

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Department of History  
Spring, 1992

History/Latin America 982

POWER AND PATRIARCHY IN MEXICAN HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

Steve J. Stern  
5105 Humanities  
263-1841/3-1800

Course Description

This seminar will explore the significance of patriarchy and gender relations for understanding the social dynamics of power, including color-class power, in Mexican history and civilization. Our purpose is to analyze, debate, and otherwise come to terms with the basic feminist argument that the analysis of gender and patriarchal power transforms the interpretation of society as a whole. This we will attempt to do in an interdisciplinary manner and over a long sweep of time, from the Aztecs (Mexico) of Tenochtitlán to women workers in the 1980s.

Our method will be two-fold: (1) we will share intensive reading and discussion in common, and (2) we will establish coordinated research and a collective division of labor enabling us to learn from one another's research. In the first section of the course, readings and discussion in common will establish a shared empirical and theoretical base, and help us develop our identity and dynamics as a group. We will also, in this first section, make commitments to various work teams and research topics. In the second section of the course, work teams and individuals will engage in their research while meeting weekly to share results, problems, and suggestions. In the third section of the course, we will have presentations of research by the work teams. Because it is important always to be intellectually broad rather than narrow, and because some students have strong research interests in Latin American countries and culture areas other than Mexico, one of the work teams will present findings and analysis from Latin American or Caribbean areas other than Mexico.

This is your seminar. Its success depends on the active engagement of all of us. I expect everyone to participate actively and thoughtfully in discussion as well as research, and to master the art of combining sharp debate on points of disagreement with a collaborative atmosphere encouraging us all to learn from one another and to develop lines of analysis as a group.

Course assignments and grading are discussed after the schedule listed below.

Schedule (tentative)

1. Jan. 23. Introductory session. Organizational day.  
Students should begin next week's reading and begin making decisions about research topics and work teams.

NOTE: For those who need general orientation or stronger background in Mexican history, a convenient starting point is to consult the relevant chapters in The Cambridge History of Latin America, Leslie Bethell, ed. (several vols., 1984--). Citations in the assigned and recommended readings below will also orient you.

UNIT I. READINGS, FORMATION OF WORK TEAMS.

2. Jan. 30. Points of Departure: The Challenge of Feminist Theory,  
The Search for Mexican Female Voice.

Rdng.: Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York, 1988), Chapters 2-4 (esp. 2).

Jean Franco, Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico (New York, 1989).

Recomm.: R. W. Connell, Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics (Stanford, 1987).

Christine Ward Gailey, Kinship to Kingship: Gender Hierarchy and State Formation in the Tongan Islands (Austin, 1987).

Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York, 1986).

Carmen Ramos et al., Presencia y transparencia: La mujer en la historia de México (Mexico City, 1987).

3. Feb. 6. Gender and Mexica Culture: An Exploration.

Rdng.: Inga Clendinnen, Aztecs: An Interpretation (New York, 1991): read all of it, but concentrate esp. on Chaps. 5-8.

Recomm.: Alfredo López Austin, Cuerpo humano e ideología: Las concepciones de los antiguos Nahuas (2 vols., Mexico City, 1988).

June Nash, "Aztec Women: The Transition from Status to Class in Empire and Colony," in Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, eds., Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives (New York, 1980), 134-48.

J. Rounds, "Lineage, Class, and Power in the Aztec State," American Ethnologist 6 (1979), 73-87.

4. Feb. 13. Gender, Honor Codes, and Labor in Colonial Settings.

Rdng.: Ramón A. Gutiérrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (Stanford, 1991).

Margaret A. Villanueva, "From Calpixqui to Corregidor: Appropriation of Women's Cotton Textile Production in Early Colonial Mexico," Latin American Perspectives, 12:1 (Winter, 1985), 17-40.

John Tutino, "Power, Class, and Family: Men and Women in the Mexican Elite, 1750-1810," The Americas, 39:3 (Jan., 1983), 359-381.

Recomm.: Gabriel García Márquez, Chronicle of a Death Foretold, Gregory Rabassa, trans. (New York, 1983).

Verena Martínez-Alier [now Stolcke], Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society (Cambridge, 1974).

