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 Mexican history:

- How did a few dozen Spanish soldiers “conquer” the peoples of central Mexico, one of the most complex, ancient civilizations the world has ever known? What did this conquest change? What was this conquest unable to change? How did native peoples engage the Spanish “conquest”?

- During the period of Spanish rule, the trans-Atlantic journey from Spain to Mexico City was difficult, dangerous, and slow, often requiring several months. The journey from Mexico City to the colony’s outlying provinces (which included most of the present-day southern and western United States, the Caribbean, Central America, and the Philippines) could take several months more. How did the Spanish Crown maintain its authority over Mexico for some three hundred years? What were the limits of this authority? How did non-Spanish peoples and non-elites understand their relationship to the Spanish Crown?

- Over much of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Mexico City was one of the largest, wealthiest, and most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Compared to Mexico in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the British North American colonies and the early United States were an economic backwater. How did Mexico economically “fall behind” the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

- 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?

- Most of the present-day western United States was once part of Mexico. How was the United States able to seize these territories in 1847-48? How has the post-1848 border been challenged over the last 150 years?

- The Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the continuing armed conflicts of the following decades were one of the great mass mobilizations of the 20th century world. What were the origins of the Mexican Revolution, and what did it change?

- As we saw in our discussion la Malinche, formulations of lo mexicano often have sought to exclude groups such as women and Indians, particularly since the nineteenth century. How have these groups participated in negotiations and conflicts about what it means to be Mexican and who is a member of the Mexican nation? What have been the real-life stakes of these negotiations?

These explorations will allow us to accomplish the following:

- Develop a familiarity basic facts, questions, and ideas in Mexican history and culture.

- 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.
Calendar of Readings

Please note that the dates and reading list might be amended, depending on the needs of the class. I also generally will ask you to focus on specific questions or themes in reading assignments, so you will not necessarily read all parts of the assignment with the same attention. If you miss a class, you should consult with one of your classmates about reading, writing, and discussion assignments for the following class.

Where additional background is needed, I suggest that you consult Alicia Hernández Chávez’s Mexico: A Brief History.

Part One  Introduction: the Search for Lo Mexicano

August 26  Introduction

August 28  Malinche and the Search for Lo Mexicano

“Self Evaluation” and “Evaluation, Grading, and Course Requirements” questionnaires due.

Lecture  The Historical Malinche (PowerPoint on Blackboard)

September 2  The Sons of la Malinche


Supplementary texts  “Images of Malinche” slideshow (PowerPoint on Blackboard)

September 4  The Sons of la Malinche, continued

Reading/discussion  Continued discussion of Paz essay and Malinche images.

Results of student “self evaluation” and “evaluation, grading, and course requirements” questionnaires

September 9  Syllabus

Part Two  Ancient Civilizations

September 11  Aztecs

Reading/writing  The Mexico Reader, pp. 55-78. (See posted assignment for study questions.)

September 16  Maya

Reading/writing  The Mexico Reader, pp. 79-85.

Part Three  Conquest and Colony

September 18  Conquest

Background reading  The Mexico Reader, pp. 95-109. 131-40.

September 23  The religious foundations of colonial life

Reading/writing  The Mexico Reader, pp. 114-30, 141-68.

Spanish Missions Archive, http://www.spanishmissionarchive.org/

September 25  Student presentations

Conquest and consolidation of Spanish rule

Hapsburg New Spain
Part Four  

Trials of the Young Republic

September 30  
No class

October 2  
Independence and Aftermath

Midterm essays due at start of class

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 169-195.

Student presentations
Bourbon Reforms and Independence

October 7  
Fall recess (no class)

October 9 & 14  
No class

October 16  
Trials of the Young Republic

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 196-238.

October 21  
No class

October 23  
Reforma, French Intervention, and Porfiriato

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 239-96,

October 28  
Everyday porfirismo

Readings
Beezley, Judas at the Jockey Club, pp. 3-12, 89-132.

October 30  
Student presentations
National period
Porfiriato

Part Five  

Revolution

November 4  
The Mexican Revolution

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 333-406.

November 6  
Student presentations
Mexican Revolution
Revolution and Reconstruction

November 11  
Cardenismo

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 406-60.

November 13  
Student presentations
Cardenismo

Part Six  

The Perils of Modernity

November 18  
The Perils of Modernity

Readings
The Mexico Reader, pp. 461-52

November 20  
Student Presentations
1946-88 (selections)
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**Final essay**  
Due Tuesday, December 16, at 8:30AM