

HIST382A/MDVL380C/LACS380S Mexico: Spanish Conquest

General Education: C - Composition, N - Social Science, I - Information Literacy, T - Critical Thinking

Fall 2025 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:15 pm - 4:45 pm (FA 342)

Instructor: Brad Skopyk, PhD, Associate Professor, bskopyk@binghamton.edu, LT 713, 607-777-4210

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00 - 10:30 am & Wednesday 10:00 am - 11:30 am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the Spanish Conquest of Mexico by means of original sixteenth-century texts, images, and maps. Key themes are war, mass mortality, race, and religion, as well as the mixing of New and Old World literary genres and ways of writing/painting. As traditionally told, the conquest is the story of the defeat of alien and exotic empires by small bands of Spanish soldiers led by charismatic figures such as Hernán Cortés. For generations, the history of conquest was told as a story that reflected the European self-image as world conquerors, where the superiority of European technology and culture over indigenous American cultures was taken as given and the conquest as inevitable. New sources and new interpretive frameworks have led scholars to problematize heroic conquest accounts, myths of white Gods and the purported success of anti-idolatry campaigns. To what degree, we ask, have advances in reading the Conquest through indigenous eyes eroded the notion of a Spanish conquest itself?

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled meeting times, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work outside of class each week during the semester. This includes time spent completing assigned readings, participating in discussion sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

GRADING

Assignment Type	Quantity	Individual Weight	Total Weight
One-on-one meetings with instructor	2	1.5% each	3%
Perusall reading assignments	8	1.5% each	12%
In-class labs (drop lowest)	5 of 6	5% each	25%
In-class interpretive essays	2	10% each	20%
Historiography paper (related to term paper)	1	10%	10%
Primary document analysis (related to term paper)	1	10%	10%
Interpretive essay (related to term paper)	1	20%	20%

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

One-on-One Meetings with Instructor (3% total)

You will attend two 20-minute one-on-one meetings with the instructor to discuss your term paper progress. These meetings are worth 1.5% each and are scheduled for weeks 11 and 16. The meetings will be scheduled outside of class time during regular office hours or at another time during the week that fits the schedules of both students and the instructor. Meetings can be held in-person or via Zoom based on mutual preference and availability.

Meeting Schedule:

- First one-on-one meeting: October 28
- Second one-on-one meeting: December 2

The meetings provide an opportunity to discuss your research direction, address questions about your primary document analysis, and receive personalized feedback on your work.

Perusall Reading Assignments (12% total)

Readings will be accessed through Brightspace and must be read by 9 AM on Perusall, an online annotation platform that encourages student reading engagement. Reading assignments are due by 9 AM on the day shown in the course schedule. Perusall is graded as follows:

Perusall Due Dates:

- Perusall 1 due: August 28
- Perusall 2 due: September 9
- Perusall 3 due: September 16
- Perusall 4 due: October 7
- Perusall 5 due: October 16
- Perusall 6 due: October 23
- Perusall 7 due: October 9
- Perusall 8 due: October 23

Grading Criteria:

- **To get 80%:** Read the text carefully and fully within Perusall; complete the assignment before 9 AM deadline; read actively (minimum of one minute/page).
- **To get another 40%:** Annotate the assigned text(s) within Perusall with thoughtful questions and comments throughout the entire reading; answer or comment upon other students' contributions; classify comments with hashtags. Target one comment per five pages.
- **To get another 10%:** Write an annotation that elicits a student response.

Students who read fully and write thoughtful comments can score as much as 130%. A percentage between 100-130% receives full credit (1.5 points). Lower percentages receive proportional grades.

In-Class Labs (25% total)

You will complete 6 in-class labs with the lowest score dropped (5 of 6 count toward final grade). Each lab is worth 5% and will involve hands-on engagement with primary sources, historical analysis exercises, or research skill development. Labs will build from concepts introduced in previous meetings of regular class time. In many cases, labs can only be successfully completed if students have read secondary and/or primary

sources cited by the lab question(s). Labs are completed using Respondus LockDown Browser during the 90-minute class period and cannot be made up if missed.

