DIRECTED READINGS IN LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY:
SPAIN’S NORTH AMERICA

This seminar will investigate two regions of Colonial Spanish North America: the complex native cultures of Mesoamerica (particularly Nahua [“Aztec’] culture) and the northern borderlands (and principally the region that is today’s U.S. Southwest). Particular attention will be given to investigating the various patterns of interaction between Spanish colonists and Native Americans in these two regions. Students will examine scholarly books on this subject that offer interdisciplinary historical perspectives from anthropology, art history, linguistics, and religious studies.

Goals and Objects of Student Learning

Beyond serving students as a means of acquiring a familiarity with the history of Colonial Mesoamerica and the Colonial Northern Borderlands, this class has also been designed to enhance students’ skills of making informed interpretations of scholarly works and to developing historiographical essays in accordance to the standards employed by professional historians.

Requirements

This is a designedly intellectually challenging course, and students should not enroll in this course unless they are wholly committed to satisfying its rigorous requirements. These requirements, together with the weight assigned to them, are: writing a historiographical essay (total of possible 40 points or 40 percent), participating in informed class discussions (total of possible 40 points or 40 percent), and serving as a seminar discussion leader and writing a book review (total of possible 20 points or 20 percent).

Historiographical Essay. The historiographical essay will be in the form of a critical and articulate assessment of scholarly works on a narrowly defined subject falling within the field of Colonial Mesoamerican history or the Colonial Spanish Borderlands frontier. Examples of such essays might be “Recent Trends in the Gendered History of the Colonial Spanish Southwest” and “Two Decades of Colonial Nahua Social History: Scholarly Contributions from 1994-2014” Each student, then, must make a judicious assessment of the major works (books, doctoral dissertations, and journal articles, of the subject that he/she has selected to review. These works, of course, might be cited and critically summarized. The topics of the essays must have the instructor’s approval.

The essay should be around fifteen double-spaced, machine-produced pages in length (using 12-point font). It is imperative that you select a topic for this essay that is narrow
enough to be properly examined within the scope of a short essay yet is sufficiently theoretically rich to allow for probing interpretation. Progress reports on the essay will be required throughout the semester. The final progress report will be given to the seminar on December 5. The essay is due at 4:00 on December 12. Two copies must be submitted; the instructor will keep one copy on file. Late papers will be penalized, and no late papers will be accepted that are submitted after 4:30 or are submitted electronically.

The criteria the instructor will use for evaluating the historiographical essays are: originality, comprehensiveness (that is, depth of research), quality of interpretation, organization, clarity of expression, and format (following Turabian).

For all citations—appearing in both bibliography and notes—you will need to follow the format that has been by the Department of History, namely, the 8th edition of Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). A summary version of Turabian is the “SDSU Library Chicago Manual of Style Guide” (accessible both through the SDSU Department of History’s and the SDSU Library’s websites).

Students are urged to examine historiographical essays by scholars as stylistic models for their essays. These essays may be found in, among other peer-reviewed journals, *The Hispanic American Historical Review, The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History* (there are different previous sub-titles), *Colonial Latin American Research Review, The Latin American Research Review*, and *The American Historical Review*. It is also strongly advised that students submit drafts of their essays to the instructor throughout the semester for his review and comments.

**Informed Class Participation.** Informed student participation is critical for the success of any seminar. Students are expected to offer insightful, evidence-based opinions of each of the assigned readings. Informed class participation also includes students’ progress reports and summations of historiographical essays, and student’s constructive criticism of peers’ oral progress reports and summations. Students should be prepared to contribute to discussions, which will be offered every class meeting.

The instructor will maintain a careful record of how a student offers thoughtful, insightful, and evidence-based comments about a particular subject under review. The principal criterion used for evaluating a student’s participation is the frequency a student offers oral commentary in ways that enrich the learning experience of all in the seminar. Some students may attempt to dominate class discussions or may discuss subjects that are not germane to those under review. These practices will diminish the quality of the learning experience of others in the class; accordingly, such practices will not be tolerated, and the participation grade of any student who engages in such practices will be negatively affected. Moreover, for every unexcused absence, a student’s participation grade will be lowered a full letter grade for every class that is missed (for example, “B” to “C”). Only documented instances of illness or hardship will be considered as excused absences. A student’s participation grade will be derived from a “curve” that will be
developed by comparing his/her performance as a participant with that of other students in the class.

