

Modern Latin American History

History 1180-501, Spring 2026

General Information:

Instructor: Sue Taylor, PhD

Email: taylor@sue@unm.edu

Phone: (505) 225-8305

Office Hours:

T 1:00-2:00 pm and W 6:00-7:00 pm on [Zoom](#)

By appointment at [You Can Book Me](#)



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The primary objective of this course is to serve as a survey of the history of Latin America from independence to the present. This course will explore the contributions of Indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans to the creation of Latin America's diverse societies. The elements of this course are designed to inform students on the major events and trends that are essential to the understanding of the history of Latin America within the context of world societies.

REQUIRED TEXTS & INTERNET ACCESS

Required texts:

James A. Wood and Anna Rose Alexander, eds., [Problems in Modern Latin American History: Sources and Interpretations](#), 5th ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, ISBN 13: 978-1538109069

[Google Books](#)

John Charles Chasteen, [Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America](#). W. W. Norton, 2016, ISBN 13: 978-0393283051

[Link to accompanying website at wwnorton.com](#)

[Please note that although this is the Fourth Edition of Chasteen, older editions will also work for the class. If you purchase an older edition please contact me via email so that I can tell you which chapters match up with the course reading schedule.]

Rigoberta Menchú, ed. Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, trans. Ann Wright. [I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala](#). Verso, 2010, ISBN 13: 9781844674718

[Google Books](#)

Other readings as assigned in course schedule (below)

Reliable internet to access UNM Canvas

History is a reading and writing-intensive discipline. That means we will spend much of our time in this course reading, writing, and discussing historical materials. If you have any concerns about your reading or writing skills, please talk to me. I am willing to work with you, help out, and teach the skills needed to succeed in this class. Also, please be aware that I am willing to work with you if personal, work, etc., issues arise that impact your ability to succeed in the class. The only condition is that you MUST let me know what is going on. I can't help you if I don't know that you could use some help.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Students will be able to EXPLAIN in their work how humans in the past shaped their own unique historical moments and were shaped by those moments, and how those cultures changed over the course of the centuries for the history of Latin America from independence through the present.
2. Students will DISTINGUISH between primary and secondary sources, IDENTIFY and EVALUATE evidence and EMPATHIZE with people in their historical context.
3. Students will SUMMARIZE and APPRAISE different historical interpretations and evidence in order to CONSTRUCT past events.
4. Students will IDENTIFY historical arguments in a variety of sources and EXPLAIN how they were constructed, EVALUATING credibility, perspective, and relevance.
5. Students will CREATE well-supported historical arguments and narratives that demonstrate an awareness of audience.
6. Students will APPLY historical knowledge and historical thinking “in order to infer what drives and motivates human behavior in both past and present.”

Essential Skills: Critical Thinking, Information and Digital Literacy, Personal and Social Responsibility

CONSULTING YOUR INSTRUCTOR

My goal is to assist you in developing a meaningful understanding of history and to help you achieve the highest grade you are capable of. A constructive, mutually respectful attitude in all matters will greatly facilitate this process. I will be available to discuss your questions and concerns during the office hours stated at the top of this syllabus. You can also make an appointment for either an in-person or online meeting at a different time by emailing me.

Email: Please note: I will not open any email that does not show a recognizable name in the send field and this course number in the subject field. This does not include messages within UNM Canvas. I check email daily and will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. Note also that you will not receive a grade for any paper submitted via an email attachment that does not show your name on the first page. If you text me at the above number please be sure to include your name and course.

Regarding Online Office Hours: I will be using Zoom for my regular office hours this semester. I will be on Zoom every Tuesday afternoons from 1:00 - 2:00 pm and Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 pm. You can access the meeting through this [link](#). If you want to meet during these hours but prefer Microsoft Teams, please message me and we can arrange that. You can also book a time outside of those hours through [You Can Book Me](#) that works with your schedule. I've set up evening hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays; however, you can contact me via email to set up times that are not available on the [You Can Book Me](#) calendar.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS & TECHNICAL SKILLS

The nature of an online course requires that all students have regular and reliable access to a computer and internet services. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure they have and maintain regular and reliable access to a computer and internet services. UNM Canvas is designed to work best from a personal computer. Some features may not be accessible from tablets, smart phones, and other devices.

All files submitted for the course must be submitted as either a Microsoft Word Document or PDF. UNM Canvas is unable to read other file formats. It is each student's responsibility to ensure files have been submitted properly. (Or, articulate which apps, software, etc. are required.) If you want to submit your assignments in a Google doc please be sure to create a shareable link with permission to make comments and then copy that link into the appropriate submission section.