Lab Schedule:

- Lab 1: September 4 -- Cortès's Letters
- Lab 2: September 11 -- The Florentine Codex
- Lab 3: September 18 -- The Return of Quetzalcoatl
- Lab 4: September 30 -- Bartolomé de las Casas
- Lab 5: October 14 -- Historiography
- Lab 6: October 21 -- The Problem Statement, Thesis and Argument

In-Class Interpretive Essays (20% total)

Students will write two in-class essays, each worth 10% of your final grade. You will have 90 minutes of class time to write each essay. Essays will be completed in our classroom during class time using Respondus LockDown Browser.

Essay Due Dates:

- First interpretive essay: September 25
- Second interpretive essay: October 30

The essay questions will be made available to students several days before the in-class essay and will ask you to think broadly and critically about a defined collection of readings that you have already read and commented upon in Perusall. You may bring printed or handwritten notes to assist with composition. Notes must be on paper and, if multiple sheets are used, must be stapled together or compiled in a notebook or binder. Only point-form notes, outlines, citations, and similar textual items are permitted; notes written in prose are NOT allowed. All notes will be collected by the instructor at the completion of the assignment.

Historiography Paper (10% total)

This assignment asks you to write a focused historiographical analysis related to your term paper topic. In 90 minutes of supervised class time, you will compose a paper that surveys and analyzes how historians have interpreted a specific aspect of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico that relates to your chosen primary document.

Due Date: November 4

The historiography paper should demonstrate your understanding of how historical scholarship has evolved over time, identify key debates and interpretive frameworks among historians, and position your own research within these scholarly conversations. You will conduct research and prepare your analysis outside of class, but the actual writing will occur during the designated class period using Respondus LockDown Browser.

You may bring printed or handwritten notes to assist with composition. Notes must be on paper and, if multiple sheets are used, must be stapled together or compiled in a notebook or binder. Only point-form notes, outlines, citations, and similar textual items are permitted; notes written in prose are NOT allowed. All notes will be collected by the instructor at the completion of the assignment.

You are also allowed to bring print copies (photocopies or published print materials) of any primary and secondary sources used in your research. These materials will be turned in at the end of the assignment and

returned to the student ASAP.

Primary Document Analysis (10% total)

In 90 minutes of supervised class time, you will write an analysis of a primary document from the Spanish Conquest period. This assignment calls for sustained analysis of your chosen primary source, demonstrating how this document can illuminate broader historical questions about the conquest.

Due Date: November 13

Your analysis should introduce and contextualize the primary source, analyze its content and significance, and build an argument about what this source reveals about the conquest period. All research and preparation will be conducted outside of class, but the composition will occur during the designated class session using Respondus LockDown Browser.

You may bring printed or handwritten notes to assist with composition. Notes must be on paper and, if multiple sheets are used, must be stapled together or compiled in a notebook or binder. Only point-form notes, outlines, citations, and similar textual items are permitted; notes written in prose are NOT allowed. All notes will be collected by the instructor at the completion of the assignment.

You are also allowed to bring print copies (photocopies or published print materials) of any primary and secondary sources used in your research. These materials will be turned in at the end of the assignment and returned to the student ASAP.

Final Interpretive Essay (20% total)

During the three-hour final exam period, you will write a comprehensive interpretive essay that formulates and defends a historical argument about some aspect of the Spanish Conquest substantiated by the primary and secondary documents consulted during your semester-long research. This essay should demonstrate your ability to define a historical problem, to use primary sources effectively, to formulate and defend a thesis, and to engage with historical debate and uncertainty.

Due Date: During finals week (December 8-12)

The final essay represents the culmination of your term paper research and should present a sophisticated historical argument supported by evidence from your primary document analysis and broader course materials. All preparation and research will be conducted throughout the semester, with the writing completed during the final exam session using Respondus LockDown Browser.

