

Honors Latin American History



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Course Text: Keen, Benjamin, A History of Latin America (Houghton Mifflin, 2004)

Supplemental Reading: Suchlicki, Jaime, Cuba: From Columbus to Castro and Beyond (Brassey's, Inc., 2002)

Course Description

This course will examine the history of Latin America beginning with the rise of its ancient civilizations through the contemporary democratic period. The class is designed to provide an analysis of the institutions, events and issues that have shaped the nations of the region. Specific attention will also be paid to the role of the Catholic Church in Latin America and how it continues to play a role spiritually and politically. Current events will also be discussed on a frequent basis.

Methodology

Lectures, handouts, group discussions, feature length films, and historical documentaries will serve as compliments to the designated textbook. Students will be expected to read assigned material on their own in order to be prepared for class.

Evaluation

Tests: 55% of the Semester Grade
Quizzes: 10% of the Semester Grade
Class Participation: 10% of the Semester Grade
Semester Exam: 25% of the Semester Grade

Make-Up Dates

One make-up date will take place per month. It is the responsibility of the students to be aware of the selected dates. Only tests need to be made up. No quizzes can be made up. If a student is late to class, and his tardiness is unexcused, he will be given a grade of 0. There will be no exceptions to this rule. Students will be expected to take quizzes on the date of their return to class, if a quiz is being given on that day.

Unit Topics & Objectives

Semester One
August & September of 2009

Unit #1: The Ancient Civilizations of the Americas

- Explain how people reached the Americas.
- Identify the main achievements of the Mayan civilization.
- Describe how the Aztecs built a powerful empire.
- Specify what regions the Incas ruled.
- Explain how the Incas organized their empire.
- Describe the role of religion in Incan civilization.

Honors Latin American History

- Describe the agricultural methods of each of the Pre-Columbian civilizations.

Unit #2: The Catholic Kings & the Reconquest of Spain

September of 2009

- Discuss the significance of the Spanish victory over the Moors.
- Describe Ferdinand & Isabella's rise to power.
- List the reforms that the Catholic Kings established.
- Discuss the role that the Inquisition played in the enforcement of their reforms.

Unit #3: The Age of Exploration

September and October of 2009

- Explain why European nations sent explorers across the oceans.
- Describe how technology aided European sailors.
- Identify the countries that led the way in overseas exploration.
- Explain why Spanish explorers traveled to the Americas.
- Describe the results of the first encounters between the Spanish and Native Americans.
- Describe how Spain governed its American empire.
- Explain why the Spanish brought enslaved Africans to the Americas.
- Describe the new social culture that emerged in Spanish America.
- Describe the problems that settlers in New France faced.
- Explain how the Atlantic slave trade affected Africa.

Unit #4: The Conquest of the Aztecs & the Incas

October of 2009

- List the advantages that the European explorers had over the natives.
- Explain the origins of the encomienda system.
- Contrast the conquests of the Incas and the Aztecs.
- Describe the institution of Indian slavery and the abuses that took place.

Unit #5: The Role of the Church in Colonial America

October & November of 2009

- Discuss the rift that existed within the Church between the hierarchy and the clergy.
- Describe the role the Church played in the Christianization of the Indians.
- Explain why Bartolome de Las Casas was so integral to the adoption of the Laws of the Indies.

Unit #6: The Catholic Missions

November of 2009

- Discuss the significance of the Jesuit missions in South America.
- Explain the process by which Father Junipero Serra established the Camino Real missions in California.
- Describe the conflicts within the Church regarding the missions in the New World.

Unit #7: Slavery in the New World

November and December of 2009

- Discuss the process by which Africans were first brought to the New World.
- Describe the horrors of the Middle Passage.

Honors Latin American History

- Discuss the economic ramifications of the Triangular Trade system.
- Explain why it was that Africans were brought in to replace the indigenous work-force.
- List the reasons for the disappearance of the Indians from most of the Caribbean.
- Explain why Cuba and Brazil were the last two countries in the Western Hemisphere to do away with slavery.

Semester Two
January of 2010

Unit #1: Cuba

- Describe the cultural contributions of the three Cuban Indian tribes: the Tainos, Siboneyes, and Guanahatabeyes.
- Analyze the impact of the production of sugar and tobacco on the Cuban society during the 1700s.
- Discuss the causes and consequences of the Ten Year's War.
- Identify the roles of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Peruchó Figueredo, Ignacio Agramonte and Francisco Vicente Aguilera during the Ten Years War.
- Explain the four main reasons why Cuba was different from all other Spanish colonies.
- Identify the importance of José Martí in the independence movement of Cuba.
- Describe how and why the U.S. became involved in the independence movement in Cuba and the reasons for the eventual independence of Cuba from the U.S.
- Summarize the corruption in Cuba and the subsequent U.S. interventions in the period between 1902-1924.
- Describe how Fulgencio Batista controlled Cuban politics from 1934-1959 and the significance of the Auténtico Party.
- Summarize Fidel Castro's rise to power.
- Explain the basic economic beliefs of the Cuban revolution (i.e. Land reforms, efforts to industrialize, and a return to intensive sugar production).
- Explain the importance of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.
- Discuss the significance of and the reasons for the failure of the Bay of Pigs Invasion.
- Discuss how the Cuban Missile Crisis was arguably the single most significant event of the Cold War.