In order to participate and succeed in this class, you will need to be able to perform the following basic technical tasks:

- Use UNM Canvas (help documentation located in "How to Use Canvas" link on welcome to the course page, and also at [Online Student Documentation](#)).
- Use email – including attaching files, opening files, downloading attachments
- Copy and paste within applications including Microsoft Office
- Open a hyperlink (click on a hyperlink to access a website or online resource)
- Use Microsoft Office applications
 - Create, download, update, save and upload MS Word documents
 - Create, download, update, save and upload MS PowerPoint presentations
 - Access MS Teams
- Use the in-course web conferencing tool (Collaborate Web Conferencing software in UNM Canvas) or use Zoom or other web conferencing tool
- Download and install an application or plug in – required for participating in web conferencing sessions

Technical Requirements

Computer

- A high-speed Internet connection is highly recommended.
- Supported browsers include: [Detailed Supported Browsers and Operating Systems](#)
- Any computer capable of running a recently updated web browser should be sufficient to access your online course. However, bear in mind that processor speed, amount of RAM and Internet connection speed can *greatly* affect performance.
- Microsoft Office products are available free for all UNM students (more information on the [UNM IT Software Distribution and Downloads page](#))
- Please update your contact information in LoboWeb: [MyUNM Login](#). When you log into MyUNM, Enter LoboWeb. Click on the Personal Information link to make sure your contact information is up to date.

Technical Support

- For UNM Canvas Technical Support: (505) 277-0857 (24/7) or use the “Create a Tech Support Ticket” link in your course.
 - For UNM-Valencia IT Support: (505)925-8911

- For UNM Web Conference Technical Help: (505) 277-0857
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ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Attendance in an online environment: This is not a self-paced course. You will need to plan specific blocks of time each week to dedicate to this class. To successfully complete all of the work, you should plan on at least 6-8 hours each week. I tell you this so that you can remember to set aside time that you will dedicate specifically to this course. It is easy to put online classes on the back burner and forget about them. Please do not do that! Devise a weekly schedule that fits your life and allows you to complete all of the assignments by the time they are due each unit.

Students enrolled for credit, credit/no credit, or audit are expected to submit all assignments and complete courses tasks on a regular basis according to deadlines.

Students should not assume they will be dropped from the class automatically. Technical issues do not relieve students of the responsibility for missed assignments and exams. Students must take the initiative in arranging with their instructor to make up missed work. Attendance in this online course will be tracked through the timely completion of assignments and participation. Simply logging into UNM Canvas does not constitute attendance. Students who do not submit an assignment, login or participate during the first week of class may be dropped from the course. A student with excessive missed assignments may be dropped from the course. Missing two weeks or more of assignments assigned constitutes excessive missed assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

General Organization

Our class is structured to provide opportunities for us to not only encounter new ideas and understandings of Latin American History, but to also interpret the past and create new ways of visualizing and thinking about historical events in the region through a series of guiding questions.

Unit Assignments:

This class is divided into 8 different two-week Units. Each Unit contains an introduction, assigned readings, and film clips to direct our study of certain historical events and themes. Unit 1 is an introduction to the course and to the field of Latin American History. Unit 5 focuses on Rigoberta Menchú's testimonio in the context of history and historical memory.

Units 2-7 will require you to complete a series of thoughts, impressions, and/or questions in a discussion forum, an entry on the class Timeline, and a critical Journal entry. All of those assignments build upon one another to help us answer the Unit's guiding question. All Units span two weeks; you will complete the reading and the initial discussion post during the first week in each Unit (2-6).

The rest of the work will be completed during the second week of the Unit. Because I understand that life often intervenes as we're working on our education, your lowest Timeline Assignment and lowest Journal scores will be dropped.

Discussion Forums

In addition to the two introductory forums in unit 1 there are unit discussion forums for units 2,3,4,5 and 7. These are for you to share your thoughts and questions over the assigned materials. The initial posts are always on the first Sunday of the unit with responses due on the following Thursday. There are three other forums in Unit 5; these are over the book *I, Rigoberto Menchú*.

I, Rigoberta Menchú:

Over the course of the semester, you will need to read *I, Rigoberta Menchú* on your own. By the sixth unit of the semester, we will have the contextual information necessary to understand her testimonio account of her family's experiences in Guatemala's highlands during "la violencia" of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Because we will work with the book in its entirety during Unit 5, it is a good idea to begin reading it on your own well before we get to the end of the term.

During Unit 6, we will complete Discussion forums on I, Rigoberta Menchú. Those exercises will help you prepare for the review essay due during week 16. Here are the [detailed instructions for the Menchú Essay](#).