**Leading Seminar Discussion and Writing Book Reviews.** One student will lead the seminar discussion for each week in which a required reading is discussed, starting with Week 4. Seminar discussion leader assignments will be made in Week 3.

To structure the direction of the required readings, seminar leaders are required to assess *at least two* scholarly reviews of the book with their own review of the book that has been assigned for the week in which they serve as leaders. Discussion leaders should ask themselves the following questions of the book reviews: Which elements of the book did the reviewers choose to emphasize, de-emphasize, or ignore altogether? In light of your own analysis of the book, what do the reviewers reveal or ignore that you believe is essential to understand the book? How, why, and in what ways are the reviewers’ interpretations of the book different from yours? How, why, and in what ways are the reviewers’ interpretations similar to yours? Obviously, discussion leaders will need to frame their questions to the seminar in different and, one would hope, creative ways that elicit enthusiastic and informed discussion.

Of course, the discussion leaders should also bring in other elements of the reading under review for discussion such as thesis/theses, methods, evidence, organization, writing style, and conclusions, as well the book’s contribution to the scholarly literature.

Discussion leaders should address these elements as well as the questions raised above to develop a short written review. The review essay (not to exceed four double-spaced, machine-produced pages, using 12-point font) assesses the book reviews based on their own review of the book. Each student will submit two copies of the review to the instructor at the beginning of the class for which he/she will lead the discussion. One copy will be kept on file with the instructor. Review essays that are submitted late or that are submitted electronically will not be accepted.

Student discussion leaders will be evaluated in part by how effectively they generate discussion and provoke debate among their peers and in equal part by the quality of their review essays.

**Professional Writing Standards.** Both the historiographical essay and the review essay must be written in a formal style that is the standard for professional historians. Consequently, any essay that contains more than two spelling errors, or more than two contractions, or more than two incomplete sentences will automatically be lowered one half a grade for each additional spelling error, contraction, or incomplete sentence that appears.

Competency in formal writing is essential for success in this course. Students requiring tutoring in writing should contact the *Writing Center*, which is located in Love Library (Room LLA 1103 [near the Circulation Desk]). You may stop by for a drop-in session or
contact the Writing Center by going to its website (writingcenter.sdsu.edu) and click the red button to make an appointment with a tutor.

The instructor will gladly review drafts of students’ written work but such reviews a) will be done only in the instructor’s office during regular office hours (and not via email) and b) will not be detailed but will be of a general nature (it would be improper for an instructor to serve as any student’s personal editor in a seminar because all students are expected to do their own writing and editing).

Required Readings

The eleven required books to be purchased for this course (four of these are also available electronically) are:


Susan M. Deeds, *Defiance and Deference in Mexico’s Colonial North: Indians under Spanish Rule in Nueva Vizcaya* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003). This work is available as an EBook through the SDSU Library’s on-line catalog.


James A. Sandos, *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). This work is available as an EBook through the SDSU Library’s on-line catalog.


Because the lengths of these readings vary weekly, students should plan their study schedules accordingly.

**Grading Criteria**

A student’s course grade will be based on the total number of points that he/she has earned during the semester. The letter grades assigned to the historiographical essay, class participation, and leadership of seminar discussion (which includes the review essay) correlate to the following percentages: “A” (100), “A-” (80), “B+” (88), “B” (85), “B-” (79), “C+” (75), “C-” (60), “D+” (68), “D” (65), “D-” (59), “F” (0). For example, a student who has received a “B” on the historiographical essay would have earned a percentage of “85” for that assignment; put another way, the student would have earned 34 points (85% out of a possible 40 points) for that assignment. His/her other course work would be calculated in the same manner, yielding a total number of points. The total number of points earned for the entire course will then be correlated to letter grades as follows: “A” (90-100 points), “A-” (89 points); “B+” (88 points), “B” (80-87 points), “B-” (79 points), “C+” (78 points), “C-” (75 points), “C” (69 points), “D+” (68 points), “D” (60-67 points), “D-” (59 points), and “F” (58 points and below).

