Imagine for a moment that you are a zealous member of the Catholic clergy. You are contemplating the vast new human landscape of potential Christians just revealed to you because of the Spanish invasion of the Americas. All of a sudden God has presented you, His spiritual representatives, with the arduous yet joyous task of creating a new body of pure Christian believers free of the heresies and distortions that plague the Faith in Europe. Surely this signals the beginning of the final conversion of all the world’s peoples to Christianity, an act that will trigger the second coming of Christ on earth. Heady times, indeed. But what if the conquered multitudes turn out to be human beings with their own ways of thinking, rather than malleable lumps of clay? What would you do then?

Now imagine that you are an indigenous inhabitant of the land the newcomers persist in calling "America." All of a sudden you are being told that your cherished religious beliefs are at best nothing but ignorant superstitions, at worst terrible lies foisted upon you by some previously unknown malevolent being called the "devil." You are being asked, even forced, to give up your old ideas and to believe only in deities called God, Jesus, Mary, and saints. What happens now?

**GOALS FOR HIST 483**

Students in HIST 483/583 should be able to give nuanced answers to the questions posed, above, by the end of the term. More specifically,

- If you can begin to imagine these feelings, these ways of looking at
the spiritual world, you can start to understand the complex process initiated by what has traditionally been called the "spiritual conquest" of Latin America's indigenous people.

- You will learn that what was once described by western scholars in one-sided, heroic terms as the triumph of the Catholic faith over superstition, this "conquest" turned out to have been much less clear-cut than its traditional label would suggest.

- You will come to understand that, while it is true that most Latin Americans today consider themselves to be Catholics, the descendants of Aztecs and Incas among them did not necessarily become the "pure" believers that the optimistic sixteenth-century clergy hoped to create.

- You will learn that this is because the process of Christian evangelization begun by Catholic friars at the dawn of the sixteenth century was a dialogue rather than a monologue. The friars wielded tremendous moral authority, backed with equally potent temporal force provided by colonial governments, but the indigenous people were not without their own spiritual resources.

- Rather than seeing them as being overwhelmed by Catholicism, we will examine the ways in which they were able to mediate its entry into their lives and beliefs.

Does this mean Christianity was never implanted among the peoples of Spanish America? Did a "spiritual conquest" really ever take place? We will explore these and other important questions during the coming term. Answers might not be as easy to find as you expect. We will seek these answers in the fascinating stories of dedicated friars and priests, of willing converts and stubborn "idolaters," in the daily life of agrarian towns as well as precarious frontier missions, in apparitions, miracles, devotion, and resistance.

**READING**

The following books are required for all undergraduates enrolled in HIST 483/583. They can be found for sale at the University of Oregon bookstore. In addition, I have placed a copy of each of these books on reserve in the Knight Library. It might be possible to obtain used copies of at least some of them at some of the used book stores here in Eugene, or from Powell's City of Books in Portland (they have a good website). Amazon.com is another possibility, but the UO bookstore is obviously the most convenient source.


The following books are recommended for all students enrolled in HIST 483. Those marked with a * are required of graduate students enrolled in HIST 583. Copies of each can be found on reserve for our course in the Knight Library.


**PAPERS AND PROJECTS**

All students enrolled in HIST 483/583 will be asked to complete several pieces of written work, outlined in brief below. More detailed information about these assignments will be made available at the appropriate time during the quarter. Everyone will endure an in-class midterm exam focused on European Christianity in comparison with the indigenous faiths of Mesoamerica and the Andes. This exam is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19, and is worth 25% of your course grade.

All students will also develop a research project devoted to some topic or issue relevant to the course. Use of relevant required books listed above is mandatory, as is consultation with other useful materials (books, articles, and the like) obtained through research at the Knight Library, through the Summit or Inter-Library Loan systems, or on the web. Undergraduates should aim for a length of at least 10 pages; graduate students should expect to write from 15 to 20 pages. Research papers are due in my office, 355 McKenzie Hall, by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 8, during finals week. The research paper is worth 40% of the course grade.