You may bring printed or handwritten notes to assist with composition. Notes must be on paper and, if multiple sheets are used, must be stapled together or compiled in a notebook or binder. Only point-form notes, outlines, citations, and similar textual items are permitted; notes written in prose are NOT allowed. All notes will be collected by the instructor at the completion of the assignment.

You are also allowed to bring print copies (photocopies or published print materials) of any primary and secondary sources used in your research. These materials will be turned in at the end of the assignment and returned to the student ASAP.

SCHEDULE

Class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:15 pm - 4:45 pm in FA 342

Meeting	Date	Day	Agenda/Topic	Readings Due by 9 AM on Perusall	Assignments Due
1	Aug 19	Tue	Course intro; Review syllabus; Many Mexicos		First day of classes
2	Aug 21	Thu	Review Perusall; The peoples of Mexico before contact; Precolumbian writing	Perusall practice assignment	
3	Aug 26	Tue	The Spanish expansion		
4	Aug 28	Thu	The 'altepetl'; The Aztec 'empire' and its enemies		Perusall 1 due
-	Sep 2	Tue	NO CLASS		Monday classes meet (Labor Day)
5	Sep 4	Thu	Lab 1		Lab 1
6	Sep 9	Tue	The Black Legend		Perusall 2 due
7	Sep 11	Thu	Lab 2		Lab 2
8	Sep 16	Tue	Native religion		Perusall 3 due
9	Sep 18	Thu	Lab 3		Lab 3
-	Sep 23	Tue	NO CLASS		Rosh Hashanah
10	Sep 25	Thu	In-Class Essay 1		First interpretive essay
11	Sep 30	Tue	Lab 4		Lab 4
-	Oct 2	Thu	NO CLASS		Yom Kippur
12	Oct 7	Tue	Teaching Christianity; Visual Culture and Maps		Perusall 4 due
13	Oct 9	Thu	Race and Mestizaje		Perusall 7 due

Meeting	Date	Day	Agenda/Topic	Readings Due by 9 AM on Perusall	Assignments Due
14	Oct 14	Tue	Lab 5		Lab 5
15	Oct 16	Thu	Anti-Idolatry Campaigns		Perusall 5 due
16	Oct 21	Tue	Lab 6		Lab 6
17	Oct 23	Thu	Politics, Economy, Society		Perusall 6 due, Perusall 8 due
18	Oct 28	Tue	Historiography of the Conquest		First one-on- one meetings
19	Oct 30	Thu	In-Class Essay 2		Second interpretive essay
20	Nov 4	Tue	Citation workshop; Historiography Paper Due		
21	Nov 6	Thu	Primary Document Workshop		
22	Nov 11	Tue	Women and gender		
23	Nov 13	Thu	Primary Document Analysis Due		
24	Nov 18	Tue	Race and empire		
25	Nov 20	Thu	Legacy and Memory		
26	Nov 25	Tue	Modern Interpretations and Debate		
-	Nov 27	Thu	NO CLASS		Thanksgiving break
27	Dec 2	Tue	Remembering conquest; Student Presentations		Second one- on-one meetings
28	Dec 4	Thu	Course Synthesis and Review		

Meeting	Date	Day	Agenda/Topic	Readings Due by 9 AM on Perusall	Assignments Due
Final	TBD	-	Final Essay Due		During finals week (Dec 8-12)

Important Dates

- **Course add/drop deadline:** September 2, 11:59 p.m.
- **Course withdrawal deadline:** October 28, 11:59 p.m.
- **Grade option change deadline:** October 28, 4:30 p.m.
- **Last day of classes:** December 5
- **Final examinations:** December 8-12

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Don't cheat, plagiarize, use AI, have somebody else do your work for you, or turn in work from another course. If you are caught, you will automatically fail the course, in addition to any university-mandated penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Get familiar with [Binghamton's Student Academic Honesty Code](#), which are the rules that we follow. If you are confused about what might constitute academic dishonesty or plagiarism, please see your instructor.

