

HISTORY 44

SYLLABUS

History 44: The Mexican-American in the History of the United States:
From Colonial Times to the Civil War

Spring 2015

Section No. 1242

West Los Angeles College

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Office Hours: By appointment

This is a warning! There will be a great deal of reading and writing required for this class. All exams will include essay questions. Students will be required to turn in frequent written responses to the reading assignments. You cannot pass the class without reading the books.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course traces the historical evolution of the Mexican and the Mexican American people and their institutions within the context of United States history. It surveys the contributions of Mexican people to the U.S. with emphasis on the Southwest.

CREDIT: Three units. Transferable to UC or CSU.

PURPOSE:

Mexico has had a profound effect on our society. Mexican ideas, Mexican cultures, and Mexican peoples have influenced American history from its beginnings. Of course, the western states of the United States were once part of Mexico. The history of the California, in particular, owes a great deal to Mexico, since the immigration of Mexican peoples to this state has continued through today. As a result, Mexican-Americans have contributed to American ideas about art, music, dance, religion, food, family, government, and so forth. There is no aspect of American culture that has not been deeply influenced by Mexican-American peoples.

Until recently, the importance of that influence has been largely ignored and has gone unrecognized. In its place, our society has invented grotesque myths and stereotypes concerning Mexican people. Until those myths are overcome, and we understand our Mexican-American past, we will not be able to understand ourselves.

This course will survey the history of Mexican-American peoples in the United States since the Civil War . Students will be encouraged to apply critical standards to all presentations of the Mexican-American past (including the textbooks) in order to recognize the obvious and subtle workings of our own cultural myths on ideas about Mexico and Mexican peoples.

GENERAL RULES:

1. No food or beverage should be brought into class.
2. Tape recording of lectures is not permitted.
3. Reading newspapers or other materials during class is not permitted.
4. Cell telephones are to be **turned off** during class sessions.
Please do not let your phone disrupt the class. **Texting** or using cell phones in any way during class is not allowed. Turn cell phones off.
6. Students must check their **campus e-mail address** regularly so that the instructor can remain in communication throughout the semester. Very important! The campus system for e-mails is clumsy, but workable. You can forward messages to your regular e-mail account, if you like.

ABSENCES:

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Class attendance is essential to the course, since the lectures will supplement your textbook reading assignments. If you must be absent from class for some reason, you will still be responsible for material covered in the lecture. So have a class friend take notes and pick up handouts for you.

Perfect attendance (no absences at all—for any reason; you have been here all the time) will be rewarded with 20 bonus points at the end of the course. If you have only one absence, you will receive 10 bonus points. Extra points earned for perfect attendance (or only one absence) **must be claimed** by the student at the end of the course in writing on the final exam or final paper.

You are allowed only three absences. *You may be dropped from the class, at the instructor's discretion, after the third absence.* If you have some special problem, please see me or call me beforehand to explain. Please be on time for class!

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS;

If you wish to withdraw from the class, please talk to me first. You may have a problem that can be resolved some other way. Anytime you feel that you are behind in class, or that you are having serious problems with the assignments, **please see the instructor before taking any other action.**

May 9 is the last day to drop the class with a grade of W.

GRADING PROCEDURES:

Grades will be based on your performance on the following assignments:

Written Responses to Reading: Each student will be required keep a class journal that will consist of one-page (or more) responses to your reading. These will consist of notes on, thoughts on, or critical responses to the weekly reading assignments. These journal entries will be turned in every week or so, at the instructor's discretion. These responses **must follow the instructions** in the Response Guidelines (provided below). Your completed journal (all responses collected together) will be turned in at the end of the semester for 100 points. So, don't lose any of your responses.

Mid-term Exams: There will be three (3) mid-term exams as listed on the Assigned Reading Schedule (below). Each exam will consist of short-answer identification questions and a longer essay question. The exam will be written in class, though the questions will be provided beforehand. Each mid-term exam will be worth a maximum of 100 points.

