

Religious Expressions in Mexico
CHIC 4350
Online course

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Course description:

Religious Expressions in Mexico focuses on the study of the Mesoamerican religions and their cultural syncretism. By the end of the course students are going to have a deep understanding of how religion shapes society by creating new borderlands and the strong relationship between religion, politics and migration. For that purpose we are going to analyze the religions of the pre-Columbian cultures that existed in what is now the Mexican territory (the Olmecs, the Mayas, the Toltecs, the Aztecs) and the religious syncretism that resulted after Columbus's arrival in 1492 creating the "Mexican" Christianity that defines modern México with symbols such as the Virgin of Guadalupe and rituals like the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos). As part of the course we will study how the Chicano Movement adopted symbols from the Mesoamerican cultures to define their identity; for example, the claim that *Aztlán*, the place where the Aztecs originated, was somewhere in what is now the south of the United States. We are also going to analyze other religious symbols relevant to the Chicano Movement such as the *Guadalupana estandarte* used in the farm worker marches. Please keep in mind that we are going to analyze each religion from a historical, anthropological and philosophical viewpoint, not from a theological perspective.

Required Textbook: *Religions of Mesoamerica* by David Carrasco (Second edition)

Grading percentages:

Weekly response papers: 10 % (**Minimum one double space page in word**)

Weekly discussion board: 10 % (**Besides giving your opinion, minimum respond to two of your classmates**)

Tests 1: 20%

Test 2: 20%

Test 3: 20%

Final research project: 20 %

Ten-page research paper in MLA format with a minimum of eight bibliographical entries. For the project you will need to relate the Mesoamerican cultures with the Chicano Movement in terms of religion, identity, migration or another topic previously approved by the professor by the end of week four.

Class structure:

The class will be divided in eight weeks. On Blackboard you can find a special section for each week. Each section has a Power Point presentation that will help you understand the material you are required to read for the week. **Please don't rely just on the information from the Power Points since it is just a tool to help you understand the text material.** Besides the Power Point presentation, you will find a folder to turn in your weekly response papers and a discussion board to turn in your discussion assignments. If we have a test during that week, you will find a folder to turn in your tests. Each week will have a section with all these tools and features. Please refer to the calendar below to know what pages from the textbook you have to read for the week and when to turn in the assignments. The topics for the assignments are posted in each week's section. **I am not going to accept late papers sent to my email after the assignments folders close.**

Calendar:

Week One (June 6 to June 12)

Book pages 11 to 46

“Mesoamerica and Religions: Shock of the New and Different.”

“Fantasies and Inventions of Mesoamerica.”

“How Can We Know?” “The Ensemble Approach to Evidence.”

“Religion as Worldmaking, Worldcentering, and Worldrenewing.”

“Mesoamerican Religions: Origins, Ancestors, and Histories.”

“Plants and the Sacred Dead.”

Weekly response paper and discussion board assignment due Sunday June 12 before 11:59 p.m.

Week Two (June 13 to June 19)

Book pages 47 to 74

“The Olmec World: A Mother Culture?”

“Astronomy and the Sacred Ball Game.”

“The Classic Maya: Kings and Cosmic Trees.”

“Teotihuacan: The Imperial Capital.”

“Tollan: City of the Plumed Serpent.”

“Aztec War, Cosmic Conflict.”

“The Mesoamerican Cosmivision.”

Weekly response paper and discussion board assignment due Sunday June 19 before 11:59 p.m.

Week Three (June 20 to June 26)

Book pages 75 to 112

“The Religion of the Aztecs: Ways of the Warrior, Words of the Sage.”

“Quetzalcoatl's Return?”

“The Sacred Career of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl.”

“Cosmivision and the Human Body.”

“Serpent Mountain: The Great Aztec Temple.”
“Speech as a Ceremony between Humans.”
“Rites of Renewal and Human Sacrifice.”

Discussion board assignment AND TEST 1 due Sunday June 26 before 11:59 p.m.

Week Four (June 27 to July 3)

Book pages 113 to 146

“Maya Religion: Cosmic Trees, Sacred Kings, and the Underworld.”

“The Lost Civilization of the Maya.”

“The Cosmic Three.”

“Sacred Kingship.”

“The Calendar and the Regeneration of Time.”

“Archaeoastronomy and the Maya.”

“The Ordeals of Xibalba.”

“The Maya Collapse.”

Weekly response paper and discussion board assignment due Sunday July 3 before 11:59 p.m.

You will need to have your final paper topic already approved by the professor by the end of this week.

Week Five (July 4 to July 10)

Book pages 147 to 158

“Mesoamerica as a New Borderlands: Colonialism and Religious Creativity.”

“La Malinche and Hybrid Mesoamerica.”

“Destruction of People and the Invention of New Religious Patterns.”

“When Christ was Crucified.”

*Watch the documentary: Doña Marina “La Malinche”: The Most Important Woman in Mexican History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2125ohqiKw>

Discussion board assignment AND TEST 2 due Sunday July 10 before 11:59 p.m.

Week Six (July 11 to July 17)

Book pages 159 to 180

“Day of the Dead (“Día de los Muertos”)

“The Virgin of Guadalupe.”

“The Peyote Hunt of the Huichol Indians.”

“The Fiesta of Santiago among the Tzutujil Maya.”

*Watch the documentary: Huichol Indians the Healing people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUK-f4cJX4U>

Weekly response paper and discussion board assignment due Sunday July 17 before 11:59 p.m.

Week Seven (July 28 to July 24)

*Watch the documentary: Chicano! Quest for a Homeland

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYfiCnHW_NU

*Read the article: “Sources of Chicano Art: Our Lady of Guadalupe” by Jacinto Quirarte

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1443&context=ees>

*Read the article: “Cultural Identities on the Mexico-United States Border”

<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/bord/cultid.html>

Discussion board assignment AND TEST 3 due Sunday July 24 before 11:59 p.m.

Week eight (July 25 – 31)

*Read the article: “Chicano Religions through Chicano Literature: Reinscribing Chicano Religions as a Hermeneutics of Movement” by Alberto López Pulido. You will need to sign-in into Jstor database through UTEP’s library in order to read it. If you have any questions about how to access the database please contact UTEP library at (915) 747-5672

***Blackboard collaborate meeting.** Each student will have to talk about their project. Please share your findings and what have you learned in the process of writing it. **We will meet Thursday July 28 at 4:00 p.m.** I will send you the link to join the session by email.

Discussion board assignment and final paper due Sunday July 31 before 11:59 p.m.