January of 2010

Unit #2: The Independence of the South American Nations

- State the importance of Simon Bolívar to the cause of independence in South America.
- List and explain the provisions of Simon Bolívar's Model State Theory.
- Explain how the Napoleonic occupation of Spain affected the colonies in the New World.
- Explain why the idea of having a Gran Colombia never came to fruition.

January & February of 2010

Unit #3: The Independence of Mexico

- Describe the reason for the people of Mexico having wanted to achieve independence from Spain.
- List the significant events of the War of Independence in Mexico.
- Discuss the political dilemma that the Church faced during the period.

Honors Latin American History

- Explain why Benito Juarez is revered as a national hero because of his role in the war.
- Explain how the spirituality of the Mexican people and their devotion to the Lady of Guadalupe strengthened their will to fight the Spanish.

Unit #4: Colonial Brazil

February of 2010

- Compare and contrast the Spanish and Portuguese American colonies.
- Compare and contrast the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies.
- Discuss the earliest forms of colonial settlement in Brazil.
- Explain how the Treaty of Tordesillas defined Brazil's patterns of colonization.
- List the raw materials that the Portuguese were most concerned with.
- Contrast the indigenous inhabitants of the Portuguese American colonies to those of the Spanish American colonies.

Unit #5: Argentina & Chile

February & March of 2010

- Discuss the political turmoil that existed in Argentina immediately following its independence.
- Explain how party politics immediately became important in Argentina following its independence.
- Describe how intellectuals played such an active role in party politics.
- Discuss why Argentina was unique among the newly independent American nations.
- Discuss the role that the military played in the governmental history of Argentina.
- List the significant coup attempts that occurred in Argentina.
- Describe the role of unionized labor in the political process.
- Discuss the administration of Juan Peron and the controversy surrounding his charismatic wife, Eva Peron.
- Identify Ambrosio O'Higgins
- Discuss the legacy of Augusto Pinochet in Chile

Unit #6: The Nations of Central America

March of 2010

- Contrast the political history of Costa Rica to that of Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama.
- Discuss the tumultuous political history of Guatemala and its thirty yearlong civil war.
- Explain the significance of Guatemala's Ten Years of Spring and how the United States played a role in bringing the era to an end.
- Discuss how the Somoza family dominated Nicaraguan politics for the majority of the twentieth century.
- Explain the Cold War rivalry that developed between the United States and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.
- Explain the significance of Oscar Arias, the former Costa Rican president, in having brought stability to the region.

Unit #7: Mexico

April of 2010

- Define the term "caudillo" as used in Latin American history.
- Explain the liberal vs. conservative struggle in Mexico after its independence.

Honors Latin American History

- Describe the dictatorship of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in Mexico and explain the causes and results of the Mexican War with the U.S.
- Identify the reforms of Benito Juarez.
- Evaluate the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz in Mexico.
- Discuss the causes and effects of the Mexican Civil War.
- Explain how the P.R.I. (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) elected their presidential candidates and how it controlled Mexico for almost 100 years.
- Discuss president Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration, specifically his economic policies.
- Identify Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, Benito Juarez, Porfirio Diaz, Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Venustiano Carranza, Alvaro Obregon, Lazaro Cardenas, Jose Lopez Portillo, Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, Ernesto Zedillo

Unit #8: Hispanics in Miami

April of 2010

- Describe the history of the development of Miami-Dade County prior to the first major wave of Cuban immigration in 1959.
- Discuss the reasons for the success of the Cuban community in the city of Miami.
- Explain the role that the Miami Herald, the construction of I-95 and the Mariel Boat Lift of 1980 all had on the cultural make-up of Miami-Dade County.
- Explain the reasons for and factors that will eventually lead to Mexican-Americans being the largest Hispanic group in Miami-Dade County.
- Discuss the origins of the tensions that exist between the many cultural groups in Miami.

Unit #9: Drugs and Narcotrafficking

April of 2010

- Explain the origins of the "War on Drugs".
- Explain why the unstable political situation in Colombia has contributed to the drug problem in the United States.