MEXICO

508:362
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Mexico, the course, is about more than five centuries of interaction between diverse peoples. It is an awesome task to accomplish a complete study in one semester, so I have selected the topics for our discussions as somewhat of a sampling; we cannot cover everything. Thus, we will study the Aztecs before 1521, but not the Tarascans or Cholulans. We will study nuns in the colonial era, but not in the twentieth century.

The main lessons to learn fall into two categories: THE GENERAL. (1) History is not simple, for it involves complex interactions of people and environments. (2) There can be different histories, because participants and observers (contemporary and later) see events through their own interpretive lenses. THE MEXICAN. (1) Mexican history is comprised of the interrelationships between Indians, Africans, and Europeans, which involved a wide range of activities from love to war, from religion to language, all of which and all aspects of which paint a fascinating, complex picture. (2) Mexico is less of a nation than a conglomeration of localities. There were and are "many Mexicos."

This course heavily emphasizes reading and writing. You are assigned eight books and are to write five papers. Contemporary observers wrote four of the books. One is a novel. One relies heavily on interviews. Another is a treatise by colonial Mexico’s finest poet and essayist, which amounts to a sixteenth century feminist manifesto. Another is the relation of a conquistador seeking to justify the conquest. Yet another is the Aztec view of the encounter with the Europeans. Of the secondary sources one is a discussion of how common people tried (and often succeeded) to control their daily lives and another discusses race.

Through films, slides, pictures, novels, memoirs, and other slices of life, I hope to give you an idea of what it was like to live in Mexico at different times from various viewpoints. We will study rich and poor, revolutionary and religious, men and women. You will also learn the barest rudiments of Mexican history in the form of its most important dates (1519, 1810, 1846, and 1910) and heroes, such as La Malinche, Cuauhtemoc, Sor Juana, Hidalgo, Morelos, Juárez, Villa, and Zapata. You will learn about many Mexicos. Each one was and is more fascinating than the next!