

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of History  
Semester I, 1991-92

History 557

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512, Humanities  
263-1822/1800

The Mexican Revolution: Background,  
Development, and Consequences

Course Description

Recent events in Mexico have potentially set to rest the debate over whether or not the Mexican Revolution is dead. As contemporary political officials continue to dismantle the structures put in place by the revolutionary process, and go back on the promises originally made by the first postrevolutionary governments, the Mexican Revolution--a violent upheaval which lasted ten years and cost perhaps a million lives--might seem increasingly irrelevant. And yet the literature on modern Mexico continues to be influenced, explicitly or implicitly, by the need to explain this event, the first social revolution of the twentieth century.

In this course we will examine some of the enduring themes and trends in nineteenth and twentieth century Mexico: regionalism, social conflict, and the emergence of a modern state; agrarian unrest and the land question; the nature and consequences of capitalist development; Mexico's unique political system; and Mexico's relationship with the United States. The Revolution of 1910, and the changes set in motion in the past five years, will serve as the two conceptual centers around which these themes are developed. Our ultimate purpose will be to combine reading, lectures, discussion and debate in order to explore--from a variety of viewpoints--the significance of recent transformations in the overall process of modern Mexican history.

Course Assignments

- 1) There will be two in-class debates about issues raised in the class readings. Each undergraduate student will be expected to participate in these debates in the following ways:
  - a) an oral presentation in one of the two debates;
  - b) one written (5-8 page) summary and analysis of the other in-class debate.
- 2) Graduate students will write a 12-15 page review of the literature on a specific topic in 19th or 20th century Mexican history.
- 3) Graduates and undergraduates will take a final exam.
- 3) All students are expected to participate actively in discussions. Please note that 15% of the grade is for discussion section.
- 4) Grading system: Oral presentation, 25%; Debate paper, 25%; final, 25%; Discussion section, 15%.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND LECTURES

UNIT I: Background to Revolution

Week 1

Sept. 3- Introduction

Sept. 5- Mexico Today: Transition, Transformation, or Continuity?

Week 2

Sept. 10-Independence

Sept. 12- Aftermath: Monopoly vs. Laissez Faire

Discussions Begin in Week 2 Reading: Newspaper clippings on the present situation, handed out in class.

Week 3

Sept. 17- The Liberal Revolution and its Consequences

Sept. 19- The French Intervention and the Restored Republic,  
1861-1875.

Reading: Document handed out in class will be topic of discussion.

Week 4

Sept. 24- The Porfiriato (I)

Sept. 26- The Porfiriato (II)

Reading: John Kenneth Turner, Barbarous Mexico, pp. xi-146.

UNIT II: The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940

Week 5

Oct. 1- Background to Revolution: Developments in the North

Oct. 3- The Maderista Revolution and Unrest in the South

Reading: Turner, pp. 147-295.

Week 6

Oct. 8- The Popular Revolution to 1914

Oct. 10- Decline of the Popular Revolution, 1915-1938

Reading: John Reed, Insurgent Mexico, entire.

Week 7

Oct. 15- The Constitutionalist through 1920

Oct. 17- Revolution at the Periphery

Reading: John Womack, Jr., Zapata and the Mexican Revolution, pp. ix-223.

In sections: Prepare for Oct. 24th debate.

Week 8

Oct. 22- Gender and the Revolution

Oct. 24- IN-CLASS DEBATE: John Kenneth Turner on trial for slander.

No sections, no new reading

Week 9

Oct. 29- "Socialism" in one State? Yucatan, 1915-1925

Oct. 31- Crisis in the 1920s

Reading: Womack, pp.223-411.

In sections: Discuss Womack in its entirety.

Week 10

\*\*\*\*FIRST DEBATE PAPER DUE, MONDAY, NOV. 4, AT 5:00 P.M.\*\*\*\*

Nov. 5- The New Revolutionary Culture: Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera

Nov. 7- The Cristero Rebellion

Reading: Begin Fuentes, The Death of Artemio Cruz.

Week 11

Nov. 12- Cardenas: Mobilization as Institutionalization

Nov. 14- The Limits of Mobilization

Reading: Finish Fuentes.

UNIT III: Mexico After Cardenas

Week 12

Nov. 19- The "Economic Miracle"

Nov. 21- The Political System

No New Reading: Prepare for Debate in discussion sections

Week 13

Nov. 26- IN-CLASS DEBATE: Artemio Cruz on trial for betraying the Revolution.

No new reading, no discussion sections.

\*\*\*\*\*THANKSGIVING BREAK\*\*\*\*\*

Week 14

Dec. 3- Agribusiness and the Green Revolution.

Dec. 5- Migration, Emigration and the Border Economy

Reading: Cornelius and Craig, Politics in Mexico.

Week 15

\*\*\*\*SECOND DEBATE PAPER DUE, MONDAY, DEC. 9, AT 5:00 P.M.\*\*\*\*

Dec. 10- Mexico Today (Lecture and Discussion)

Dec. 12- The Meaning of the Revolution, Past and Present

Discussion sections: review for final exam.

LIST OF REQUIRED READINGS (In the University Bookstore \* means also in reserve in Helen C. White).

Cornelius, Wayne A. and Ann L. Craig, Politics in Mexico: An Introduction and Overview (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, Reprint Series 1, 2nd. Ed.).

\*Fuentes, Carlos, The Death of Artemio Cruz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964).

\*Reed, John, Insurgent Mexico (New York: International Publishers, 1969).

\*Turner, John Kenneth, Barbarous Mexico (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969).

\*Womack, Jr., John, Zapata and the Mexican Revolution (New York: Random House, 1968).

Plus a short document, and occasional clippings, handed out in class.