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 discussion 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 of Indians, Africans, and Europeans. These interrelationships 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 seven books and several short pieces and are to write five papers. Contemporary observers wrote five 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 priest seeking to justify the conquest. Yet another is the Aztec view of the encounter with the Europeans. Of the secondary sources one is an irreverent study of comic books and the other is a series of essays on popular culture.