Book Reviews: Instead of writing examinations in class, the student may choose to turn in book reviews *at the time* of the exams. Each review must be typed, five to ten pages long, and answer the questions on the Book Review Guidelines (see below). Each review will be worth a maximum of 100 points. No late book reviews will be accepted.

Reviews may be written for the assigned or optional readings, or for **any other book** concerned with the Mexican-American past (within our time period) **that is approved by the instructor.**

Research papers: For various reasons, family history (including stories passed down from generation to generation within families) has played a more important role in Mexican-American culture than it has for most other American groups. These stories are also an important source of Mexican-American history. Each student will have an opportunity to complete at least one assignment concerned with collecting the history of the Mexican-American family.

A student may elect to do a **family history research paper** instead of taking the mid-term exams. Research papers must be typed, five to ten pages long, and follow the guidelines on the research guide. Papers must be turned in *on the day* of the exams, and **no late papers will be accepted (ever)**. Each paper will be worth a maximum of 100 points.

Research papers concerned with other aspects of Mexican American history can also be completed for mid-term or final exam credit. Papers not concerned with family history will pick some other topic to present in depth and from different points of view. Those papers will require special guidelines, however. Please see the instructor if you are interested in doing such a paper.

Group Projects: At some point during the first weeks of the semester the class will be divided into groups of three or four students. Each group will give two presentations to the class as a whole and will participate in other cooperative projects. Students will choose their own groups and can change groups or form new groups at any time.

Final Examination: There will be a comprehensive final examination given as shown in the Schedule of Classes. The exam will consist of essay questions and identification questions. **The final exam must be taken in order to obtain a passing grade in this class.** It will be two hours in length and is worth a maximum of 100 points.

Additional Points: Fifty (50) additional points will be given by the instructor based on class attendance and participation. 20 bonus points are given for perfect class attendance; 10 bonus points for no more than one absence.

Make-up Exams: Make-up exams may be arranged with the consent of the instructor, but they must be taken within two weeks of the exam missed; and they will be marked down by 10 points (one full grade). However, book reviews and research papers *may not* be turned in late.

Extra Credit: In general, extra credit work will not be assigned or accepted. However, if you are concerned about raising the grade you are getting in the class, please consult with the instructor.

Total Points for Course (This is only approximate.):

Mid-Terms, Book Reviews, or Family Research Papers	300
Final Examination	100
Reading Responses	100
Quizzes and misc. assignments	50
Class Participation	<u>50</u>
Total	600

CHEATING:

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in severe penalties. Copying paragraphs or sentences from the Internet and putting them in your papers without proper citation is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious violation of college rules and will result in a failing grade for the class. It is also extremely easy to recognize and to trace, by the way.

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

Among others, this course is intended to teach the following academic skills: (There are also lots more, but this is enough for now.)

1. Critical thinking about the past: the ability to understand how history is written and what influences there are on the construction of history;
2. The evaluation of texts: the ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a text in terms of date, author, language, audience, purpose, tone/style, provenance, and so forth.
3. The ability to recognize various forms of texts, including images, works of art, film, performance, the presentation of the body, etc.
4. The capacity to assess multiple points of view: the ability to understand, appreciate, and articulate multiple and differing opinions about the past.
5. An understanding of culture and the history of culture: the ability to study cultural influences on the past and the present.
6. Problemicizing the past: the ability to identify themes, issues, ideas, and historical problems as they are studied academically as part of history.
7. Writing skills: the ability to respond critically, and in writing, to an academic text.
8. Composing an essay: the ability to formulate an argument in writing and to support that argument with evidence gleaned from the course materials.
9. Discussion: the ability to engage verbally in a scholarly discussion of the past, to understand the arguments presented and to respond to those arguments critically.

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GRADES AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

For a GRADE of A:

The student's performance demonstrates most or all of these features:

The student has no more than two (2) unexcused absences. He or she completes all reading and writing assignments on time, takes exams on time, and participates actively in class discussions. This student asks questions in class and is prepared to answer questions thoughtfully when they are asked in class.

