HILA 132: A History of Contemporary Mexico, 1913-2013

Visions of Modernity

Spring Quarter 2014
6:30-7:50, Peterson 102
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Course Synopsis

Modern Mexican history is bookended by spasms of cataclysmic violence. At the start of the twentieth century, a massive social revolution left at least 1.5 million dead. At the start of the twenty-first century, violence connected to the drug trade has cost the lives of over 65,000. These episodes both represent profoundly modern experiences. From new tactics of entrenched machine guns in 1914 to propaganda campaigns on Twitter in 2011, the story of contemporary Mexico can be told through its encounters with modernity. It is a story that can also be told through the efforts of revolutionaries, artists, politicians, workers, and countless others to fashion a future aligned with what they considered “modern” principles. Yet these projects were constantly contested: there was no single vision of what Mexico should or would look like. This course is the history of those struggles. In four units covering the Revolution, postrevolutionary reconstruction, popular culture, and the authoritarian PRI regime, we will examine the ways in which important social and political processes were shaped by different, and often competing, historical conceptions of modernity and how domestic and international forces influenced those visions.

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment #1, Units 1: (2-3 pages)
Critically summarize one of the optional readings. What is the author’s argument? How is this argument supported? How is this argument in dialogue with other scholars? Does it change or enhance what you have learned in the course so far?

Writing Assignment #2, Units 2&3: (3-4 pages)
Analyze one of the optional readings from this course unit. How does the author’s argument contribute to a discussion of modernity in Mexican history? Does the author’s argument force us to reevaluate some aspect of our definition of modernity?

Writing Assignment #3, Cumulative: (4-6 pages)
Using 2 or more of the optional readings from any course unit and one primary source either from the course or your own research (Suggested: Battles in the Desert, La Ley de Herodes, Y Tu Mama También, Enrique Metinides’ photos, articles from the New York Times online archive) formulate an argument about the place or importance of modernity in 20th-century Mexican history. How and why has modernity (as a concept, as a practice, as a concern) shaped some aspect of Mexican history?

Grading Breakdown
Writing Assignment #1: 10%
Writing Assignment #2: 30%
Writing Assignment #3: 40%
Final Exam: 20%

Academic Integrity

All work for this course must be your own; plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported. This applies to all writing assignments, quizzes, and exams. If you have any questions as to what constitutes academic misconduct, consult the UCSD Academic Integrity Office website: http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/defining.html

Course Policies

In order to make the quarter as enjoyable and productive as possible, I have a few policies for the course. Please arrive to class on time, I will ensure that we start and end on schedule. Please plan to stay, and stay awake, for the entire class period. I will not take attendance, but may give occasional quizzes. If you are not in lecture regularly, you will likely struggle to complete the assignments and I certainly will not have any reason to be lenient in grading if I do not recognize your name. Additionally, I ask that you take notes by hand or restrict laptop use to notetaking. I know the internet is a magical, distracting place, but if you are disturbing the people around you, I will have to ask you to leave. Work is due on the date indicated on the syllabus, late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day it is late; additionally I reserve the right not to accept work
that is more than 3 days late. There are two exceptions: 1) the final writing assignment must be turned in on the assigned date—no late work will be accepted; 2) if you are in dire need of an extension, please come talk to me, I'm not an unreasonable monster.

**Required Reading**

All excerpts listed on the syllabus are found on TED. Optional readings can be located on Jstor, with some exceptions.

