

**San Bernardino Valley College**  
**Course Outline**  
**Social Science Division**

**I. Course Identification**

History 150: Introduction to Latin American History

Three hours lecture: three units

Prerequisite: None

The historical heritage of Latin America from its Indian, European and African origins to 1825. After a consideration of Spanish and Portuguese empires, the course concludes with a study of the independence movements. Themes will range from social, intellectual and cultural developments, poverty, race relations to art, popular culture and social mores.

**II.** Course can only be taken once for credit.

**III. Course Objectives**

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the diverse geography of Latin America (highland, tropical lowlands).
- Identify the social, economic and political structures of the pre-Columbian civilizations of Meso-America. (Teotihuacán, Toltec, Maya, Aztec, Tupi, Arawack, Caribs)
- Compare affects of European contact on different geographical regions and different Indian groups.
- Evaluate the validity of traditional interpretations of the European conquest.
- Explain the social and cultural consequences of mestisaje.
- Identify the social reality of colonial society. (Indian, European, African)
- Describe the development of institutional structures of colonialism.
- Explain the development of African slavery in North and South America. (Sugar, cotton, urban slaves)
- Compare and contrast the factors leading to the Latin American independence movements. (Brazil, Argentina, Latin America, Peru)

**IV. Course Content.**

1. **Introduction:** Geography and natural setting. Students must understand the topographic and climatic diversity of Latin America. In addition, a review of the historiography of Latin America needs to be presented.
2. **Native Peoples:** Latin America's indigenous people have been seen as a homogenous group, this is far from the reality. The natives of the region were as diverse culturally as the geography. This plays an important role in the Spanish ability to conquer the region. (Aztec, Maya, Zapotec, Mixtec)
3. **Europe on the Eve of Expansion. Columbus and the Caribbean, Legacy of Columbus, Conquest of Latin America and Peru, Portuguese Settlement in Brazil:** Students must understand the complexity of the society European explorers were apart of to accurately

access their actions when confronted with a “new” peoples in the Americas.

4. **Development of Slavery;** Brazil and the Caribbean become the greatest importers of slaves in America. Students will be introduced to the Safra (sugar harvest) to understand why the demand for slaves lasted will into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
5. **Spanish and Portuguese Empire:** New Spain and Brazil. Motives for exploration and settling North and South America
6. **Conflict of Cultures; Establishment of Spanish and Portuguese Colonial Societies.** Although the Spanish and Portuguese controlled an empire that lasted over 300 years, indigenous populations were not passive bystanders. They were just as influential in the establishment of the colonial institutions and limited Spanish hegemony.
7. **Colonial Economy and Labor, Race and Class in Colonial Latin America, Church and the Indigenous Worldview:** Spanish colonial society had a great amount of continuity to the pre-Columbian civilizations. Much of the labor systems, social structures and religion was more a synthesis between cultures than a complete elimination of indigenous roots. Brazil had colonial development much more similar to that of the US south. Students will be introduced to these similarities to understand why, not only Latin America developed differently, but also how certain regions of the US developed differently.
8. **Imperial Crisis, Bourbon Reforms, Pombaline Reforms:** After 250 years of neglect, the Spanish and Portuguese crowns attempts to re-impose their authority over their colonies. Despite the success of the commercial and political reforms, the colonies suffered socially which leads to dissatisfaction with existing order.
9. **Revolt and Rebellion in Colonial Latin America:** Imperial reforms led to various organized rebellions against the royal order. Detailed analysis of these events will expose students to the importance of world events on the move toward independence.
10. **Independence:** When Napoleon Bonaparte invades Spain and Portugal, the colonies find their opportunity to break away from the mother country. This begins 11 year struggle for independence.

**V. Methods of Instruction (100%):**

- Lecture/In-class Discussion, including discussions of assigned readings
- Collaborative learning and small group exercises
- In-class student essays on broad questions raised by the subject matter
- Films and other multimedia presentations covering subjects in Latin American History
- Student presentations on student research projects
- Student trips to museums and other sites pertaining to more contemporary Latin American issues.

## VI. **Methods of Evaluation.**

- In-class essays in response to key questions in Latin American History
- Discussion participation, including leading of classroom discussion on assigned readings and topics
- On-line electronic discussions involving responses to problems and questions in Latin American history
- Book reviews on major works on Latin American history
- Research projects on problems and subjects in Latin American history (at least 7-10 pages and at least 2 sources)

## VII. **Example of Assignments (Sample assignments which demonstrate the level of difficulty expected)**

**1. Essay question (in-class)** Compare and Contrast the Portuguese colonization of Brazil to the Spanish colonization of the Valley of Mexico and the Caribbean or the Andes and the Caribbean. (Please discuss geographical and social factors.)

**Educational goals of assignment.** In essay examinations students will demonstrate an ability to synthesize information from the lecture-discussions and readings, organize evidence and specific information into a coherent response to a major question in history, and produce clear and logically argued analyses in a conclusion. Essay questions will require students to demonstrate analytical thinking rather than rote memory alone, answering “why” and “compare and contrast” questions.

**2. Book review.** Broken Spears, by Leon Portilla, provides an alternative vision of the conquest of Aztecs. How does this perspective differ from the traditional interpretation? Are Portilla’s sources credible in your opinion? Why or why not?

**Educational goals of assignment.** Book reviews should enable students to explore how prominent scholars tackle major problems. The assignment should also ask student to consider the following: what evidence was used to reach conclusions? What are the biases of the author? How does the author’s treatment of environmental history tell us more about traditional subjects?

**3. Collaborative learning and small group discussions.** Use reading notes and discussions among yourselves identify major impact of the Bourbon and Pombaline Reforms. Did they succeed or fail? Be sure to describe subjects on which members of your group agreed and subjects on which there was disagreement.

**Educational goals of assignment.** Collaborative learning encourages students to take responsibility for teaching and learning and asks them to work creatively and productively with peers. By asking for a group report, the instructor can make students aware of dissenting opinions and differing interpretations.

**4. On-line internet electronic discussions.** Similar to collaborative work in class, for this exercise, students will respond to a major historical issue on Latin American history on the world-wide-web.

**Educational Goals of assignment.** This majority of this exercise is done outside of the classroom and serves two major functions. It gets students to formally post a position paper on a question or document that is on the internet. Their peers will then be able to evaluate and respond to directly to the work. Secondly, it introduces students to computer skills needed in today's high tech workplace.

**5. Research Project.** Students will chose their own topics in Latin American history and will use on-line internet resources an published materials to do research. The final product will be the result of individual effort.

**Educational Goals of assignment.** This project encourages students to pursue topics of interest on their own. Use of internet resources and published materials will be one skill gained in this project. Using these resources, students will be asked to develop skills of evaluation, syntheses, and analysis as they produce a coherent and analytical narrative that calls upon skills of critical thinking.

#### **VIII. Required Course Materials: (All suggested works are primarily college level)**

Bakewell, P.J. A history of Latin America: Empires and Sequels: Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1997.

Burns, Bradford E. Latin America, a concise interpretive history 5<sup>th</sup> ed.: Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1990.

Keen, Benjamin. A History of Latin America- 5<sup>th</sup> edition: Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, 1991.

Keen, Benjamin. A History of Latin America- Vol. I: Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, 1996.

Keen, Benjamin. Latin American Civilization; Westview Press Boulder, 1991.

\*\*Or other college level equivalent (text, Historical monographs, source readers, autobiographies, novels, or plays) that specifically deal with the topics related to Latin American History.

#### **IX. Other Supplies Required of Students:**

Floppy disk may be required.