The Americas
A History from 1492-2012
3 Credits
Summer 1, 2013

Instructor: Dr. Mark Christensen
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Office: McGuinn 100
Telephone: 617-552-3900
Schedule (class times and day(s)): Tues/Thurs 6:15-9:15pm
Room: Stokes 131N

Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation’s finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

On the eve of discovery of the Americas, Mexico and South America boasted the most complex and productive economies and governments in all the Americas. Throughout the colonial period, these regions continued to produce the most money and attract the most colonists. However, things changed. Today, the United States and Canada possess a success and stability in government and economy largely absent in other
American countries. Why and when did this change occur? This course attempts to answer those questions through an examination that ranges from the Aztec and Maya to George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Course Objectives

This course has three main objectives:

- **Achieve a factual knowledge of the events that transpired in the Americas from 1492-2012, and understand how they impact the world today**
  - The rich history of the Americas is filled with myths and misunderstandings. The various readings, lectures, and discussions of the course will provide a firm factual base for your understanding of the Americas
- **Develop argumentative and writing skills**
  - The ability to develop and support an opinion (or argument) is an important skill. The written examinations, weekly assessments, and argumentative paper will allow you to achieve this goal
- **Develop critical thinking and analytical skills**
  - Knowing how to think critically and analyze the past and present world events is an essential skill. Through the examination of primary source materials and literary works you will learn to examine and consider various points of view

In addition to these specific objectives this course allows students to:

- **Demonstrate a cross-cultural understanding of the impact of culture, gender, and age in the Americas as demonstrated by various written assignments**
- **Demonstrate an ethical knowledge pertaining to the Americas as demonstrated by our in-class discussions**

Overall, throughout this course you will have the opportunity to gain a global perspective of how different cultures interact with one another. All of these combine to serve you on both a personal and professional level. In the end, regardless of your interest in history, the ability to critically examine information, construct and present a persuasive argument, and understand the world around will help you excel in any vocation.

Grading
Your grade will break down as follows:

**Class Participation.** Learning how to express yourself and your ideas orally is an important skill. Moreover, everyone benefits from the mutual exchange of ideas. Thus, your participation is important and is **15%** of your grade.

**Weekly Assessments.** At the beginning of each Thursday’s discussion, you will answer a series of short questions regarding the week’s assigned reading. Your lowest score will be dropped. These responses constitute **25%** of your overall grade.

**Midterm Argumentative Paper 25%** (1300 words)

**Final Argumentative Paper 35%**

**WCAS Grading System**

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course.

The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

**Grade Reports.** All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known, the Student Learning and Support Center in the O’Neill Library Computer Center will issue a new one. The SLSC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

**Text(s)/Readings (Required)**

Three **required** books have been selected. The first, *The Americas* by Felipe Fernández-Armesto, is your textbook. Providing a comprehensible history of the Americas is a daunting task, and one that this book does quite well. As such, the book provides the general background and outline for our discussion.

The next book, *Resilient Cultures*, by John Kicza provides an excellent overview of the European conquest and colonization of the Americas. Using a wide variety of primary sources (first-hand accounts), the book confronts many of the myths surrounding native-European interactions and establishes an understanding of why Europeans settled where they did.

Finally, you will read *The Tattooed Soldier*, by Hector Tobar. This book tells the story of a Guatemalan Maya who, after his brutal capture and detainment by a tattooed soldier in Guatemala, later immigrates to Los Angeles where he encounters the soldier yet again, but
this time as a fellow immigrant trying to forge a new life in a land of opportunity. This book serves to illustrate the political and economic relationships between the United States and Latin America during the 1960s-1970s and today, and the role of the global politics—particularly communism—in informing U.S. action around the world.

Text(s)/Readings (Recommended for further study, but not required)

- Ceremonies of Possession: Europe’s Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640, by Patricia Seed (Cambridge, 1995), uses a comparative framework to examine and contrast the exploration and colonization initiatives of five European countries
- Latin American and the United States: A Documentary History, by Robert H. Holden and Eric Zolov (Oxford, 2010), provides a wide range of primary documents that take the reader on a tour of US/Latin American relations
- Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest, by Matthew Restall (Oxford, 2003)
- Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico, edited by Stuart Schwartz (Bedford, 2000), which tells the story of the fall of the Aztec empire using sixteenth-century Spanish and Aztec accounts

Important Policies
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html

Written Work
Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using the Chicago Manual of Style. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may
also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate’s notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days
that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

**Deadlines**

Paper assignments should be emailed to me by the specified deadlines. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

Late assignments will be penalized half of a letter grade per day, including weekends. If you are going to be away from campus for an interview, sporting event, or other activity, you are still responsible for submitting assignments on time; it is your responsibility to plan ahead. Late assignments will be accepted without penalty only in the event of unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances due to family emergency, serious injury, or illness. On such occasions, you must provide a note from a doctor or the dean.

**Course Outline and Assignments**

Classes will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:30-9:30pm. Students are expected to come having done the reading and ready to participate. It is expected that 8 hours per week of your study time will be spent on out of class assignments and exercises. These are listed below. Please note that some weeks will require more time and some weeks less time but the average is approximately 8 hours per week over the term.

**Course Outline**

**WEEK ONE: The Precontact Americas**
- 5/14  Introductions and the Natives of the Americas  
  Armesto, Chs. 1-2
- 5/16  Natives of the Americas (cont)  
  Kicza, Chs. 1-2

**WEEK TWO: Voyages of Discovery & the Columbian Exchange**
- 5/21  Conquest of the “New World”  
  Kicza, Chs. 3-4
- 5/23  French and English Colonization  
  Kicza, Chs. 5-7

**WEEK THREE: Going Colonial**
- 5/28  The Columbian Exchange  
  Kicza, Ch. 8
- 5/30  Responding to the “other”  
  Armesto, Ch. 3

* The schedule and assignments are subject to change
Midterm paper due June 2\textsuperscript{nd} by midnight

WEEK FOUR: Revolutions and Independence
6/4 North American Revolution Armesto, Ch. 4
6/6 Latin American Revolutions Tobar

WEEK FIVE: Industrialization and the rise of Liberalism
6/11 The Rise and Progress of Liberalism Armesto, Ch. 5; Tobar
6/13 Remember the Alamo Armesto, Ch. 6; Tobar

WEEK SIX: Bananas, Walmart, and Drugs
6/18 Depressions, World Wars, and Economics Armesto, Ch. 7; Tobar
6/20 “Trade, not Aid” Tobar

Final paper due June 23\textsuperscript{rd} by midnight