The reading responses are consistently thoughtful and intelligent. The responses show a serious engagement with the reading. All of the responses are at least a full page in length, some much longer. All journal responses have been turned in. The student has played a leading role in group projects and class presentations.

The student has given about two hours of study time per week for each hour of class.

At least three out of four of the major exams or papers are of A quality.

For a GRADE of B:

The student's performance demonstrates all or most of these features:

The student has no more than three or four (3-4) absence hours. All reading and writing assignments are completed, and all exams taken, usually on time. He or she makes a good effort to participate in class and is usually well prepared to ask and to answer questions.

All reading responses assignments are completed, and the responses are usually thoughtful. Most show a serious attempt to engage with the reading. All of the responses are at least a half-page in length, and most are a full page or more. The student has played an important role in group projects and class presentations.

The student has given around two hours of study time per week for each hour of class.

At least three out of four major exams or papers are of B quality--or if not, the student has completed an extra credit assignment.

For a GRADE of C:

The student's performance demonstrates most or all of these features:

The student has no more than four or five (4-5) unexcused absence hours. All reading and writing assignments are completed, but the work has some or all of these deficits: papers or exams completed late, lack of preparation for class discussions, disinterest in asking questions in class, and inability to answer them when asked.

Some reading response assignments may be missing. Most of the notes have been completed and are at least half a page in length. However, the notes do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the reading or an attempt to engage with the subject. The journal shows a minimum of thought and effort. The student has had little role in group projects and class presentations, or has not been present.

The student has only about an hour per week of study time for each hour of class.

Two or three out of the four major exams (or papers) are of C quality--or if not, the student has completed an extra credit assignment. (**Please note** that three weak B-grades and one grade of C will result in a C in the course.)

For a GRADE of D or Fail:

Student's performance demonstrates most or all of these:

The student has five (5) or more unexcused absence hours. Some of the reading and writing assignments have not been completed, and the work shows some or all of these deficits: work turned in late, lack of preparation for class discussion, disinterest, and inability to ask questions in class or to answer them when asked.

Reading response assignments are less than half a page in length, and many of them are missing. The responses show that little time or effort has gone into them. The student has clearly made no attempt to engage with or ponder the reading materials. The student has had little or nothing to do with group projects and class presentations.

The student has studied less than an hour for every hour of class time each week.

Two or more of the major exams or papers have received less than a grade of C, or the student has failed to take some exams or to turn in some papers. The student has shown no interest in extra credit assignments--or has asked for them, but has not turned them in on time, or not at all.

READING RESPONSE GUIDELINES

All students are expected to turn in frequent, written assignments in response to the weekly readings for the course. (At least a full page in length, or more, once a week.) **All such assignments must be dated**, with an appropriate citation of the material being discussed. The responses may take many different forms. These assignments will be graded on **seriousness, thoughtfulness, and thorough engagement** with the reading material.

There are no right or wrong answers to this assignment. You are just supposed to think about what you have read, then write critically and intelligently about it.

The written assignments should contain some of the following possible responses to the readings. **Don't try to do them all in one response.** Just pick one or two:

1. **First thoughts.** Your initial reactions or reflections on the readings. Do some focused free writing in response to what you have read. If the reading bores you, write that down and explain why. If it makes you angry, write that. If you don't understand it, write that too. Tell me what you don't understand. Just write! Take at least five minutes to write *something* whenever you have finished an assignment.
2. **Ask yourself questions** about what you have read: What puzzles you about some passage or some point that the author has made? Begin with: "I wonder why . . ." or "I am having trouble understanding how . . ." or "It puzzles me that . . ." or "I was surprised when the author said that . . ."
3. **Actually, any emotion will do.** Try responding personally to what you have read. How does it make you feel? Why? Begin with: "I got angry when the author said . . ." or "It made me sad when I read that . . ." or "I laughed out loud when the author made the remark about . . ."
4. **Try agreeing with the author.** Think of anything that you can say to support the ideas you have read. Draw on your personal experience or past reading. Improve on the author's arguments.
5. **Or, try arguing with the author.** What do you disagree with and why? Support your arguments. Again, draw on your personal experience. Where does the author contradict himself? Why are his arguments weak?