Further Notes on Academic Honesty

1. Professors use the internet all the time – if you found it, we can, too.
2. Cheating is bad citizenship. If you're a Democrat, it destroys the level playing field; if you're a Republican, it distorts free and open competition amongst individuals. (And if you're a libertarian or an anarchist, why are you attending a state school?)
3. Don't plagiarize – either directly, or by neglecting to cite ideas and arguments. Changing a few words or a verb tense, or rearranging a sentence, does not count as "putting something in your own words," even if you've added a citation.
4. Don't pay others to do your assignments for you – it's often more obvious than you think, especially for a paper due at the end of the semester, when we have become somewhat familiar with your writing style and general work habits. Or you might not get your money's worth and end up with a D.
5. Don't turn in work from another course. If you find complementary themes or materials in your other classes that you wish to make use of, clear it with me first.
6. Students in this course are not permitted to submit any work that uses text generated from artificial intelligence.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Instructors can assist you in reaching out to a wide range of campus resources, including:

- **Dean of Students Office:** 607-777-2804
- **Decker Student Health Services Center:** 607-777-2221
- **University Police:** On campus emergency, 911
- **University Counseling Center:** 607-777-2772
- **Interpersonal Violence Prevention:** 607-777-3062

- **Academic Advising:**
 - Harpur: 607-777-6305
 - CCPA: 607-777-2841
 - DSON: 607-777-6586
 - SOM: 607-777-2316
 - Watson: 607-777-6203
- **Office of International Student & Scholar Services:** 607-777-2510

WRITING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

The Writing Center provides services to help you improve your writing. The Center for Learning and Teaching can help you find a tutor. You also should take advantage of everything the library has to offer. Asking for help is not cheating! No professor or student ever completes academic work in isolation. Ask for help when you need it.

ADAPTATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (607.777.2686). Students who need accommodation should present an SSD authorization letter and contact me to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

Extended Time Accommodations: Students with approved extended time accommodations will complete all written assignments (labs, in-class interpretive essays, historiography paper, primary document analysis, and final interpretive essay) at the University Testing Center. These students should coordinate with both the instructor and the Testing Center to schedule their writing sessions. The same Respondus LockDown Browser requirements apply for all testing center sessions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The History Department has determined that students in history classes will:

1. Learn to read primary and secondary sources with a critical eye and express these ideas in effective papers; to analyze a variety of different types of written texts (or in some cases material evidence or oral accounts) and identify how each of them is shaped by author, audience, and the context in which they were constructed.
2. Develop the ability to communicate effectively in writing in a manner that is coherent, well-developed, and expressive of complex thought.
3. Improve the ability to think critically and to argue effectively.
4. Learn about the interactions between different groups within a single society and how these relationships have affected the development of respective regions, ethnicities or identities.
5. Improve the ability to recognize and develop connections between historical issues and life outside the classroom.
6. Enhance the ability to examine current issues from a historical perspective.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

This course fulfills the following General Education requirements:

C requirement - Composition

Students will:

- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- demonstrate coherent college-level communication (written) that informs, persuades, or otherwise engages with an audience; and
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve written communication.

N requirement – Social Sciences

Students will:

- describe major concepts and theories of at least one discipline in the social sciences; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena.

I requirement – Information Literacy

Students will:

- locate information effectively using tools appropriate to their need and discipline;
- evaluate information with an awareness of authority, validity, and bias; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the ethical dimensions of information use, creation, and dissemination.

T requirement – Critical Thinking

Students will:

- clearly articulate an issue or problem;
- identify, analyze, and evaluate ideas, data, and arguments as they occur in their own or others' work;
- acknowledge limitations such as perspective and bias; and
- develop well-reasoned (logical) arguments to form judgments and/or draw conclusions.

