

Mexican National Identity and Society

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Abstract: As of 2023, Mexico is the United States' largest trading partner. Both nations share an extensive border, and historically, they have alternated between aggression and cooperation. In addition, the United States is home to the second largest community of Mexican and Mexican descents. Moreover, Mexico has a rich and vibrant culture that is both traditional and ever evolving. Learning about the development of Mexican national identity is crucial for students at US colleges and universities. The International Studies Research Lab (ISRL) aims to provide faculty with resources and time to better serve a better cultural understanding of other nations in a context of globalization. SPAN 310 Mexican Culture and National identity will also play a critical role to internationalize curricular offerings at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) given that there is not a similar class offered by the History or Political Science Departments.

Mexican National Identity and Society

This class traces the development of Mexican identity from the nineteenth century to Iguala, through films and literature. Major political events such as the Mexican Revolution, Tlateloloco, and Iguala will be contextualized to explore the tension between exclusion and integration as well as their impact on Mexican intellectuals and artists. Through this exploration, students will discover the internal complexities of Mexico as a nation and the varied ways of being Mexican that have emerged at different times since the 1900s. The class will be taught in Spanish.

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Class objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will:

- a) be able to identify key social protagonists and their contributions to Mexican identity
- b) describe and analyze the social construction of gender, race, and class in Mexican society.
- c) find and communicate main ideas, point of view, purpose.

Grade breakdown:

- 1. Class attendance and participation (16 %)** Class attendance is mandatory. This will ensure that students have opportunities to learn and practice the class material. Students have, however, three absences without penalty for special occasions (health issues, unexpected events, etc). Every absence in excess of three will result in a lower participation grade. Participation will be posted in Bb every two classes. Class attendance will be posted weekly so that students can monitor their progress. 10 = Excellent, 8 = very good, 6 = fair, 3 = poor, 0 = no participation
- 2. Assignments (49 %)** There will be 8 essays that will be submitted through Bb. No late homework will be accepted but the lowest grade will be dropped. Instructions will be given in class and posted in Bb weekly.
- 3. Presentations (15 %)** In the final weeks of the semester, students will present a brief research based on an additional reading. More information and rubric to be given in class.
- 4. Final essay (20 %)** The in-class essay will include a new reading that has to be compared/contrasted with previous ones. **Note:** Unless properly documented, there is **no** make-up for this essay.

Make-up policy: There will be no make-ups for assignments, class essay, presentations or midterm. If you are absent, you will lose the points. Excuses for serious illness, accident or family emergency will be accepted as valid if they are accompanied by supporting documentation (doctor's note, police report, etc). Please note that even with documentation, there is not automatic make-up as it remains at the discretion of the instructor.

Percentage grading scale: 100-90 A, 89.6-80 B, 79.6-70 C, 69.6-60 D, 59-0 E

Calendario de clases (tentative)

Please Note: The information contained in this syllabus is as accurate as possible but may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice.

Week I

Class 1: Introduction and syllabus

Class 2: What is National Identity?

Week II

Class 3: Mexico's Indigenous and Colonial Past (1519-1522)

Paz, Octavio. "The Sons of Malinche" *The Labyrinth of Solitude*

<https://ia802907.us.archive.org/32/items/labyrinthofsolit0000pazo/labyrinthofsolit0000pazo.pdf>

Class 4: Mexico's Indigenous and Colonial Past (1519-1522)

Gutiérrez Chong, Natividad. "Symbolic Violence and Sexualities in the Myth Making of Mexican National Identity" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31. 3 (2008): 524-542.

Week III

Class 5: Assignment # 1: In an essay, explain the differences and similarities between Paz' and Gutiérrez Chong's ideas.

Class 6: Legacies of the Encounter

Tate, Julee. "Dueling Portraits of La Malinche in Twenty-First Century Mexican Historical Fiction" *Letras Hispanas* 15 (2019)

Week IV

Class 7: Mexico in the nineteenth century

Beezley, William. "How El Negrito Saved Mexico from the French" *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo and Popular Culture*. Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2008.

Class 8: Mexican identity in the nineteenth century.