**Books:**

**Recommended Resources**


**Course Readings and Schedule**

**Introduction:**

**Week 1:**

Monday, March 31

1: *Introduction* - The heritage of the Nineteenth Century, definitions of ‘modernity’

**Unit 1: The Revolution and its Legacy**

*How were the Revolution’s aims modern? How was the Revolution a response to nineteenth-century visions of modernity?*

Wednesday, April 2

2: *The Revolution*


Optional: Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, “1910 Mexico City: Space and Nation in the City of the Centenario.”
Week 2
Monday, April 7
3: Agraristas and Workers
   Excerpts from: Christopher Boyer, Becoming Campesinos; The 1917 Mexican Constitution

Wednesday, April 9
4: The Long Cristiada
   Excerpts from: Jim Tuck, The Holy War in Los Altos


Week 3
Monday, April 14
5: The Legacy of the Revolution
   Excerpts from: Thomas Benjamin, La Revolución

   Optional: Alan Knight, “Myth of Mexican Revolution” (Posted on TED); Everard Meade, “Modern Warfare Meets “Mexico’s Evil Tradition”: Death, Memory, and Media during the Mexican Revolution.” (Posted on TED)

Unit 2: Building the Perfect Dictatorship
What made a state “modern” in the twentieth century? How did the PRI’s vision of modernity compare to its predecessors?

Wednesday, April 16
6: The Sonoran Dynasty, Calles and the PNR
   Excerpts from: Mexico Reader, “Nation of Institutions and Laws”, The Eagle and the Virgin

Writing Assignment #1 due in class

Week 4
Monday, April 21
7: Cárdenas: Revolution Redeemed, the Regime Rebuilt
    Alan Knight, “Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?”

Wednesday, April 23
8: The Long Conservative Turn and The Miracle in the making
    Excerpts from: Enrique Krauze, Biography of Power


Unit 3: Popular Culture in a Changing Society
How does “modern” popular culture transcend national boundaries? What constitutes cultural “modernity”?

Week 5
Monday, April 28
10: Midcentury Culture in the capital
    José Emilio Pacheco, Battles in the Desert

Optional: Everard Meade, “From Sex Strangler to Model Citizen: Mexico’s Most Famous Murder and the Defeat of the Death Penalty”; Sandra Aguilar-Rodríguez “Cooking Modernity: Nutrition Policies, Class, and Gender in 1940s and 1950s Mexico City”

Wednesday, April 30
No Class. Attend: Libertad Bajo Palabra: Censorship, Satire, and the Press in Mexico (Conference held at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies) for extra credit. Details to follow.

Week 6
Monday, May 5
11: Life on the Border, Braceros, Immigration
    Excerpts from: Sam Quinones, True Tales from Another Mexico
Lori A. Flores, “A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California’s Chicano Movement.”

Wednesday, May 7
12: Counterculture
Excerpts from: Eric Zolov, Refried Elvis

Optional: Rachel Adams, “Hipsters and jipitecas: Literary Countercultures on Both Sides of the Border.”

Week 7
Monday, May 12
13: 1968 as Cultural Phenomenon
Eric Zolov, “Showcasing the Land of Tomorrow: Mexico and the 1968 Olympics”


Writing Assignment #2 due in class

Unit 4: Authoritarianism and Democracy
What makes democracy a part of modernity?

Wednesday, May 14
Excerpts from: Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith, Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968

Optional: O’Neill Blacker, “Cold War in the Countryside: Conflict in Guerrero, Mexico”

Week 8
Monday, May 19

15: Echeverría and Populism, López Portillo and Excelsior
Excerpts from: Amelia Kiddle and María Muñoz, Populism in 20th Century Mexico


Wednesday, May 21

16: 1985, 1988; Civil Society, 1994, NAFTA, 2000
Excerpts from: Elena Poniatowska, Nothing, Nobody; Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon, Opening Mexico

Optional: John Harner, “Muebles Rústicos in México and the United States”

Week 9
Monday, May 26
Memorial Day

Wednesday, May 28

18: The Legacy of the PRI
In Class Film: La Ley de Herodes

Conclusion
Week 10
Monday, June 2

19: The Last 13 Years: The PAN, the Drug Wars, the Return of the PRI
Excerpts from: Ioan Grillo, El Narco


Wednesday, June 4

20: Whither Modernity? The Photos of Enrique Metinides

Writing Assignment #3 due in class