Everyone must complete a third assignment, which is worth 25% of your course grade, choosing at least ONE of the following: 1) A 5-page essay
devoted to the discussion of the nature of post-contact indigenous Christianity, or idolatry and resistance. 2) A "performance" option that might appeal to those of you with a flair for the dramatic. Volunteers perform dramatic readings of at least one of two evangelical plays, one telling the story of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and the other dramatizing the story of the "Sacrifice of Isaac," both of which were originally written in the Nahuatl (aka Aztec) language and presented in Mexico in the Colonial period (these plays have been translated into English; no one is required to participate in both plays, but you are certainly welcome to do so). Performances will take place in class on Thursday, May 12, and Tuesday, May 17. The actors must also submit a 2-page analysis of their play's role in the process of Christian evangelism, as well as its possible reception by the indigenous audience. 3) Members of our 483/583 audience may elect to write a 5-page paper about one or both plays. Due dates are as follows: Indigenous Christianity, Tuesday, May 10; actor and audience papers, Thursday, May 26; idolatry and resistance, Tuesday, May 31.

Remember that you can decide to tackle more than one of these papers and activities. Please discuss this with me if you’d like to do so. You must still take the midterm, and complete the final paper, if you decide to take on this extra work to bolster your grade, out of intrinsic interest, etc. Graduate students enrolled in HIST 583 must write at least 2 of these 3 papers.

The gods and saints will smile upon you if you get your work in on time. But malevolent forces take over if it comes in late! All work turned in after the end of class on the relevant due date will be assessed a fine of 3 points. Five (5) points will be deducted for each additional day after this, including weekends. This kind of thing can rapidly plunge your grade into the infernal depths of hell..., well, you know where.

PARTICIPATION

Class meetings will often include both lecture and discussion. Your participation is worth 10% of the course grade. For this format to work, everyone must prepare for class and come ready to participate. Roll will be taken for each class meeting, as well. The aim is for everyone to attend, take part in, and enjoy the course. Depending on the number of graduate student enrolled in HIST 583, I may establish reading and discussion meetings (a kind of "mini seminar") with them outside of the regular class times.

GRADING SUMMARY

Midterm    25%
Essay 2/Play   25%
Research Paper 40%
Participation 10%


SOME RULES FOR THE CLASSROOM

1. Please turn off your cell phones and put them away in your backpacks, bags, etc., during class meetings.

2. Laptops may only be used by permission, and users must sit in the first row of seats in the classroom. It is assumed that you will use your laptops for note taking, only. Otherwise, we will rarely if ever have occasion to go online for anything related to the course during class meetings.

3. Please let me know if you need to leave class early for any reason. Otherwise, please do not leave and the classroom during our sessions, as this is disruptive.

COURSE CALENDAR

March

WEEK 1

T 29 Introduction to the Course

TH 31 The Rise of Expansionist Christianity

April

WEEK 2

T 5 Faith and Life in Early Modern Spain

Th 7 Religion and Society in the Americas

WEEK 3

T 12 Religion and Society in the Americas, continued

Th 14 Discussion: Truth or Myth? Assessing Religious Beliefs in Spain and the Americas

WEEK 4
T 19  **IN-CLASS EXAM**: Pre-contact Religions in Europe and the Americas

Th 21  Conquistadores without Swords

**WEEK 5**

T 26  An Age of Miracles

Th 28  A New Kind of Christianity?

**May**

**WEEK 6**

T 3  Discussion: The First Stages of Evangelization

Th 5  The Virgin of Guadalupe

**WEEK 7**

T 10  Evangelical Theater, Music, and Indigenous Society

  **INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANITY ESSAY DUE**

Th 12  The Play’s the Thing, 1

**WEEK 8**

T 17  The Play’s the Thing, 2

Th 19  Discussion: Evangelical Theater and Indigenous Religiosity

**WEEK 9**

T 24  Idolatry and Extirpation

Th 26  Soldiers of the Virgin: Millennialism and Resistance

  **ACTOR OR AUDIENCE ESSAYS DUE**

**WEEK 10**

T 31  Short Presentation and Discussion: Martyrs, Traitors, and Idolaters, or, Was There Really a Spiritual Conquest?

  **RESISTANCE AND IDOLATRY ESSAYS DUE**

**June**
Th 2 Final Paper Workshop

Finals Week

W 8 RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN 355 MCKENZIE BY 5:00 P.M.