Journals

There are journals due on the second Sunday of each unit. The journals are your reflections about the material covered in the units, as specified in the [journal instructions](#).

Other Assignments

Each student will contribute five events/persons/themes to a class [timeline](#).

Each student will also complete a final project over a topic of their choosing.

Summary of Units:

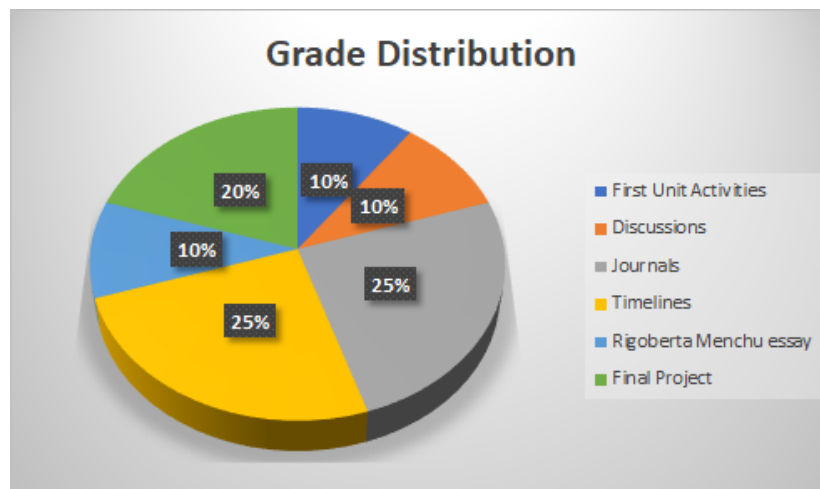
For each major unit you are required to:

1. Read the assigned chapters and articles
2. Discuss the readings
3. Submit a Timeline ID
4. Submit a Timeline Connection
5. Submit your journals
6. Complete the other assignments as appropriate

GRADING

The Grades for this course will be calculated as follows:

Activities	% of Final Grade	Percent
		A+ 99.0% – 100.0%
		A 94.0% – 98.9%
		A- 90.0% – 93.9%
		B+ 87.0% – 89.9%
		B 84.0% – 86.9%
		B- 80.0% – 83.9%
		C+ 77.0% – 79.9%
		C 72.0% – 76.9%
		C- 70.0% – 73.9%
		D+ 67.0% – 69.9%
		D 64.0% – 66.9%
		D 60.0% – 63.9%
		F Less than 60.0%
First Unit Activities	10%	
Discussions	10%	
Journals	25%	
Timelines	25%	
Rigoberta Menchu essay	10%	
Final Project	20%	
	100%	



****Important Note:** Please recognize that the Canvas Grade Book doesn't always compute the correct total number of points for a variety of reasons. Be sure that you use **the above points scale** when computing your overall grade and considering the work you've done for the course.

In the event UNM closes during finals week, final grades for students will be calculated based on all work assessed up to that point in the course.

MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

I expect that students will develop critical thinking skills through class participation. Students are expected to login regularly and submit their work on time. In addition, they are expected to display courteous behavior with respect for their instructor and fellow students and honesty in their academic and personal interactions.

Late and Missed Assignments: Assignments are due at the time and date specified. Late discussion posts are not allowed. Other assignments will be accepted up to two weeks beyond the due date. No assignments will be accepted later than two weeks beyond the due date unless we have discussed it

ahead of time. If a serious crisis situation occurs please inform me as soon as you can so that I can work with you accordingly.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism: According to University of New Mexico Policy Statement on Academic Dishonesty "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and non-disclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records. UNM policies concerning academic honesty can be found at:

<http://policy.unm.edu/regents-policies/section-4/4-8.html>

Plagiarism occurs when someone – knowingly or unknowingly – presents the words or ideas of another person as his or her own. This is a violation of UNM rules as well as the expectations for this class. Any work turned in for this class must meet UNM standards for academic honesty. Students unsure about how to apply these rules should consult with the instructor *prior to* turning in written work.

According to the policy “Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or who otherwise fails to meet the expected standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in coursework may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course.”

As the policy applies to this course: **Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will receive an immediate 0 for that assignment or exam—NO EXCEPTIONS!!!** Incidents of plagiarism may also be reported to the Dean of Students, at the discretion of the instructor.