(OVER)

6. **Write down words, images, phrases, or details** in the text that strike you. Think about them. What are the author's biases? How do you think the author feels about the ideas he or she is presenting? Discuss the tone and style of the text. How have these things influenced the way the material has been presented? How does the author use language?

7. **Identify the author's purpose.** What is the author's point? What is he trying to convince you of? How does he make his arguments? Who is his audience? What kind of language does he use, and why? What kinds of arguments are made? Are they reasoned, emotional, religious, moral, pragmatic, or what? Try to understand why the author writes the way he does.

8. Of course, there are lots of other ways to respond to a text critically. But just try one of the above for now. You can do other things later.

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GUIDELINES FOR BOOK REVIEWS

Students may turn in book reviews in lieu of taking mid-term exams. Reviews are due on the day of the exam, and **no late reviews will be accepted**. Any book about the Mexican-American past that deals with our time period (**and has been approved by the instructor**) may be reviewed for credit. The books assigned for the class are already approved.

Reviews must be typed (double-spaced), and from five to ten pages long. The purpose of the book review is to discuss the relevance of the book read to the study of Mexican-American history. **You will also compare your book to at least one other book of Mexican-American history.**

All reviews must contain the following elements:

1. State clearly on your first page: Name of the author. *Name of the book*. City of publication: Publisher, Date of publication, any other publishing details.
2. State clearly in the first paragraph of your review whether or not you think your book is useful for the study of Mexican-American history, and explain why or why not.
3. Explain the time and place in American history that is covered by your book. Which specific places and groups are discussed? Is this a monograph, a collection of essays, a novel, or what?
4. What are the themes, problems, or issues of Mexican-American history that the book addresses? Identify two or three. What point of view does the author take towards these issues? What are the arguments put forth and how are they put forth? What is he trying to convince you of? Do you agree with the author? Explain why or why not.
5. Evaluate your book in a critical fashion. Discuss the importance of: date, author, language, purpose, audience, style, tone, bias, political perspective, etc. (At least three.) How do these issues affect the way the book is written? Which do you think are the most important?
6. **Find at least one or two scholarly reviews** of your book that have been published in academic journals. You should use the databases in the library to locate reviews. Summarize the review (or more than one). How does this scholar evaluate the book you are reading? Do you agree or disagree?

(OVER)

6. What themes, problems, or issues of Mexican-American history (in the same time and place) are *not* addressed by the author? Where are the silences? Why not? What are the author's biases? (*Yes, all authors have biases. Your job is to figure out what they are.*) Explain fully.
7. Cite at least **one or two other books** on the American or the Mexican-American past that deal with the same issues dealt with in your book. What are the issues that both books address? How do these books differ? Which arguments are more convincing? **Please note that this will require additional reading, beyond your chosen book.** You do not have to read another book in full. But **you will have to consult** other books and read parts of them.
8. Explain what you learned from your book and what more you would like to learn about the themes, problems, or issues raised.

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GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPERS IN FAMILY HISTORY

For various reasons, family history (including the stories passed down from generation to generation within families) has played a more important role in Mexican-American culture than it has for many other groups. Family histories are an important source of the history of Latino Americans. Research papers in family history may be turned in by students in lieu of taking mid-term exams. Papers are due on the day of the exam, and **no late papers will be accepted.**

Papers should concern the history of your own family. Or you may do research into the family history of a friend or a prominent Mexican American in history. If you have trouble finding a subject for your research, please consult the instructor.

