

Black Mexico – AAAS 380, HIST 387W, HIST 487 Spring 2022 syllabus - Prof. Pablo Sierra

Class: Wednesdays, 2-4:40 pm
Classroom: Bausch & Lomb 315
Zoom Meeting ID: On course Blackboard page

Office Hours: Mondays, 1-3 pm
In-Person: Rush Rhees 458
Virtual Meeting ID: On course Blackboard page

Description

In this multidisciplinary seminar we will analyze the immense variety of historical experiences that Africans and their descendants have had in Mexico from 1520 to 2020. From the “Black conquistadors” and maroon leaders of the colonial period to the recent arrival of migrants from Haiti, Honduras, and Congo, this course asks us to consider the many dimensions and limitations of the “Afro-Mexican” or *afrodescendiente* concept. Who claims these identities, when, why, and under what conditions? This is a capacious history, as it also necessarily involves those who do not claim blackness due to national policies, personal indifference, educational ideologies, and familial pressures. Thus, we will address questions of civic rights, racial mixture (*mestizaje*), community-making, migration and immigration, freedoms and unfreedoms, etc. We will also examine Black Mexicans’ complex relationships to the Caribbean, the United States, and to specific African-American communities and notable intellectuals. Building on film, anthropology, dance, photography, sociology, migration studies, art history, and food studies, this seminar is open to students of all academic disciplines.

Books

Bennett, Herman L. *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. ISBN 9780253223319 (also available as e-book on UofR Library site)

Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo. *Mexico Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996. ISBN 9780292708433

Cohen, Theodore W. *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. ISBN 9781108730310 (also available as e-book on UofR Library site)

Gonzalez, Anita. *Afro-Mexico: Dancing Between Myth and Reality*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. ISBN 9780292739567 (also available as e-book on UofR Library site)

Sue, Christina A. *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race, Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 9780199925506

Walcott, Rinaldo. *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. ISBN 9781478014058 (also available as e-book on UofR Library site)

Kelly Book Fund

If you are an undergraduate student facing financial hardship in acquiring the books listed above, you may apply to the Kelly Book Fund. These funds are for undergraduate students in need to purchase books for their history courses; preference will be given to those majoring in history. Students may apply for these funds using this link: <https://forms.gle/c2WArDa5g696oKeU6>

Calendar

Week 1 – Jan. 12

Statistics and Existence

2020 Census: Black, Afro-Mexican, Afrodescendientes

Week 2 – Jan. 19

21st c. Perceptions

Gonzalez, *Dancing Between Myth and Reality*

Week 3 – Jan. 26

Black Conquistadors

Peter Gerhard, “A Black Conquistador in Mexico”

Matthew Restall, “Invisible Warriors”

Elena FitzPatrick Sifford, “Mexican Manuscripts and the First Images of Africans in the Americas”

Week 4 – Feb. 2 – First Response Due by 2 pm

Deep Mexico

Bonfil Batalla, *Mexico Profundo*

Week 5 – Feb. 9

Yanga and the Maroons

Adela Amaral, “Social geographies, the practice of marronage and the archaeology of absence in colonial Mexico”

Patrick Carroll, “Black-Native Relations and the Historical Record in Colonial Mexico”

Jane Landers, “From cimarrón to citizen”

Week 6 – Feb. 16

Unfreedoms

Walcott, *The Long Emancipation*

Week 7 – Feb. 23 - Outline due by 2 pm

Black Familia, pt. 1

Bennett, *Colonial Blackness*

Week 8 – Mar. 2

Black Familia Pt. 2

Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race*

Week 9 – Mar. 9 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

SPECIAL EVENT I - “Black Mexico: Screening of *Negra* (2019)” | Tues March 15 @ 5-7pm | location TBA Feature (72 min.) and Q&A with director Medhin Tewold Serrano

SPECIAL EVENT II - “Migration, Identity, and Blackness in Mexico” | Weds March 16 @ 12-2pm | Humanities Center | Roundtable with Professors Christina Sue and Karma Frierson

Week 10 – Mar. 16

Afro-Mexican Identity in the 21st century

- Hettie Malcomson, “The Expediency of Blackness” in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement*, 35-60
- Walter Thompson-Hernández, “...Blaxicans and Basketball in Mexico” in *Afro-Latin@s in Movement*, 109-130
- Christina Sue, “Is Mexico beyond Mestizaje”

SPECIAL EVENT III - “Haitian Migrant Identities in the Americas” | Wed March 23 @ 12-2pm | Humanities Center Seminar led by Professors April J. Mayes and Jean Eddy Saint-Paul

Week 11 – Mar. 23 – Second Response due by 2 pm

Haitian Migrants in Mexico

“Life Between Borders” (16 min., Ebony Marie Bailey, dir.)

- o <https://vimeo.com/203384382>

Mayes reading TBD

Saint-Paul reading TBD

Week 12 – Mar. 30

Your Research I

Monograph of your choice for research

- Prepare to present and discuss the central argument, source base, strengths and weaknesses of the argument
- How will you use this particular source for the research paper?

Week 13 – Apr. 6

Blackness, Mexico, and the United States

Theodore Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*

Week 14 – Apr. 13

Your Research II

First version of research paper due in class at 2 pm

In-Class exercise: *Mexico, Slavery, Freedom: A bilingual documentary history*

Week 15 – Apr. 20 – RESEARCH WEEK

- Identify three additional scholarly articles for your research
 - How do these sources alter your argument, source base, and the strengths and weaknesses of the paper?

Week 16 – Apr. 27

Diasporic Foodways... and Tamales

Abarca, Meredith E. "An Afro-Mestizo Tamal: Remembering a Sacred and Sacred Encounter." In *Dialogues across Diasporas* (2013), pp. 157-174.

Abarca, Meredith E. "Culinary *Mestizaje*: An Afro-Latino Collective Sensory Memory." *Diálogo* Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 2015): 101-112.

Abarca, Meredith E. "Afro-Latina/os' Cultural Subjectivities: Rooting Ethnicities through Root Vegetables." In *Food across Borders* (2017), pp. 24-43.

Finals Week – Revised Research Paper due Wednesday, May 4 at 2 pm

Course Policies

In accordance with the College credit hour policy, which awards 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week, students are expected to devote at least one hour each week identifying the main lines or argument in course readings, working alone or in groups. In this particular course this might require attending lectures, film screenings or other academic events related to the seminar.

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

This is a DACA/Undocu-friendly course. The UofR and I are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to students with temporary and permanent disabilities, to students with DACA or undocumented status, to students facing mental health issues, other personal situations, and to students with other kinds of learning needs. Please feel free to let me know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate in class or if I can connect you to University resources. For more information see the Burgett Intercultural Center's page: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/bic/support-inclusion/international-students.html#Undocumented>

Academic Honesty

The AS&E Academic Honesty Policy, in parallel to the College Statement of Communal Principles, recognizes our shared obligation to promote honesty and the related principles of respect and responsibility among all members of our institution. It establishes high standards of academic conduct, and requires that each individual meet those standards. All members of the College community further understand that adherence to our shared expectations for integrity requires not only clear communication about those expectations, but the individual and collective courage to uphold them.

As a writing-intensive seminar, there are no midterm or final examinations in this course. However, in your writing assignments you must be especially diligent in crediting the works, thoughts and concepts of other scholars. Students can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating the source of any idea or wording that they did not produce, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, and in a list of references (e.g., bibliography or works cited page). Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words. Direct quotes must always be placed in quotation marks in addition to the other citation information that is required. If ever in doubt, please see AS&E's full Academic Honesty Policy: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy.html>