COMPOSITION AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

All written composition (in-class essays, historiography paper, primary document analysis, and final interpretive essay) will be completed during class time or the scheduled final exam period. Research and planning for these assignments should be carried out outside of class time, but the actual writing will occur in a supervised classroom environment.

All written assignments will be submitted using **Respondus LockDown Browser**, a secure browser application that prevents access to other websites, applications, or resources during the writing process. This ensures academic integrity and creates a fair testing environment for all students.

Grading Policy for Respondus LockDown Browser Assignments: Assignments submitted through Respondus LockDown Browser will not be assessed based upon the eloquence, grammar, or spelling of written text, provided that the written text can be understood. Assessment will focus on content, historical analysis, argument development, and use of evidence.

Course Materials Access

Students will have access to the course GitHub repository throughout the semester, which contains detailed assignment descriptions and PDF versions of all course readings. This repository serves as a comprehensive resource for assignment preparation and research.

Course GitHub Repository: <https://github.com/bds134/hist-382b-mex-span-conquest>

Notes Policy for Written Assignments

Students may bring printed or handwritten notes to assist with all written assignments. Notes must be on paper and, if multiple sheets are used, must be stapled together or compiled in a notebook or binder. Only point-form notes, outlines, citations, and similar textual items are permitted; **notes written in prose are NOT allowed**. All notes will be collected by the instructor at the completion of each assignment.

About Respondus LockDown Browser

Respondus LockDown Browser is a free application that "locks down" your computer during online assessments and written assignments. When active, it prevents you from:

- Opening other browser windows or tabs
- Accessing other applications
- Using copy/paste functions from external sources
- Accessing notes or materials stored on your computer

Exception: The course GitHub repository will be accessible through Respondus LockDown Browser during labs and written assignments, providing access to assignment descriptions and course readings as needed.

How to Access Respondus LockDown Browser

1. Download the browser from the Respondus website (link will be provided on Brightspace)
2. Install the application on your laptop before the first in-class essay
3. Access assignments through Brightspace while using the LockDown Browser
4. We will have practice sessions in class to ensure all students are comfortable with the technology

Students are responsible for ensuring their laptops are compatible with and can run Respondus LockDown Browser. Technical issues should be resolved before assignment due dates.

GRADE EQUIVALENCY

Grade	Percentage Range
A	93%-100%
A-	90% - <93%
B+	87% - <90%
B	83% - <87%
B-	80% - <83%
C+	77% - <80%
C	73% - <77%

Grade	Percentage Range
C-	70% - <73%
D	60% - <70%
F	<60%

TEXTBOOKS

There is no textbook for this course. All readings will be read on Perusall via Brightspace and can also be consulted in the course github repository.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are strongly encouraged to attend each class meeting, as we will be covering content crucial to your understanding of Mexican history and the Spanish Conquest. Regular class meetings will explain and demonstrate key concepts and ideas that will allow students to succeed in labs and essays. While marks are not given specifically for attendance or participation, regular attendance is essential for academic success in this course.

Mandatory Attendance for Graded Activities: You must be present in class to complete:

- In-class labs (6 total, with lowest score dropped)
- In-class interpretive essays (2 total)
- In-class Historiography Paper
- In-class Primary Document Analysis
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Note: One-on-one meetings with the instructor are scheduled outside of class time during office hours or at mutually convenient times, and can be conducted in-person or via Zoom.

Note for Students with Accommodations: Students with extra-time accommodations will complete their written assignments (interpretive essays, historiography paper, primary document analysis, and final essay) at the University Testing Center rather than in the regular classroom.

Missing these sessions will result in a zero for that particular assignment, as there are no makeup opportunities for in-class activities unless the absence is documented with a doctor's note. In these rare cases, students will complete the assignment at the University Testing Center. The course is designed around active engagement with primary sources, discussions of complex historical interpretations, and collaborative learning that cannot be replicated outside the classroom environment.