

Afro-Mexico: A History of Race and Gender Relations From the Colonial Period

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Course description and objectives.

Identified as the “third root” in Mexico’s mestizo population, Africans and others of African descent have played significant roles from the colonial period to the present. The notion of La Raza, however, left little to imagining and envisioning the history of so many women and men of African descent in Mexico. This course is an effort to explore Mexico’s history through the perspective of the African Mexican communities. Our review of a sample of the most significant scholarship in the field will assist us to identify and comprehend the multiple roles Africans and their descendents played in the nation’s political, economic, and socio-cultural development as well as in the transnational communities of which Afro-Mexicans are members. Race, gender, and class will guide us in reading, discussing, and constructing questions on an often neglected aspect of history accounting for the presence of persons of African descent living in metaphorical and geopolitical border regions.

Objectives

- To assess the importance of the African Diaspora in the construction of hybrid transnational communities in the American Continent.
- To analyze critically gender and race relations in the context of the cultural, and political development of Mexico.
- To identify the relation of history with other disciplines; and
- To learn in a cooperative environment the *relationship* and *significance* of historical persons, events, ideas, and processes affecting our present.

At the end of this course I would like my students to be able to:

- Think critically about interlocking relations of power, including gender, race, and economic class.
- Evaluate past events and social processes as factors that shape our present.
- Reflect on their own academic responsibility and potential to affect positively their communities.
- Develop strategies to improve independent study skills.

Required Textbooks:

1. Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009.
2. Bristol, Joan Cameron. *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007.
3. Horne, Gerald. *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
4. Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004.

All books are available through our bookstore or Amazon.

Additional required readings:

- Sudarkasa, Niara. “The ‘Status of Women’ in Indigenous African Societies” in *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1987.
- Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn. “African Feminism: A Theoretical Approach to the History of Women in the African Diaspora.” In *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1987.
- Kellogg, Susan. "Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts." *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 69-92.
- Johnson, Charles. “A Phenomenology of the Black Body.” In *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*, ed.

- Laurence Goldstein. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bennett, Herman. "The Grand Remedy. Africans and Christian Conjuality," and "Between Property and Person: Jurisdictional Conflicts Over Marriage." In *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Dedra S. McDonald. "Intimacy and Empire Indian-African Interaction in Spanish Colonial New Mexico, 1500-1800," *American Indian Quarterly* 22, no. 1/2 (1998): 141
- Dore, Elizabeth. "Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century." In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Chaves, Maria Eugenia. "Slave Women's Strategies for Freedom and the Late Spanish Colonial State." In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- González, Anita. "Roots of Jarocho's Dance" in *Jarocho's Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro-Mexican Dance*. Dallas: University Press of America, 2004.
- LeFalle Collins, Lizetta and Shifra M. Goldman. "The Mexican Connection: The New Negro Border Crossings" in *In the Spirit of Resistance: African American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School*. Amer Federation of Arts, 1996.
- Cuevas Hernández, Marco Polo. "Angelitos negros, a Film from the "Golden Age" of Mexican Cinema: Coding Visibly Black Mestizos by and through a Far-reading Medium" in *African Mexicans and the Discourse on the Modern Nation* (Lanham, MD, 2004). Dallas: University Press of America, 2004.
- Cruz-Janzen, Marta I. "Latinegras: Desired Women-Undesirable Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, and Wives." *Frontiers - A Journal of Women's Studies* 22, no. 3 (2001): 168.
- McKee Irwin, Robert. "Memin Pinguin: Lios Gordos con los Gringos" in *Redrawing the nation: national identity in Latin/o American comics* by Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, Juan Poblete. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.
- Hoppenjans, Lisa and Ted Richardson. "Mexican Ways, African Roots." In *The Afrolatin@ Reader*, ed. Miriam Jimenez Roman and Juan Flores. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is crucial in a discussion-centered course such as this. Each student is allowed 1 absence without penalty; each subsequent absence will lower the final grade by 5%. More than FOUR absences will automatically result in a failing grade. Two times late will be equivalent to one absence. If you leave the classroom for a period longer than 10 minutes, your attendance points will also decrease. Unauthorized use of cell phones or computers will result in deductions from your attendance and participation points. You must consult your Blackboard records to make sure I have accurate attendance records. You have only 36 hours to inform me of any mistake in your attendance record. Quizzes and team work cannot be made up when you are absent.