The paper may concern any aspect of the history of a family: You may collect stories passed down in your own family. Narrow down the topic: you can't do everything! Choose a particular individual, relationship, or event in your family. You may analyze old photographs kept by your family, for example.

Papers must be typed (double-spaced), and from five to ten pages long. The purpose of the book review is to discuss the relevance of your family's history to Mexican-American history *as a whole*.

All papers must contain the following elements:

1. State clearly on your first page: the name of the family you are conducting research on, the time and the place you are concerned with, and the subject of your research. You should provide only a **minimum** of genealogy (who is related to whom and how). You are not concerned with genealogy, but with family history.
2. State clearly in your first paragraph the precise topic of your research and explain how it is related to Mexican-American history. How does what you have learned about your family help us to understand the lives of Mexican-American peoples in the United States?
3. Discuss your research findings. What are the stories you have recorded? Provide xeroxed copies of the photographs you have found. What is your analysis of them? Include information on how, when, and where you obtained your information.

(OVER)

4. What are the themes, problems, or issues of Mexican-American history that your research has raised? How were these issues understood by your family? In the past? Now?
5. **IMPORTANT!!** Cite and discuss at least **one or two books** on Mexican-American history that have dealt with the issues you have listed above (#4). How do these books approach your issues and are they helpful in understanding your family? This analysis must be a **major part** of your paper and should be **at least** one or two pages in length.

The purpose here is to fit the history of your family into the larger history of Mexican American people in the United States. Is your family typical? How? Is it unusual? How so? Explain your family's actions within the large context of the major events and trends of Mexican-American history during that time.

6. Explain what you learned from your research and what more you would like to learn about your family, or about the issues that the study of your family has raised. Do you plan to continue with your research? How?

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WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

Required Reading:

Richard Rodriguez. *Hunger for Memory*. New York: Dial Press, 1982.
 Manuel G. Gonzalez. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*.
 Second Edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999 (2009).

Optional Reading: (Students must choose any two of the following.)

Ernesto Galarza. *Barrio Boy*. 40th Anniversary Edition. University of Notre Dame Press, 2011.
 Luis D. Leon. *The Political Spirituality of Cesar Chavez*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.
 Patricia Preciado Martin. *Songs My Mother Sang to Me*. Tucson: Arizona University Press, 1992.
 Luis J. Rodriguez. *Always Running: La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993.
 _____. *The Republic of East L.A.* New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
 Arturo Rosales and Francisco A. Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. 2nd Edition. Houston: Arto Publico Press, 1996.
 George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
 Frans J. Schryer. *They Never Come Back: A Story of Undocumented Workers from Mexico*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Assignments must be COMPLETED by the beginning of class on the day indicated.

Week of	Subject	Assignment
February 9	Orientation What is history? Why study history?	
16	Critical Thinking Historical Questions Mexican American Culture	<i>Hunger of Memory</i> and handouts
<i>Presidents Day Weekend. No class Monday.</i>		
23	The Social Construction of Race and Identity	Finish <i>Hunger of Memory</i> ; Read Ch. 10

Form Presentation Groups this week.

March	2	Latino/Chicano/Hispanic/Mexicano	Ch. 8
	9	Post-Chicano Identity and Exam	Ch. 9

*Mid-Term Exam will be given this week or
Book Reviews and Research Papers Due.*

	16	Group Presentations	<i>Begin Second Book</i>
	23	The American Southwest	Ch. 4
	30	The Great Migration	Ch. 5

April 6 *Spring Break. No class this week.*

	13	Group Book Reviews	<i>Begin third book</i>
	20	Book Reviews and Exam	

*Mid-Term Exam will be given this week at or
Book Reviews and Research Papers Due.*

27 The Depression Ch. 6

May 4 World War II and Afterwards Ch. 7

11 Mexicans in California and LA *Handout Readings*

18 Mexicanss in California and LA

25 Review for Exam *Catch-up*

Memorial Day. No class Monday.

Final Journals are due this week.

Final Exam or Paper: June 3, 10:15-12:15 a.m.