



History of Central America

HISL 679-01 – Fall 2002 – Tilton 307 – T3:30-6:00p

Prof. Justin Wolfe

Office Hours: W1:30 - 4:00 PM or by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean and feel like to be Nicaraguan or Guatemalan or Honduran? Is it the same for a businessman and a peasant, a man and a woman, a recent immigrant and an indigenous person? Are these identities historically stable or changing? This course will look at the anticolonial struggles and subsequent efforts to construct independent nations in Central America. In the first half of the course, we will focus on how states are formed from colonial territories and the struggles over constructing nations and national identities. At the same time, we will place these processes in the context of the region's social and economic history and the struggle by many sectors for political, social and economic inclusion. In 20th century, many of these new states faced revolutions in their streets and countrysides. In the second half of the course we will turn our attention toward the origins of these revolutionary movements and their relationship to the nation-building process. Although our focus will revolve around the concept of the nation-state in Central America, this course will examine the critical issues of Central American history over the last two centuries. Keeping up with the reading and being prepared to discuss it are essential to the success of this class. The materials and issues we will grapple with are difficult and often lead to us further questions rather than answers. Bring your curiosity and inquisitiveness to class. Look to each other, in conversation, to explore new ideas. Note: This syllabus may be subject to change.

GRADING POLICY AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade will be determined on the assignments listed below:

- Map quiz (5%)
- Participation (20%)
- Research proposal (10%)
- Annotated bibliography (10%)
- Peer reviews (10%)
- Research paper (45%)

I am available to discuss any aspect of this class throughout the semester. All assignments are due on the date noted. If you turn in an assignment late without having cleared it with me BEFORE THE DUE DATE, you will be marked down one grade-step for each day that it is late (e.g., from a "B" to a "B-", etc.).

BOOKS FOR THE COURSE

There is no textbook assigned for this class, however, I would highly recommend that you peruse one (or more) of the textbooks I will place on reserve. They will provide you with an overview of Central American history against which to compare the works we will be reading and discussing in this class. The classic work of Central American history available in English are Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided* and Hector Perez-Brignoli, *History of Central America*. A useful, data-filled and encyclopedic political and economic history of the region is James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*. All of the following books are available for purchase at the University Book Store. They will also all be available on 1-day reserve at the library.

Thomas Anderson, *Matanza*. New York: Curbstone Press, 1992.

Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Anthropology and Human Rights*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996.

Jeffrey Gould, *To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944-1954*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

Ronald Harpelle, *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race Class and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority*. Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Lynn Horton, *Peasants in Arms: War and Peace in the Mountains of Nicaragua, 1979-1994*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998.

Aldo Lauria-Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic: Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823-1914*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999.

Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part 1: Colonial Central America

9/3 Formation of Colonial Societies

Part 2: Community, Race and Nation in the 19th Century

9/10 Guatemala

Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala*, chs. 1-7. Map quiz in class.

9/17 El Salvador

Aldo Lauria-Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic*, all.

9/24 Nicaragua

Jeffrey Gould, “‘¡Vana Ilusión!’: The Highland Indians and the Myth of Nicaragua Mestiza, 1880-1925” (on JSTOR)

Julie Charlip, “At Their Own Risk: Coffee Farmers and Debt in Nicaragua, 1870-1930” (on Eres).

Research proposal due.

Part 3: Peasants, Workers and Populists in the 20th Century

10/1 Nicaragua

Jeffrey Gould, *To Lead as Equals*, chs. 1-10.

10/8 Costa Rica

Ronald Harpelle, *The West Indians of Central America*, all.

10/15 Research Presentations

Annotated bibliography due.

10/22 El Salvador

Thomas Anderson, *Matanza*, all.

Erik Ching and Virginia Tilley, “Indians, the Military and the Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador” (on JSTOR)

Jeffrey Gould, “Revolutionary Nationalism and Local Memories in El Salvador” (on Eres)

10/29 Guatemala

Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside*, all.

Cindy Forster, "Reforging National Revolution: Campesino Struggles in Guatemala, 1944-1954" (on Eres)

Greg Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala*, ch. 8 and conclusion.

Part 4: Terror, Repression, Resistance and Renewal

11/5 Guatemala

Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror*, all.

Draft of research paper due.

11/12 El Salvador

Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre*, all.

Peer reviews due.

Part 5: Revolution and Counter-Revolution

11/19 Nicaragua

Jeffrey Gould, *To Lead as Equals*, ch. 11-12 and conclusion.

David Whisnant, "New Women and (Not So) New Men: Cultural Recalcitrance and the Politics of Gender" (on Eres)

Carlos Vilas, "Family Affairs: Class, Lineage and Politics in Contemporary Nicaragua" (on JSTOR)

11/26 Nicaragua

Lynn Horton, *Peasants in Arms*, all.

12/3 Research paper due