Office appointments: Please, e-mail me or call me to cancel your appointment if you are not able to meet with me. If you miss an appointment participation points will be deducted from your final grade.

Class discussions. They are designed to encourage the class to express opinions, observations, share experiences, and ask questions. We should use this time to clarify understanding of concepts encountered in course materials.

Disabled student resources. A variety of services are available to students who need special accommodation for students to succeed and enjoy this class. Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for this course.

Group activities will be arranged periodically to allow students to become acquainted with other class members and their ideas. They also provide opportunities for students to see the application of the principles introduced in course materials. The frequency and quality of the group activities largely depends on the cooperation of group members.

Grades will be determined by students' performance in the following areas:

Grading Policy:

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| • One paper | 20% |
| • One banner | 15% |
| • Presentations | 10% |
| • Journal | 30% |
| • Rapid evaluations | 05% |
| • Participation in class | 10% |

Final grades will be based on the total number of points earned in the course.

Grade Scale
A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 89%
C = 70 -79%
F = 69 and under

It is highly recommended to visit Blackboard periodically. You can find your grades, post messages, form discussion groups and be reminded of tests, assignments, events, etc.

Late work policy:

- **All assignments are due on or before the assigned dates.**
- **There will be no make ups for class participation or quizzes in class.**
- **Papers placed underneath the instructor’s office door or in her box won’t be accepted if they are late.**

It is important that you understand the reasons why you receive the grade you do. I encourage students to discuss the graded papers, quizzes or exams with me, but such conversation can only take place 24-hours after students receive their graded paper or quizzes.

Students’ responsibilities

- Students will complete all procedures required to drop the course if they desire to obtain a “W.”
- Students will be active in their own learning process, obtain knowledge on their own, and share their knowledge with their peers and teacher.
- Students are expected to read assigned material prior to class. They should be prepared to answer questions related to material in the text and may be called on to do so. Students should also be prepared to ask questions about issues of interest or for clarifications of concepts during class.
- Students are expected to show respect for the instructor, guests and one another regardless of opinion, cultural values and other group differences.
- Communications with your peers and your professor must follow the protocol you will read at <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor> Participation points will be deducted when your messages do not follow the conventions listed in the site referenced.
- When requested to meet with your professor in her office, you must schedule a meeting or meet her during office hours during the next 36 hours. Failing to meet with her in this case will result in a deduction of your participation points.
- Students should give one another equal opportunity to express opinions, experiences and ideas.
- All students should be supportive of a cooperative learning environment in the classrooms.
- Students are encouraged to attend all sessions, arrive on time, and remain in attendance until each session is formally ended. When a test is scheduled, students will not be allowed to leave the classroom before finishing the test, with the exception of documented medical problems. A significant proportion of the learning process originates from interaction with others and in the give-and-take discussions relevant to readings. Because our class represents a system of learning, your presence or absence affects and enables the learning process of every other class member.
- Students will not use cell phones or other electronic devices during our class sessions, or exams at all. Students must turn all electronic devices. In cases of emergency, students must notify the instructor of the need to answer a call and will be allowed to exit the classroom for a brief period of time to take the call. Students will not be allowed to use computer during class unless they have a documented need to use a laptop. In that case, the computer will be used exclusively to take notes and the student must use designated places for computer users.
- **Your classmates and your syllabus will be a good source to inquire on what you missed in class when absent.**
- **5% of your grade will be discounted from your final grade for each absence, after the first absence. For example, if your final grade is 100, but you missed four sessions your final grade will be 85. FOUR classes is the maximum amount of sessions you may miss. If you miss class five times you will fail this course.**

Participation (10%)

Your professor as well as the other members of your team will grade your participation. Evaluation will be based on punctuality, attendance, preparedness, number and quality of interventions, willingness to take notes for yourself and for your team, and collaboration with your team and the rest of the class to attain our learning goals. When you are absent you are missing information and making it more difficult for you to do well in the class and your participation points

decrease. I believe that all of us need to contribute to the educational growth of the whole group. These are some of the basic points regarding participation followed by a basic description of participation points.

Follow these rules for an enjoyable class:

1. **Listen actively** -- respect others when they are talking.
2. Practice **timely attendance**.
3. Do not be afraid to **challenge respectfully one another** by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
4. **Participate to the fullest of your ability** -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. **The goal is not to agree** -- it is about hearing and exploring divergent perspectives.