**Student Disability Services**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you may need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that the instructor cannot provide accommodations based on disability until the instructor has received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

**Classroom Protocols**

A classroom should provide an environment that fosters the assimilation of knowledge and the responsible and civilized exchange of ideas. Most students attend a class because they genuinely wish to learn a particular subject. However, some students enroll in courses without having this seriousness of purpose, and a few of these individuals will occasionally engage in inappropriate behavior. Such behavior includes (but is not limited to) talking during seminar discussions and arriving late and/or leaving early without previously notifying the instructor of compelling reasons for entering or exiting the
seminar room while class is in session. Of course, inappropriate behavior of any kind is
disturbing to instructors and serious students alike. Accordingly, any form of behavior
deemed by the instructor to be inappropriate will not be tolerated. The instructor will
advise a student once that his/her behavior is inappropriate; the first time this
inappropriate behavior is repeated, the matter will be turned over to the Center for
Students Rights and Responsibilities for appropriate review.

Academic integrity is a foundational principle of this course. Academic integrity is
violated by such acts as borrowing or purchasing written works (including works
obtained over the Internet) and presenting these works as one’s own. The sources of
one’s ideas, words, and evidence must be fully cited; failure to do so, intentionally or not,
constitutes plagiarism. Any evidence of violations of academic integrity by a student will
result in an automatic “F” as that student’s course grade. Moreover, any evidence of such
violations will also be promptly reported to the Center for Students Rights and
Responsibilities.

All electronic devices must be turned off during class except for authorized class use, and
this is limited to taking notes and retrieving readings. Because the in-class use of such
devices is a privilege and not a right, any student who violates this policy will have
his/her privilege permanently revoked.

There are also protocols concerning the appropriate use of emails that are binding for this
class. Emails should be used for sending and receiving only brief messages (a couple of
sentences). Moreover, senders of emails to instructors should identify themselves and
address the professors by name.

Students are expected to adhere to the “acceptable standards for conduct” as described on
the web page of the SDSU Center for Students Rights and Responsibilities
(http://www.sdsu.edu/srr/).

Students are held responsible for all material covered in the seminar even if they are not
attendance for whatever reason.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as he considers
appropriate. Whether these changes are given by the instructor orally or in writing, they
must be considered as binding course requirements.

**Pertinent Administrative Information**

**Instructor:** S.A. Colston. **Telephone:** 594-4716. **E-mail:** colston@mail.sdsu.edu
**Office:** Arts & Letters Building, Room 528. **Office Hours:** Mondays, Tuesdays, and
Wednesdays, 2:30-3:30. **Department of History Office:** Arts & Letters Building,
Room 588 (telephone: 594-5262). The instructor will return E-mail and voice mail
messages only during regular office hours.
Course Outline

Weekly Topics and Assignments

1  (August 29)
Introduction to course. An overview of colonial Mesoamerica and the northwestern-most Colonial Spanish Borderlands frontier.

2  (September 5)
Holiday-Veterans Day.

3  (September 12)
Reading assignment: Hassig, Mexico and the Spanish Conquest. Assignments of discussion leaders for the remainder of the weekly readings.

4  (September 19)
Reading assignment: Lockhart, The Nahuas After the Conquest (Chapters 1-5).

5  (September 26)
Reading assignment: Lockhart, The Nahuas After the Conquest (Chapters 6-10).

6  (October 3)
Reading assignment: Mundy, The Mapping of New Spain.

7  (October 10)
Reading assignment: Bauer, The Search for the Codex Cardona.

8  (October 17)
Reading assignment: McDonough, The Learned Ones.

9  (October 24)

10 (October 31)
Reading assignment: Deeds, Defiance and Deference.

11 (November 7)
Reading assignment: Rabasa, Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier.

12 (November 14)
Reading assignment: Knaut, The Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

13 (November 21)
Reading assignment: Sandos, Converting California.
(November 28)  
Reading assignment: *Colston, Imprints on Empire.*

(December 5)  
Progress reports on the historiographical essays to the seminar. Discussion.

(December 12)  
**Historiographical essays (two copies) are due in class at 4:00. Oral summations of the polished historiographical essays to the seminar. Discussion.** Late papers will be penalized, and no papers will be accepted that are submitted after 4:30 or that are submitted electronically.