Regarding the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (e.g. Chat GPT, Google Bard, or others): for this course, it is expected that you not use AI for your assignments. Your assignments are designed for you to apply critical thinking skills, draw conclusions, and communicate those conclusions as appropriate. If, however, you decide to consult AI you must treat it as any other source and cite it in accordance with the Academic Honesty guidelines stated above. Failure to disclose the use of AI will be deemed plagiarism and will be treated accordingly. You should also be sure you understand the known issues with using AI for academic work. AI is still in a developmental stage and is not always reliable. If you have questions about this please ask. You should also realize that Grammarly is an AI platform and if you use Grammarly to edit your work you should also cite that.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



This course is hosted onCanvas, which is ADA compliant.

If you have a documented disability, the Equal Access Services office will provide me with a letter outlining your accommodations. I will then discuss the accommodations with you to determine the best learning environment. If you feel that you need accommodations, but have not documented your disability, please contact Jeanne Lujan, the coordinator for Equal Access Services at 925-8910 or jmlujan@unm.edu.

Academic Freedom and Intercultural Diversity: All students are expected to respect the opinions and diverse perspectives of others, including such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identities. Each student is guaranteed the right to freely express his or her ideas, no matter what they are or how unpopular they are. All students are expected

to maintain an atmosphere of respect and tolerance for diverse perspectives. Sexist, racist, heterosexist or other prejudicial comments will not be tolerated.

Title IX: In an effort to meet obligations under Title IX, UNM faculty, Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Assistants are considered “responsible employees” by the Department of Education (see pg 15 - <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ga-201404-title-ix.pdf>). This designation requires that any report of gender discrimination which includes sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence made to a faculty member, TA, or GA must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator at the Office of Equal Opportunity (oeo.unm.edu). For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct, see: <https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2740.html>

Academic Freedom and Intercultural Diversity: All students are expected to respect the opinions and diverse perspectives of others, including such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identities. Each student is guaranteed the right to freely express his or her ideas, no matter what they are or how unpopular they are. All students are expected to maintain an atmosphere of respect and tolerance for diverse perspectives. Sexist, racist, heterosexist or other prejudicial comments will not be tolerated.

Course Schedule

Unit One: Class Intro, Concepts, and Definitions

Guiding Question: How do we define “history,” and what are the most crucial elements of Historical Thinking?

Readings:

- [Documents on History](#)
- Defining Latin America (in Canvas)

Assignments

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| • Thursday, January 22 | Introductions - Discussion Forum Initial Post |
| • Sunday January 25 | Introductions - Discussion Forum Responses |
| • Monday, January 26 | Initial Discussion Post (History/Historical Sources) |
| • Wednesday January 28 | Initial posts in defining Latin America |
| • Sunday, February 1 | History Discussion Responses |
| • Sunday, February 1 | Defining Latin America Responses |

Unit Two: Colonial Legacies and the Independence Era

Guiding Question: How did colonial-era institutions and issues shape the process of Latin American independence?

Readings:

- Wood and Alexander, Chapters 1-3
- Chasteen, Chapters 2-4 (especially 3 and 4)

Podcast:

- [“El Libertador,” NPR Throughline, 16 May 2019](#)

Optional Readings:

- [Earle, “National Symbols in Nineteenth-Century Spanish America”](#)

- [Earle, "From Colony to Nation" \[Comparative Book Review\]](#)
- [Wood, "Burden of Citizenship"](#)

Assignments

- Sunday, February 8 Initial Discussion Posts
- Wednesday, February 11 Timeline Identification Step Unit 2
- Thursday, February 12 Discussion Responses
- Sunday February 15 Timeline Connection Step Unit 2
- Sunday February 15 Journal Unit 2

Unit Three: "Order and Progress": Caudillos, Liberalism, and Neocolonialism

Guiding Question: How did the competing forces of caudillo rule, liberal-conservative (Church) disputes, and racial difference shape the process of mid-nineteenth-century nation building?

Readings:

- Wood and Alexander, Chapters 4-6
- Chasteen, Chapters 5-7

Podcast:

- ["Brazil in Black and White,"](#) NPR Rough Translation, 21 August 2019

Optional Readings:

- [Morgan, "Tomochic Uprising, 1892"](#) (Blog Post)
- [Levine, "Mud Hut Jerusalem: Canudos Revisited"](#)
- [Levine, "Canudos in National Context"](#)
- [Abente, "The War of the Triple Alliance"](#)

Assignments

- Sunday, February 22 Initial Discussion Posts
- Wednesday, February 25 Timeline Identification Step Unit 3
- Thursday, February 26 Discussion Responses
- Sunday March 1 Timeline Connection Step Unit 3
- Sunday March 1 Journal Unit 3
- Sunday March 1 Final Project Step #1

Unit Four: Twentieth-century "isms"

Guiding Question: In what ways did nationalism, populism, and social revolution all contribute to the development of self-determination in Latin American nations between 1900 and 1970?