One paper (20%):

You will present one paper . Compliance with all the requirements for these specific assignments does not guarantee an A in this course for the entire course. This paper is mandatory to pass this course, regardless of the extra credit points you may accumulate. Instructions will be provided three weeks before the due date. Papers must be submitted by the deadline through blackboard.

One banner 15%)

As a historian, you will develop public history skills in this course. You will work with another student for this project. Your team will design a banner and print it to form part of the collection of the Museo Urbano. The banner will present a topic of your interest related to the our course content and the history of El Paso. Instructions will be provided through Blackboard.

Presentations (10%):

Your team will make two presentations during the term, using multimedia technology to address the main topics of this course.

Journal (30%):

This section of the course includes two entries per week through your Blackboard journals section. You will submit a summary of each article or chapter scheduled to read. This exercise will prepare you for our discussions in class. In addition, you will submit a comment on the same reading. Occasionally, I will submit a list of questions to answer in lieu of your summary. When the journal section is not available, please, print your journal entry and bring it to class.

Rapid evaluations (5%):

Periodically, you will answer a set of questions in class related to the material previously presented to you during lecture or included in your mandatory readings.

Schedule:

This schedule is for your mandatory readings mainly. You must read the material before their discussion in class. I will provide other texts through blackboard or will give you hand-outs. Several guests' presentations, movies and group discussions, among other events will take place during the term and the topics will be integrated into your exams.

Week 1 Before the Diaspora: Free African Women and Feminist Theory. Submit Journal entries by January 25.

Sudarkasa, Niara. "The 'Status of Women' in Indigenous African Societies" in *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1987.

Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn. "African Feminism: A Theoretical Approach to the History of Women in the African Diaspora." In *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn Penn and Andrea Benton Rushing. Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1987.

Week 2 Reconstruction. The Gendering of the Black Body.

Reading: Kellogg, Susan. "Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts." *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 69-92. Submit by Tuesday, January 28.

Johnson, Charles. "A Phenomenology of the Black Body." In *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*, ed. Laurence Goldstein. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. Submit by Thursday, January 30.

Week 3 Entering the Colonial World.

Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009. Entering the Colonial World: Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2. Submit by Tuesday, February 4.

Bennett, Herman. "The Grand Remedy. Africans and Christian Conjugalities," and "Between Property and Person: Jurisdictional Conflicts Over Marriage." In *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*. Indiana University Press, 2010. Submit by Thursday, February 6.

Week 4 Resistance to the Colonial Order.

Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004. Chapter 1. Submit by Tuesday, February 11.

Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009. Entering the Colonial World: Chapters 3 and 4. Submit by Thursday, February 13.

Week 5 Gender and the State.

Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004. Chapter 2. Submit by Tuesday, February 18.

Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009. Entering the Colonial World: Chapters 5 and 6. Submit by Thursday, February 20.

Week 6 Strategies for Freedom.

Bristol, Joan Cameron. *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. (2007). Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2. Submit by Tuesday, February 25.

Chaves, Maria Eugenia. "Slave Women's Strategies for Freedom and the Late Spanish Colonial State." In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. Submit by Thursday, February 27.

Week 7 Cultural Identity.

Bristol, Joan Cameron. *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century*. Chapters 3 and 4. Submit by Tuesday, March 4.

Gonzalez, Anita. "Roots of Jarocho's Dance" in *Jarocho's Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro-Mexican Dance*. Dallas: University Press of America, 2004. Submit by Thursday, March 6.

Spring Break.

Week 8 Desired Women.

Bristol, Joan Cameron. *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century*. Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Submit by Tuesday, March 18.

Cruz-Janzen, Marta I. "Latinegras: Desired Women-Undesirable Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, and Wives." *Frontiers - A Journal of Women's Studies* 22, no. 3 (2001): 168. Submit by Thursday, March 20.

Week 9 African Americans and the Mexican Revolution.

Horne, Gerald. *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2. Submit by Tuesday, March 25.

Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004. Chapter 3. Submit by Thursday, March 27.

Week 10 African American Soldiers Cross the Border.

Horne, Gerald. *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Submit by Tuesday, April 1st.

Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004. Chapter 4. Submit by Thursday, April 3rd.