Pilcher, Jeffrey "Tamales or Timbales: Cuisine and the Formation of Mexican National Identity, 1821-1911" *The Americas* 53.2 (1996): 193-216

Week V

Class 9: Mexican Identity and Popular Culture

Mulholand, Mary-Lee "Mariachi, Myths and Mestizaje: Popular Culture and Mexican National Identity" *National Identities* 9. 3 (September 2007): 247-264.

Class 10: Mexican Identity and Popular Culture

Paz, Octavio. "The Day of the Dead" *The Labyrinth of Solitude*

<https://ia802907.us.archive.org/32/items/labyrinthofsolit0000pazo/labyrinthofsolit0000pazo.pdf>

Assignment # 2: In the nineteenth century, popular culture played a pivotal role in the formation of Mexican national identity. Using two of the readings, provide specific details and explain their efficacy to nationhood.

Week VI:

Class 11: The Mexican Revolution

Class 12: Discussion of *And Starring Pancho Villa as Himself*

Assignment # 3 How did Pancho Villa challenge the construction of Mexicanness? What, if any, were his contributions to it? Provide at least one specific example from the film and one from the reading

Week VII:

Class 13: The Mexican Revolution and National Identity

Pick, Suzanna “Competing Narratives and Converging Visions” *Constructing the Image of the Mexican Revolution*

Class 14: Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity

Yankelevich, Pablo. “Mexico for the Mexicans: Immigration, National Sovereignty and the Promotion of Mestizaje” *The Americas* 68. 3 (January 2012): 405-436.

Assignment # 4: Discuss Mexico’s policies regarding immigration and migration as presented In Yankelevich’s article.

Week VIII:

Class 15: **Midterm**

Class 16: Diego Rivera

Reading: López, Rick. “The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82.2 (2002): 292-328.

Assignment # 5: In which way, if any, does López’s piece expand and/or contradict Yankelevich’s findings?

Week IX:

Class 17: The Cosmic Race

Reading: Vasconcelos, José.

Class 18: Assignment #6 How did the issue of race impact the construction of Mexican national identity?

Week X:

Class 19: **Presentations**

Class 20: **Presentations**

Readings for Presentations:

Lewis, Laura. "Of Ships and Saints: History, Memory, and Place in the Making of Moreno Mexican" *Cultural Anthropology* 16.1 (2001): 62-82.

Nájera-Ramírez, Olga. "Engendering Nationalism: Identity, Discourse, and the Mexican Charro" *Anthropological Quarterly* 67.1 (1994): 1-14.

Ramírez, Cristina. "Forging a Mestiza Rhetoric: Mexican Women Journalists' Role in the Construction of a National Identity" *College English* 71.6, Special Topic: Writing, Rhetoric, and Latinidad (July 2009): 606-629.

Week XI:

Class 21: *Battles in the Desert*

Class 22: *Battles in the Desert*

Hind, Emily. "Classism: Gente Decente and Civil Rights" in Stuart Day (ed.) *Modern Mexican Culture: Critical Foundations* Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 2017. 184-202.

Week XII:

Class 23: Tlatelotlco

Class 24: Assignment #7. According to Carpenter, in which way did, if any, the Massacre of Tlatelolco impact Mexican identity in the twentieth century?

Carpenter, Victoria. "The Tlatelolco Massacre 1968: Introduction: October 2 is not forgotten" *The Tlatelolco Massacre 1968: and the Emotional Triangle of Anger, Grief, and Shame*. Cardiff, Wales University Press, 2018.

Week XIII:

Class 25: Neoliberal México

Class 26: Neoliberal Mexico

Reading: Morales Moreno, Isidro. "Mexico's National Identity after NAFTA" *The American Behavioral Scientist* 40.7 (1997): 858-883.

Assignment # 8: According to Morales Moreno, how did the presidency of Carlos Salinas change Mexican identity?

Week XIV:

Class 27: *Love is a Bitch*

Class 28: *Love is a Bitch*

Week XV

Class 29: Concluding Remarks

Class 30: **Final essay**

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- Hershfield, Joanne. *Imagining la chica moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

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- Kenny, Ivan. "The Right to Tlatelolco: Space, State and Home in Rojo amanecer (1989), Directed by Jorge Fons" *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 97.19 (2020): 1113-1129.
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- Lemus, Rafael. "En los márgenes de la nación: geografías imaginarias en Temporada de huracanes (2017) de Fernanda Melchor" *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 99. 2 (2022): 163-170.
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