

**MEXICO: CULTURE, POLITICS AND SOCIETY**

CL 2200-09 , Wednesday evening 6:00—10:15

Term 2, 2010, Spring Term -- Notre Dame de Namur University

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**Instructor: Qualifications and Experience:**

Master's degree from Stanford University in Latin American Studies. Teaches Mexican and Latin American immigrants English and cultural adjustment in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, and has traveled and worked extensively throughout Mexico and Central and South America. Taught at NDNU since 1993.

**Course Description and Learning Outcomes:**

The goal of this course is to increase the student's awareness and appreciation of the social, political and cultural characteristics of Mexico, a nation which has been largely misunderstood by most North Americans, despite being our Southern neighbor and holding a long standing historical and economic importance to us.

Our primary focus will be to:

- understand the importance of indigenous cultures to the cultural identity of Mexico.
- analyse the effect of the Spanish Conquest on Mexico and its influence over the development of national identity.
- appreciate the modern Mexican dilemmas of political turmoil, economic depression, and the resulting immigration to the U.S.
- learn and appreciate the Spanish language
- describe through papers , interviews and discussion the significant ideas we are learning about.

**Texts: All paperback**

**Across the Wire, Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border, Luis Alberto Urrea**  
**Broken Spears, The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico, Miguel Leon-Portilla**  
**First Stop in the New World, David Lida**

**Course Format and Activities**

Classes are organized to maximize student involvement in the learning process. Class discussion will be emphasized as well as contemporary videotapes shown to amplify the uniqueness of Mexico. There will also be out of class interviews assigned as well as a videotape to be watched at home.

**Attendance Policy:**

Prompt arrival is important, and missing more than one class in the semester will necessitate a drop.

**Grades**

The course will be based in the following distribution, which is approximate. Students will be assessed on growth, attitude and participation as well as on academic performance.

- 20% Attendance and class participation
- 35% Papers due on readings and interviews
- 45% Quizzes and Final Exam.

**Assignments and Readings**

Readings are to be completed the day of class. Papers are to be two-three page essays, typed, double spaced with one inch margins. The papers must communicate your thoughts clearly (not a book review) and any outside sources must be documented. I will go over the specifics on essays the first night of class.

The final will be in an essay format. It will be a take home exam and will be due on the last night of class. The class will have an “interview” project, (on immigration), as well as watching a Mexican culture film at home. There will be a short quiz at the beginning of class each week based on the week’s readings. We will also be studying and speaking Spanish.

3/17 -**Overview of Modern and Ancient Mexico**

Bring all books to class

Read before the first class: Broken Spears, Forward, Intro, Chap. 1 and 2

First Stop in the New World-- Intro. to page 17

3/24 **Indigenous cultures and the Encounter with Europeans**

Paper due

Read Broken Spears, Chapters 3—15, and Appendix

Read First Stop..El Centro p. 18--49

3/31 **Colonial Power and Influence in Mexico**

First Stop: p.51—65, p. 87—141

Across the Wire p. 1-29

4/07 **Immigration and Relationship to the United States**

**Paper due (on 4/14)** on a video watched at home: My Family/Mi Familia, Real Women Have Curves, El Norte, Como Agua Para Chocolate, La Misma Luna ( The Same Moon )

Read Across the Wire—Chapter 2-6 , First Stop p. 210--244

4/14 **Politics in Mexico: Change of Power**

First Stop: p.. 245—318, Across the Wire: Chapter 7—10 and epilogue

4/21 **Modern Implications of Immigration and Free Trade**

First Stop: p. 319--355

**Papers due** on interviews with two immigrants

Final Exam given out to take home

4/28 **Final Class Fiesta...Art, Music, Food of Mexico**

Take home final, review of class, dinner in class!