5. Feb. 20. The Church, Female "Deviance," and the Agony of Sor Juana.

Rdng.: Asunción Lavrin, "Sexuality in Colonial Mexico: A Church Dilemma," in Lavrin, ed., Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America (Lincoln, 1989), 47-92. I encourage a reading of Lavrin's introduction as well.

Ruth Behar, "Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women's Powers: Views from the Mexican Inquisition," in ibid., 178-206.

Margaret Sayers Peden, ed. and trans., A Woman of Genius: The Intellectual Autobiography of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (Salisbury, Ct., 1982).

Mary Elizabeth Perry, Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville (Princeton, 1990).

Recomm.: Fernando Benítez, Los demonios en el convento: Sexo y religión en la Nueva España (Mexico City, 1985).

Lavrin, ed., Sexuality and Marriage (remaining chapters).

Seminario de Historia de las Mentalidades, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico), El placer de pecar y el afán de normar (Mexico City, 1987).

PLEASE NOTE THAT BY THIS WEEK, ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE SELECTED WORK TEAMS AND RESEARCH TOPICS. RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHIES SHOULD BE WELL ADVANCED.

6. Feb. 27. Gender Struggles and Female Crossfires (I): Late Colonial Times.

Rdng.: Steve J. Stern, draft manuscript chapters from "The Secret History of Gender: Power, Patriarchy, and the Color-Class

Order in Mexico."

Recomm.: Silvia Marina Arrom, The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857 (Stanford, 1985).

William B. Taylor, Drinking, Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages (Stanford, 1979), esp. homicide and rebellion chapters.

Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," Signs, 7:3 (Spring, 1982), 545-566.

Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State, and Revolution," in Richard R. Fagen et al., eds., Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism (New York, 1986).

7. March 5. The Mexican Revolution and the Construction of National Culture.

Rdng.: Ilene V. O'Malley, The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940 (Westport, Ct., 1986).

Elizabeth Salas, Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History (Austin, 1990).

Recomm.: María Herrera-Sobek, The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis (Bloomington, 1990).

Anna Macias, Against All Odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico to 1940 (Westport, Ct., 1982). Recommended to those who have read O'Malley, or who wish to supplement it.

Maria Antonieta Rascon, "Women and the Social Struggle in Mexico" (orig. 1972; translated and republished by Women's International Resource Exchange; SJS has both versions).

Roger Bartra, La jaula de la melancolía: Identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano (Mexico City, 1987).

[March 12 = Spring Break. During this time, people should both read the assignment for Week 8, and make the transition toward intensive research.]

8. March 19. Gender Struggles and Female Crossfires (II): Contemporary Times.

Rdng.: Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán, The Crossroads and Class & Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City (Chicago, 1987).

Mercedes Gonzales de la Rocha, "De por qué las mujeres aguantan golpes y cuernos: un análisis de hogares sin varón en Guadalajara," in Luisa Gabayet et al., eds., Mujeres y sociedad: Salario, hogar y acción social en el occidente de México (Guadalajara, 1988), 205-227.

Recomm.: Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier (Albany, 1983).

Oscar J. Martinez, "Soledad Fuente," in William H. Beezley and Judith Ewell, eds., The Human Tradition in Latin America: The Twentieth Century (Wilmington, DE, 1987), 195-206.

Gabayet et al., eds., Mujeres y sociedad (remaining chapters).

Mercedes González de la Rocha, "Economic Crisis, Domestic Reorganisation and Women's Work in Guadalajara, Mexico," Bulletin of Latin American Research 7:2 (1988), 207-223.

Soledad González Montes and Pilar Iracheta Cenegorta, "La violencia en la vida de las mujeres campesinas: El distrito de Tenango, 1880-1910," in Ramos et al., Presencia y transparencia, 111-141.

## UNIT II. INTENSIVE RESEARCH.

During this phase of the course, we will focus our full energies on research. Instead of meeting weekly as a whole, the class will break into work teams. The work teams will meet weekly at the customary class time; I will rotate among the work teams. Work team members should share results, problems, findings, suggestions, bibliography, etc., and may, if appropriate, devise ways to coordinate more closely individual research topics.