Week 11 The New Negro Border Crossings.

- Horne, Gerald. *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Submit by Tuesday, April 8.
- LeFalle Collins, Lizetta and Shifra M. Goldman. "The Mexican Connection: The New Negro Border Crossings" in *In the Spirit of Resistance: African American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School*. Amer Federation of Arts, 1996. Submit by Thursday, April 10.

Week 12 Engaging Modernity I.

- Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009. Section 2. Chapters 7, 8. Submit by Tuesday, April 15.
- Vinson, Chapter 9. Submit by Thursday, April 17.

Week 13 Engaging Modernity II.

- Vinson, Ben. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009. Chapters 10. Submit by Tuesday, April 22.
- Vinson, Ben, Chapter 11. Submit by Thursday, April 23.

Week 14 Afro-Mexico in the Popular Culture.

- Cuevas Hernández, Marco Polo. "Angelitos Negros, a Film from the "Golden Age" of Mexican Cinema: Coding Visibly Black Mestizos by and through a Far-reading Medium" in *African Mexicans and the Discourse on the Modern Nation* (Lanham, MD, 2004). Dallas: University Press of America, 2004. Submit by Tuesday, April 29.
- McKee Irwin, Robert. "Memín Pinguin: Lios Gordos con los Gringos." In *Redrawing the nation: national identity in Latin/o American comics* by Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, Juan Poblete. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009. Submit by Thursday, May 1.

Week 15 A Global Nation in the New Millennium.

- Hoppenjans, Lisa and Ted Richardson. "Mexican Ways, African Roots." In *The Afrolatin@ Reader*, ed. Miriam Jimenez Roman and Juan Flores. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Submit by Tuesday, May 6.
- Hernández Cuevas, Marco Polo. *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*, University Press of America, 2004. Chapter 6 and Conclusion. Submit by Thursday, May 8.

Recommended Readings:

- Andersen, Margaret L. and Patricia Hill Collins. "Systems of Power and Inequality." In *Race, Class, and Gender*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2006.
- Bass, Amy. *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Bennett, Herman L. *Colonial Blackness. A History of Afro-Mexico*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.
- Boyer, Richard and Geoffrey Spurling, eds. *Colonial Lives: Documents on Latin American History, 1550-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Bueno, Eva Paulino. "Carolina Maria De Jesus in the Context of Testimonios: Race, Sexuality, and Exclusion." *Criticism* 41, no. 2 (1999): 257.
- Carrera, Magali M. "Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body. " In *Portraiture and Casta Paintings*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.
- Cummins, Thomas B.F. "Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico." *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 1 (2006): 185.
- Fisher, Andrew B. "Creating and Contesting Community: Indians and Afro-mestizos in the Late-Colonial Tierra Caliente of Guerrero, Mexico," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 7 (Spring 2006 online version).
- González, Anita. *Afro-Mexico. Dancing Between Myth and Reality*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Hill, Collins, Patricia. "Why Black Sexual Politics?" In *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Lavrin, Asunción, ed. *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Landers, Jane. "Felipe Edimboro Sues for Manumission, Don Francisco Javier Sánchez Contests." In Boyer, Richard and Geoffrey Spurling, eds. *Colonial Lives: Documents on Latin American History, 1550-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Edgar F. Love, "Marriage Patterns of Persons of African Descent in a Colonial Mexico City Parish," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 51 (February 1971): 79-91.
- Mulroy, Kelvin. *Freedom on the Border: The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila and Texas*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1993.
- Palmer, Colin. "Afro-Mexican Culture and Consciousness During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." In *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, DC, 1993), 125-35.
- The First Passage. Blacks in the Americas, 1502-1617*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Perkins, Maureen. "Thoroughly Modern Mulatta: Rethinking "Old World" Stereotypes in a "New World" Setting." *Biography* 28, no. 1 (2005): 104.
- Rodriguez, Ileana. *House/Garden/Nation: Space, Gender, and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Latin American Literatures by Women*. Translated by Rodriguez, Ileana and Robert Carr. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Vasconcellos, Ramon Julian. "Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 1 (2005): 575.
- Vinson, Ben. "Free Colored Voices: Issues of Representation and Racial Identity in the Colonial Mexican Militia." *The Journal of Negro History* 80, no. 4 (1995): 170.
- Von Germeten, Nicole. *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006.