Readings:

- Wood and Alexander, Chapters 7-9
- Chasteen, Chapter 8-9

Podcast:

- ["A Border Drawn in Blood,"](#) Latino USA, 6 October 2017

Optional Readings:

- [Hyland, "A Sacred Duty: Nationalist and Anti-Imperial Activisms in Buenos Aires, 1916-1930"](#)
- [Grandin, "Can the Subaltern be Seen?"](#)
- [Fallaw, "Cardenas and the Caste War that Wasn't"](#)
- [McPherson, "Women's Responses to U.S. Military Occupation in Latin America"](#)

Assignments

- Sunday, March 8 Initial Discussion Posts
- Wednesday, March 11 Timeline Identification Step Unit 4
- Thursday, March 12 Discussion Responses
- Sunday March 15 Timeline Connection Step Unit 4
- Sunday March 15 Journal Unit 4

Spring Break: March 16 - March 22

Unit Five: Histories and Historical Memories of State Violence

Guiding Question: How do testimonios (first-hand accounts), scholarly research, and truth commissions help to address the ongoing legacies of brutal state violence?

Readings:

- Wood and Alexander, Chapter 12
- Menchu with Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (entire book)
- ["Taracena Breaks His Silence,"](#) from *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*

Podcast:

- Radio Ambulante podcast, [#RenunciaYa episode](#) (en español with English transcript)

Optional Readings and Resources:

- Lovell, ["The Archive that Never Was"](#)
 - FYI: [Digitized archive of the AHPN discussed in Lovell](#)
- [Ríos Montt Al-Jazeera America](#)
- [NY Times articles on Ríos Montt](#)
- [Verdict Annulled—Democracy Now!](#)
- [@guatejustice](#) (formerly@RiosMonttTrial) on Twitter
- [Podcast with Jo-Marie Burt on continuance of Rios-Montt trial](#)
- [NY Times "Guatemalans Ousted President Otto Pérez Molina. Now What?"](#)
- ["Guatemala convicts ex-soldiers for raping indigenous women,"](#) BBC, 25 January 2022



Assignments

- Sunday, March 29 **All past due assignments from first half of the semester (before spring break) must be submitted by this date**
- Sunday, March 29 Initial Discussion Posts on Rigoberta Menchú
- Wednesday, April 1 * Timeline Identification Step Unit 6

- Thursday, April 2 Discussion Responses
- Sunday April 5 * Timeline Connection Step Unit 6
- Sunday April 5 Journal Unit 6

The discussions for this unit are over the Menchú book. There are three separate discussions.

* Timeline entries for this unit are optional. If you want some extra credit you can decide to do them.

Unit Six: Reaction and Neoliberalism

Guiding Question: How did Cold War foreign policies and the expansion of neoliberal global economics impact issues of human and civil rights across Latin America?

Readings:

- Wood and Alexander, Chapter 10-11 and 13
- Chasteen, Chapter 10-11

Podcast:

- [“Keller on Mexico’s Cold War and an inter-American History of the Cuban Missile Crisis,”](#) SECOLAS Historias, 8 April 2019

Optional Readings:

- [Blacker, “Cold War in the Countryside”](#)
- [Stahler-Sholk, “The Zapatista Social Movement”](#)
- [Waddell, “Why a Generation of Latin American Leaders Failed to Deliver on their Promise of Progress”](#)
- [NYT “The Human Cost of Javier Milei’s Assault on Science and History”](#)

Assignments

- Sunday, April 12 Step #2 in Final Project
- Sunday, April 12 Initial Discussion Posts
- Wednesday, April 15 Timeline Identification Step Unit 5
- Thursday, April 16 Discussion Responses
- **Friday April 17 Rigoberta Menchú essay is due**
- Sunday April 19 Timeline Connection Step Unit 5
- Sunday April 19 Journal Unit 5

Unit Seven: Twenty-first Century Latin America

- [Reading List](#)

Assignments

- Sunday, April 26 Initial Discussion Posts
- Wednesday, April 29 Timeline Identification Step Unit 7
- Thursday, April 30 Discussion Responses
- Sunday May 3 Timeline Connection Step Unit 7
- Sunday May 3 Journal Unit 7
- Sunday, May 3 **All past due assignments for the second half of the semester (after Spring Break) must be submitted by this date**

Final Unit

Assignments:

- Monday, May 11 Extra credit assignment
- Thursday, May 14 Final Project