HISTORY 1600

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AZTECS

# Prof. Cope Fall 2014

S. Haley

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This course will chart the development of the Culhua Mexica (better known as the Aztecs) from wandering outcasts to the dominant people of central Mexico; examine their political, cultural, and religious practices (including human sacrifice); explore the structure and limitations of their empire; and analyze their defeat by Spanish conquistadors and their response to European colonization. We will draw upon – and critique -- a rich array of sources, treating the Aztecs as a case study in the rewards and the challenges of ethnohistory.

**Readings**

Alan Knight, *Mexico from the Beginning to the Spanish Conquest*

Thelma D. Sullivan, trans., *A Scattering of Jades: Stories, Poems, and Prayers*

*of the Aztecs*

Fray Diego Durán, *History of the Indies of New Spain*

Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle and Sacrifice in*

*Aztec Culture*

James Lockhart, ed., *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of*

*Mexico*

Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of*

*Mexico*

Louise M. Burkhart, ed., *Aztecs on Stage: Religious Theater in Colonial Mexico*

The course will also have two reading packets, which be purchased at Allegra Print and Imaging. The first is available now, and the second will be ready in a few weeks. The packets will not be on reserve. Finally, we will make frequent use of the *Mesolore* website ([www.mesolore.org](http://www.mesolore.org)). You can find a link to this site on the course’s Canvas page.

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**Assignments**

There are three requirements for this course. 1) You will sign up for and attend weekly discussion sections. 2) You will submit four short (5-page) papers designed to engage your analytical and writing skills and to help you explore the major themes of the

course. These will be based on questions from the instructor which will be posted on our Canvas site at least one week in advance. Each paper will have a different focus, based on the four sections of the course listed below. The due dates are: September 29, October 27, November 17, and December 8. 3) You will complete a take-home final examination composed of essay questions handed out the last day of class.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Papers (4x15%) 60%

Final 30%

Section 10%

**Course schedule**

Part I: Background

1 Sept. The Aztecs in Memory and Imagination

Julio Cortázar, “The Night Face Up” (Packet I, #1)

Davíd Carrasco, Leonardo López Luján, and Eduardo Matos

Moctezuma, *Breaking Through Mexico’s Past*, pp. 13-14, 83-90,

95-106 (Packet I, #2)

Davíd Carrasco, “Imagining a Place for Aztlán” (Packet I, #3)

Online Movie: *Engineering an Empire: The Aztecs* (Canvas)

8 Sept. Mesoamerican History: Problems and Sources

Alan Knight, *Mexico: From the Beginning to the Spanish*

*Conquest*, pp. 1-117

Jeremy A Sabloff, *The Cities of Ancient Mexico: Reconstructing*

*A Lost World*, pp. 133-170 (Packet I, #4)

*Mesolore*: Tutorials/Ñudzavui Tutorials/Mesoamerican/Screenfolds

*Mesolore*: Scholars/Lectures/An Introduction to Mesoamerica

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15 Sept. Migrations: Myth or History?

Knight, *Mexico*, pp. 118-131

Thelma D. Sullivan, trans., *A Scattering of Jades*, pp. 67-100

Diego Durán, *History of the Indies of New Spain*, pp. xix-xxx, 3-57

Elizabeth Hill Boone, “Glorious Imperium” (Packet I, #5)

*Mesolore*: Scholars/Debates/History vs. Propaganda (entries by

Boone, Marcus, Sanders, Schele)

Part II: The Aztec Empire

22 Sept. Rise to Power

Durán, pp. 58-111, 123-159, 169-174

Geoffrey W. Conrad and Arthur A. Demarest, *Religion and Empire*,

pp. 11-60 (Packet I, #6)

29 Sept. FIRST PAPER DUE

29 Sept. Zenith of Empire: Triumphs and Troubles

Durán, pp. 202-262, 278-282, 309-318

Arthur J.O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble, trans., *Florentine*

*Codex*, Book 8, pp. 41-44, 51-59 (Packet I, #7)

*Mesolore*: Tutorials/Nahua Tutorials/Introduction to the Matrícula

de Tributos

Mesolore: Nahua/Matrícula de Tributos (explore)

