

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
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Ibero-American/History 982

POWER, PATRIARCHY, AND CLASS IN MEXICAN HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

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5105 Humanities
263-1841/3-1800

Course Description

This seminar will explore the significance of patriarchy and gender relations for understanding the organization and uses of power in Mexican history and civilization. Our purpose is to analyze, debate, and otherwise come to terms with the basic feminist argument that the analysis of gender and patriarchal power transforms the interpretation of society as a whole. This we will attempt to do in an interdisciplinary manner and over a long sweep of time, from the Aztecs (Mexico) of Tenochtitlan to women workers in the 1980s.

Our method will be that of fashioning coordinated research and a collective division of labor enabling us to learn from one another's research in a coherent sequential pattern. In the first section of the course, we will engage in readings in common to establish a shared empirical and theoretical base, and to develop our identity and dynamics as a group. We will also, in this first section, make commitments to various work teams and research topics. In the second section of the course, work teams and individuals will engage in their research while meeting weekly to share results, problems, and suggestions. In the third section of the course, we will have presentations of research by the work teams. Because it is important always to be intellectually broad rather than narrow, and because some students have strong research interests in Latin American countries and culture areas other than Mexico, one of the work teams will present findings and analysis from Latin American areas other than Mexico.

This is your seminar. Its success depends on the active engagement of all of us. I expect everyone to participate actively and thoughtfully in discussion as well as research, and to master the art of combining sharp debate on points of disagreement with a collaborative atmosphere encouraging us all to learn from one another and to develop lines of analysis as a group.

Course assignments and grading are discussed after the schedule listed below.

Schedule

1. Jan. 26. Introductory session. Organizational day.
Students should begin next week's reading and begin making decisions about research topics and work teams.

UNIT I. READINGS, FORMATION OF WORK TEAMS.

2. Feb. 2. The Challenge of Feminist Theory/Gendered Cults of Courage.

Rdng.: Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York, 1986).

Inga Clendinnen, "The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society." Past and Present, 107 (1985), 44-89.

Recomm.: Christine Ward Gailey, Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands (Austin, 1987). This is esp. recommended to those who have recently read Lerner or prefer to read an anthropological approach to a similar topic.

Eric R. Wolf, Sons of the Shaking Earth (Chicago, 1959), esp. Chaps. 1-9. (Chaps. 10-11 are useful, but seriously out of date.) This little classic, although out of date in some respects, is still valuable and highly recommended to those who need background on the culture history of Mesoamerica.

3. Feb. 9. Women and the Colonial Indian Community/The Agony of Sor Juana.

Rdng.: Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," Signs, 7:3 (Spring, 1982), 545-566.

William B. Taylor, Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages (Stanford, 1979).

Margaret Sayers Peden, ed. and trans., A Woman of Genius: The Intellectual Autobiography of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (Salisbury, Ct., 1982).

Recomm.: Silvia Marina Arrom, The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857 (Stanford, 1985). Recommended to those who have read Taylor.

John Tutino, "Power, Class, and Family: Men and Women in the Mexican Elite, 1750-1810," The Americas, 39:3 (Jan., 1983), 359-381. Recommended to those who have read Taylor.

Margaret A. Villanueva, "From Calpixqui to Corregidor: Appropriation of Women's Cotton Textile Production in Early Colonial Mexico," Latin American Perspectives, 12:1 (Winter, 1985), 17-40. Recommended to those who have read Taylor.

4. Feb. 16. The Mexican Revolution, the State, and Male Hero Cults.

Rdng.: Ilene V. O'Malley, The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940 (Westport, Ct., 1986).

Maria Antonieta Rascon, "Women and the Social Struggle in Mexico" (orig. 1972; translated and republished by Women's International Resource Exchange).



4 (continued).

Recomm.: Anna Macias, Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940 (Westport, Ct., 1982). Recommended to those who have read O'Malley, or who wish to supplement it.

For those who need to strengthen their background on the Mexican Revolution, consult the relevant chapters of Leslie Bethell, ed., The Cambridge History of Latin America, 5 (New York, 1986). See also the recent anthology (Princeton, 1988) edited by Friedrich Katz.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BY THIS WEEK, ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE SELECTED WORK TEAMS AND RESEARCH TOPICS. RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHIES SHOULD BE WELL ADVANCED.

5. Feb. 23. Gender in Family and Life Histories.

Rdng.: Oscar Lewis, Five Families (New York, 1959).

Recomm.: Those who have read Five Families recently may substitute Lewis's Pedro Martinez (rural) or Children of Sanchez (urban).

6. March 2. Women and Industrial Labor.

Rdng.: Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier (Albany, 1983).

Oscar J. Martinez, "Soledad Fuente," in William H. Beezley and Judith Ewell, eds., The Human Tradition in Latin America: The Twentieth Century (Wilmington, DE, 1987), 195-206.

