ten-minute presentations on two figures in Mexican history. I will pass out a list of suggested names in the coming days. Your two figures should be from different time periods. The presentations should do the following:
 - Give a brief biography of the figure.
 - Locate and present a primary source by or about the figure (e.g., an official document, literary or artistic work, or letter).
 - Describe the primary source and how it relates to the broader themes of the corresponding unit.
- ❖ Midterm and final papers (40%). For your midterm and final, you will write a four-page essay addressing one of the sets of questions on p. 1. The midterm essay will be due Thursday, October 2, at 8:30AM, and the final essay will be due Tuesday, December 16, at 8:30AM. Your grade will be subtracted a half grade for every day your paper is late. Your essay grade will be based on the following criteria:
 - The clarity of your argument.
 - How well you marshal evidence from the course readings, lectures, and discussions to support your argument.
 - How well you relate your paper to broader themes and questions from the course.