Ross Hassig, *Trade, Tribute, and Transportation*, pp. 85-126 (Packet

I, #8)

6 Oct. Life and Death in an Imperial Capital

William T. Sanders, “Tenochtitlan in 1519: A Pre-Industrial

Megalopolis” (Packet I, #9)

*Mesolore*: Tutorials/Nahua Tutorials/Counting Tomorrow, the Day after

Tomorrow; Clothing: Skirt, Huipil; Actions: Water, Fire

Sullivan, *A Scattering of Jades*, pp. 109-147, 183-201

Inga Clendinnen, *Aztecs*, pp. 87-110 (Packet I, #10)

13 Oct. Gender and Family

Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of Blood*, entire

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20 Oct. “In Flower, in Song”: Nahua Poetics and Philosophy

*Mesolore*: Tutorials/Nahua Tutorials/Poetics: Flower and Song

Sullivan, *A Scattering of Jades*, pp. 151-159

Miguel León-Portilla, *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World*, pp. 70-98

(Packet I, #11)

Jongsoo Lee, *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl*, pp. 150-189 (electronic

book)

Kay Almere Read, “The Chalcan Woman’s Song: Sex as a Political

Metaphor in Fifteenth-Century Mexico,” *The Americas*, vol. 62,

No. 3 (January 2006), pp. 313-348 (OCRA reserve)

27 Oct. SECOND PAPER DUE

Part III: Conquest

27 Oct. Indigenous Accounts

James Lockhart, ed., *We People Here*, pp. 4-21, 48-255

*Mesolore*: Tutorials/Nahua Tutorials/Introduction to the Lienzo de

Tlaxcala

3 Nov. A Conquest Biography

Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices*, pp. 1-187

# 10 Nov. The Conquest as Catastrophe?

Miguel León-Portilla, *The Broken Spears*, pp. 145-149 (Packet II, #1)

Lockhart, *We People Here*, pp. 283-297

Laura E. Matthew and Michel R. Oudijk, eds. *Indian Conquistadors: Indigenous Allies in the Conquest of Mesoamerica*, pp. 28-63, 254-287

(Packet II, #2)

Stephanie Wood, *Transcending Conquest: Nahua Views of Spanish*

*Colonial Mexico*, pp. 23-59 (Packet II, #3)

Elinor G. K. Melville, “Disease, Ecology and the Environment” (Packet II, #4)

17 Nov. THIRD PAPER DUE

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Part IV: Resistance and Survival

# 17 Nov. Evangelization and its Discontents

Louise M. Burkhart, ed., *Aztecs on Stage*, pp. 1-57,

145-217

Patricia Lopes Don, “The 1539 Inquisition and the Trial

of Don Carlos of Texcoco in Early Mexico,” *Hispanic*

*American Historical Review*, vol. 88, no. 4 (November

2008), pp. 573-606 (OCRA reserve)

24 Nov./ Negotiating the Colonial World

1 Dec. James Lockhart, *Nahuas and Spaniards*, pp. 2-22 (Packet

II, #5)

Enrique Florescano, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico*,

pp. 110-136 (Packet II, #6)

Barbara E. Mundy, *The Mapping of New Spain*, pp.

61-101 (Packet II, #7)

Susan Kellogg, “From Parallel and Equivalent to Separate

but Unequal” (Packet II, #8)

William F. Connell, *After Moctezuma*, pp. 3-21, 55-89

(Packet II, #9)

8 Dec. FOURTH PAPER DUE

16 Dec. TAKE HOME FINAL EXAMINATION DUE (4:00 PM)

**Academic Code**

Students are expected to abide by Brown’s academic code, which can be found here: <http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/academic_code.php>

**Contact Information**

My office hours for this semester are Wednesday, 2:00-3:30 PM and Thursday, 10:00-11:30. My office is in the Peter Green House (79 Brown Street), #004. Appointments at other hours can be arranged by phone: 863-3161 (office), 863-2131 (messages), or 545-0789 (cell). I can also be reached by email: [Robert\_Cope@brown](mailto:Robert_Cope@brown).edu.