During this phase, the teams will also read short family life histories by Oscar Lewis as background and food for thought during the research process.

### Suggested work teams and topics:

Team 1: The Legacies of Empire and Colonialism:  
Gender and Order in the Aztec and Spanish Eras.

#### Ideas for possible topics:

Gender and State Formation: Aztec Ideology and Praxis  
Colonized Women: Work, Sex, and Honor among the Colonial Poor  
The Ordeal of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz  
Gender and Power: Honor and the Sex-Gender System in Elite Society  
Rebel Women: The Problem of "Deviance" in a Colonial Order

Team 2: The Ethnography and Politics of Mexican Gender:

From the Revolution to the Reconstruction of Nationality.

Ideas for possible topics:

Mexican Feminisms: Ideology and Social Movements

The Revolution as Masculine Emancipation? Male and Female in Popular  
Corridos and Testimonios

Three Women [select several women's lives for close study]

Rural Women in Central Mexico: Oscar Lewis and Beyond

Rural Women of the South: The Myth and Mystique of Zapotec Women

The Urban-Industrial Context: Women's Labor, Women's Lives

Team 3: Mexico in Comparative Latin American Perspective.

Topics to be determined.

Calendar for Unit II:

9. March 26. Work team meeting.

Objective: present 1-paragraph statements for circulation  
outlining topic, approach, central hypothesis or issue  
to be researched, implications of topic. Attach 1-2  
page bibliography of key sources and journals.

Background Rdnng.: Oscar Lewis, Five Families (New York, 1959),  
Introduction/first family.

10. April 2. Work team meeting.

Objective: share research experiences, findings, problems.

Backgr. Rdnng.: Lewis, Five Families, second/third families.

11. April 9. Work team meeting.

Objective: share major results and findings. Present central  
hypotheses, ideas emerging. Highlight problem areas.

Backgr. Rdnng.: Lewis, Five Families, fourth/fifth families.

12. April 16. Work team meeting.

Objectives: individuals present outlines of paper and argument;  
oral "trial run" of paper; get feedback, advice;

AND

the team collectively drafts a 1-page statement  
indicating how the individual topics together create  
a "whole" larger than the sum of its parts; the  
statement points to the larger implications of  
your team's coordinated research.

Hist./Lat.Amer. 982, Power and Patriarchy in Mexico, page 7.

UNIT III. RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSION/DEBATE.

13. April 23. Research presentation.

TEAM 1: The Legacies of Empire and Colonialism:  
Gender and Order in the Aztec and Spanish Eras.

14. April 30. Research presentation.

TEAM 2: The Ethnography and Politics of Mexican Gender:  
From the Revolution to the Reconstruction of Nationality.

15. May 7. Research presentation.

TEAM 3: Mexico in Comparative Latin American Perspective.

Course Assignments and Grading

There are two assignments: active and thoughtful oral participation in class and work teams; and the writing of a research paper in conjunction with collaboration on one of three work teams.

Suggested topics for work teams and coordinated research topics are given above. These are suggestions, not rigidly set demands, but they convey a sense for the grand sweep, interdisciplinary possibilities, and sense of sequence to which I would like us to aspire in our collective work.

Research papers will be of medium scale: 20-30 pages of text, based on an intelligently selective (not comprehensive or exhaustive) body of source material including primary sources. The syllabus, your peers, and I will help you get started in tracking down sources, and I expect you to consult with me early and as actively as warranted while you develop your topic and bibliography. The paper should be accompanied by an annotated bibliography.

All papers circulated must be in dark and legible print. I will return poor quality dot matrix or xerox copies unread. Be courteous to our eyes, please.

Students may choose to call the drafts submitted for research presentations "first drafts" and to submit revised drafts that take into account comments received on the first draft. Those who choose this option must turn in the final draft, together with the first draft and a 1-page statement outlining the principal changes made as a result of written and oral comments received, no later than Thursday, May 14.

We will conduct the research discussions in Unit III on the assumption that all seminar members have recently read the drafts of papers. Student commentators will open our discussion, and we will dispense with summaries of the papers by the authors. After the initial commentary, the floor will be open to discussion by all.

Grades will be weighted roughly as follows: one-half research essay, and one-half discussion.