Recomm.: Lourdes Beneria and Martha Roldan, The Crossroads of Class & Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City (Chicago, 1987). Superb, although difficult to read for some people. Recommended to those who have read Fernandez-Kelly.

UNIT II. INTENSIVE RESEARCH.

During this phase of the course, we will focus our full energies on research. Instead of meeting weekly as a whole, the class will break into work teams. The work teams will meet weekly at the customary class time; I will rotate among the work teams. Work team members should share results, problems, findings, suggestions, bibliography, etc., and may, if appropriate, devise ways to coordinate more closely individual research topics.

Suggested work teams and topics:

Team 1: The Legacies of Empire and Colonialism:
Gender and Order in the Aztec and Spanish Eras.

Suggested topics:

Gender and State Formation: Aztec Ideology and Praxis
Colonized Women: Work, Sex, and Honor among the Colonial Poor
The Ordeal of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
Gender and Power: The Sex-Gender System in Elite Society

Team 2: The Revolution: The Reconstruction of Gender in the Reconstruction
of Political Order.

Suggested topics:

Revolutionary Memories: Gender in the Literature and Testimonios
of the War Years [possibly include more recent fiction too]
The Early Feminist Movement
The Revolution as Masculine Emancipation: Male and Female in Popular
Corridos and Ballads [possibly include nat'l char./culture lit.]
Three Women [select three women's lives for close study, including
the soldadera of Elena Poniatowski, Hasta no verte Jesus mio]

Team 3: The Ethnography of Gender in Contemporary Mexico.

Suggested topics:

Rural Women in Central Mexico: Oscar Lewis and Beyond
Rural Women of the South: The Myth and Mystique of Zapotec Women
The Urban-Industrial Context: Women's Labor, Women's Lives
Mexican Feminism: Ideology and Social Movements

Team 4: Mexico in Comparative Latin American Perspective.

Topics to be determined.

Calendar for Unit II:

7. March 9. Work team meeting.

Objective: present 1-page statements for circulation outlining
topic, approach, central hypothesis or issue to be
researched, implications of topic. Attach 1-2 page
bibliography of key sources and journals.

8. March 16. Work team meeting.

Objective: share research experiences, findings, problems.

[No meeting March 23. Spring Break. Advance research.]

9. March 30. Work team meeting.

Objective: share major results and findings. Present central
hypotheses, ideas emerging. Highlight problem areas.

10. April 6. Work team meeting.

Objective: present outline of paper and argument. Oral "trial run" of paper. Get feedback, advice. Draft a 1-page introductory statement saying how the individual research topics fit together into a "whole" larger than the sum of its parts, and advancing larger implications of your coordinated research.

11. April 13. Work team meeting.

Objective: informal discussion of any specific problems that have emerged while writing draft. Get help, ideas. Revise 1-page introductory statement of work team.

UNIT III. RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSION/DEBATE.

12. April 20. Research presentation.

TEAM 1: The Legacies of Empire and Colonialism:
Gender and Order in the Aztec and Spanish Eras.

PLEASE NOTE that because Thurs., April 20 is Passover eve, this meeting will need to be rescheduled. I propose Wed. evening or Fri. afternoon.

13. April 27. Research presentation.

Team 2: The Revolution: The Reconstruction of Gender
in the Reconstruction of Political Order.

14. May 4. Research presentation.

Team 3: The Ethnography of Gender in Contemporary Mexico.

15. May 11. Research presentation.

Team 4: Mexico in Comparative Latin American Perspective.

Course Assignments and Grading

There are two assignments: active and thoughtful oral participation in class and work teams; and the writing of a research paper in conjunction with collaboration on one of four work teams.

Suggested topics for work teams and coordinated research topics are given above. These are suggestions, not rigidly set demands, but they convey a sense for the grand sweep, interdisciplinary possibilities, and sense of sequence to which I would like us to aspire in our collective work.

Research papers will be of medium scale: 20-30 pages of text, and a substantial (not necessarily exhaustive) body of source material including primary sources. I will help you get started in tracking down sources, and indeed, expect you to consult with me actively as you develop your topic and bibliography. The paper should be accompanied by an annotated bibliography.

All papers circulated must be in dark and legible print. I will return poor quality dot matrix or xerox copies unread. Be courteous to our eyes, please.

Students may choose to call the drafts submitted for research presentations "first drafts" and to submit revised drafts that take into account comments received on the first draft. Those who choose this option must turn in the final draft, together with the first draft and a 1-page statement outlining the principal changes made as a result of written and oral comments received, no later than Thursday, May 18.

We will conduct the research discussions in Unit III on the assumption that all seminar members have recently read the drafts of papers. Student commentators will open our discussion, and we will dispense with summaries of the papers by the authors. After the initial commentary, the floor will be open to discussion by all.

Grades will be weighted roughly as follows: two-thirds research essay, and one-third discussion.