

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

CLC 2129B/ SP 2102B- Mexico City

(Please note: this course outline is subject to change)

Professor: Alena Robin

Schedule: Monday, 3:30-4:30 pm, Wednesday, 3:30-5:30 pm, Room TBA

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Office: Arts and Humanities Building, Room TBA

Phone: 519-661-2111, ext. 81599

Office Hour: Tuesday 2:00-4:00 pm



I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Examine Mexico City through its history of continuous transformations from the Aztec empire to the megalopolis it is today. Identify traces of the various pasts in the city's contemporary urban landscape and daily life through art, film and literature. Comparisons to other Latin American cities will be drawn. Taught in English.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Understand broader, underlying socio-historical changes that inform literary and visual representations of a unique Latin American city during the past eight hundred years;
- Develop knowledge of some of the major artistic representations of Mexico City, and other cities of Latin America, across a range of texts and images;
- Engage in visual interpretations of the social and urban space through art, films, literature and other media;
- Discuss the role of emblematic historical figures crucial to the future of Mexico City and other Latin American cities;
- Create a case study that analyzes the coexistence of the sacred and the secular by examining the works of artists, writers and directors;
- Assess the interplay between artistic endeavours and economical, political and religious powers.

III. EVALUATION

Participation (10%): Students are expected to attend every class unless medical circumstances prevent them from doing so (please see section below on department policies). The success of the course depends on the frequency and quality of the participation of its members. Assigned readings should be done prior to class in order to be adequately discussed in class. Students are expected to come prepared with ideas for discussion. Being present in class does not necessarily imply participating in it. Similarly, being absent from class on a repetitive basis will seriously affect the participation mark.

As part of the participation, students are invited to submit two questions on a weekly basis that could form part of the exam, according to the topics covered in class.

When absent, it is still the student's responsibility to complete and turn in coursework on time and catch up on the material covered in class. Students must inform their professor by email of any absence as soon as possible.

Surprise quizzes (10%): To regularly control the acquisition of new knowledge, various short surprise quizzes will be administered throughout the semester, at the beginning of class. One more reason to attend class on a regular basis and be punctual!

Reflection paper (20%): Tell me about your experience reading Nick Caistor, *Mexico City. A Cultural and Literary Companion*. Further information will be provided in class. **Due February 6.**

Photo essay (20%): Create your own version of Mexico City! This assignment provides you with the opportunity to explore Mexico City through the camera lens. It is designed as an exercise in cultural observation, which encourages you to explore your artistic imagination and ethnographic skills. Be creative! No need to be an artist! Further information will be provided in class. **Due March 6.**

Mexican Lexicon (10%): No need to have knowledge of Spanish or Náhuatl (one word for your lexicon!) to take this course. However, you will be exposed to some new worlds and typical Mexican expressions. Here is your chance to make a list of them! **Due March 27.**

Final exam (30%): The final examination will consist of four sections: identifications of iconographic themes, multiple choice, short answer and essay style questions, and will cover the material of the whole semester. **Date TBA.**

The book report and photo essay will be graded on research, originality of thesis and approach, argument, structure and style. All written assignments must be in Times New Roman, 12 point font (no other font will be accepted), double-spaced, and prepared according to MLA style.

IMPORTANT: The only acceptable reason for turning in a late assignment or missing an examination is for medical purposes (see section on departmental policies below). Late assignments will lose 5 points per day (on 100%). Assignments turned in a week after the due date (7 days) will not be accepted and will receive a grade of "0."

All university regulations concerning plagiarism apply. If you are unsure about plagiarism, please ask.

"Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of Registration."

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf

The **Department of Modern Languages and Literatures Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Modern Languages and Literatures courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures website at <http://www.uwo.ca/modlang/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Electronic Devices: You are encouraged to bring tablets and laptops to class, as we may use them for some in-class activities. However, I expect you to avoid using cellphones in class and only use your laptop, tablet, or other technologies for note taking and in-class activities.

The use of electronic devices will not be permitted during tests and examinations.

IV. CALENDAR OF MANDATORY READINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Mandatory reading (available from the bookstore): Nick Caistor, *Mexico City. A Cultural and Literary Companion*. New York, Interlink Books, 2000.

(Further Weekly Readings: TBA)

Monday, January 9	Introduction	
Wednesday, January 11	Mexico City: basic facts and notions	
Monday, January 16	Foundation of Mexico-Tenochtitlan	
Wednesday, January 18		
Monday, January 23	Tlatelolco: the encounter of three cultures	
Wednesday, January 25		
Monday, January 30	The Virgin of Guadalupe	
Wednesday, February 1		
Monday, February 6	Xochimilco through the ages	Reflection paper due (20%)
Wednesday, February 8		
Monday, February 13	Mexico City through the camera lens	
Wednesday, February 15		
February 20-24	Reading Week	No Class
Monday, February 27	Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and Frida Kahlo (1907-1954): their traces in the city	
Wednesday, March 1		
Monday, March 6	University City (1952)	Photo essay due (20%)
Wednesday, March 8		
Monday, March 13	Pedro Ramírez Vázquez (1919-2013): an architect in the city	
Wednesday, March 15		
Monday, March 20	Disasters and tragedies: earthquakes, flooding, pollution, traffic and protests in the city	

Wednesday, March 22		
Monday, March 27	Mexico City and the movies: screening	Mexican Lexicon due (10%)
Wednesday, March 29	Mexico City and the movies: screening and discussion	
Monday, April 3	Markets, food and drink in Mexico City	
Wednesday, April 5	Conclusion and review for final exam	
TBA	Final exam	