Spiritual Conquest: Religious Imperialism and Spirituality in the New World, Pre-Contact to the Present [PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS]

History 483 – CRN: 42144
SUMMER 2015

Monday – Thursday, 12:00 – 1:50 PM
285 Lillis

Josh Fitzgerald, PhD Candidate
University of Oregon, Department of History
Office: MCK 350A

Phone: (541) 346-8702
Email: fitzger3@uoregon.edu

Course Description:

History 483, Spiritual Conquest, examines the process of European evangelism and cultural imperialism in the years leading up to American-Iberian transatlantic contact (beginning roughly at 1400), during the Colonial Period, and up to the present day. Using the so-called “Spiritual Conquest” as a pivot point, we will cover the preexisting religious institutions and popular practices of Mesoamerica and Andes, Christian traditions from the Iberian Peninsula, as well as some discussion of African religious traditions at contact. We will then investigate the religious implications and outcomes of the European-Christian military campaign against the Aztec, Incan, and other indigenous societies. Then we turn to how religious officials planned to destroy diabolism and the development of new American “Catholicisms” in the Colonial Period. Later, we will look at the rise of religious proto-nationalism with independence movements in the early nineteenth century. Finally, we will spend some of our last week discussing the legacies of cultural imperialism and the persistence of local religious identity to the present.

We will ask hard questions about the role spirituality played in colonization. These include: What was Christianity before the Conquest? What were the religions of the pre-contact Americas and how did they encounter Christianity? How did African religions factor into colonialism? How did evangelism take hold, from the jungles of Brazilian Amazon to the dry heat of the Sonoran Desert? How did colonizers ‘teach in’ Christianity? How did gender roles transform, and why? What was the Spanish-American Inquisition, and how did it work? Why did the accused turn to heresy? How did they defend the charges against their immortal soul? Why did political leaders turn to religion to start revolts or independence movements in the late-colonial period?

To answer these questions, throughout the course students will delve into primary sources from Spanish, Indian, African, and mixed-race peoples, covering topics including: gods, mangods, priests, conquistadors, elites, commoners, sinners, saints, demons, and witches. These documents problematize the easy story of a top-down Spiritual Conquest depicted by some historians, and they will allow us to interpret cultural transformations and adaptations that occurred in the daily lives of colonial peoples. This course foregrounds the historical meanings of art and culture; students will deconstruct symbol-ridden images, religious theater, architecture, and rituals that challenge our assumptions about cultural hegemony. In the end, students will
leave this course with a better understanding of the conflicting power of religion, a core human value that often weaves communities together while it also rips them apart.

This course satisfies 4 credits towards the UO Department of History’s pre-1800 credit and Latin America field requirements.

Readings and Selected Texts:
All course reading selections will be available online, through the course website, and held on Course Reserve at the Knight Library. Assigned daily readings will be manageable lengths and listed in the weekly assignments calendar. This is a summer course. The amount of reading will generally be between 20 to 30 pages per night, although some nights I will have no readings assigned. However, students will be expected to do all the readings and be ready to discuss them in class the following day.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Your grade will consist of 5 elements:

- Participation (20%)
- In-Class Response Paragraphs (15%)
- Online Research Assignment (15%)
- Primary Source Paper (20%)
- In-Class Final Exam (30%)

Assignment Details:

- Participation (20%)
  Attendance is not required, but participation is. I am looking forward to a vibrant debate on the core themes and topics you find in the readings and primary sources. Glazed-over stares or snoring will not be conducive to an active learning experience. Come to class to share your thoughts on what we’ve read. Also, be respectful of your peers and follow the guidelines in the Student Code of Conduct.

- In-Class Response Paragraphs (3 X 5% = 15%)
  The 3 In-Class Paragraphs are designed to draw out and reflect on the core themes and discussion topics of the week. Students will identify key historical figures, places, and objects, as well as religio-political movements and their core ideology. Grammar and spelling will matter less than the content you bring to bear in your reflection.

- Online Research Assignment (15%)
  The Online Research Assignment tasks you to search, survey and review an online source with relevance to Latin American religion, religious traditions, and/or the legacy of the Spiritual Conquest. For example: explore a set of Catholic tourist sites to determine how they promote sacred places. Survey a few news stories about religious conflict or new evangelism in Central America. Watch some Youtube clips about Mabel Jones’ personal journey to the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico. Whichever topic you chose, make it a serious study that connects the ‘magic’ of the internet to our course themes.

- Primary Source Paper (20%)
This short paper (2 to 3 pages) will prompt you to identify, investigate, and analyze two sources, encouraging you to compare, contrast, and argue an original idea using the evidence. You will give your informed interpretation, based on the secondary sources and class discussions, regarding the historical context of the moment and motivations of the authors. Although this is not an English course, I expect proper grammar and clear academic prose. In the end, this assignment builds critical-thinking and communication skills will help you in the job market.

- **In-Class Final Exam (30%)**
  [Format TBA]

**Learning Objectives:**

The course assignments, readings, and lectures are designed to introduce the student to a body of historical information as well as build upon the student’s intellectual skills that apply to “real world” activities outside the classroom and your professional career path. We will learn:

- The history and legacy of cultural, social, political, and economic changes resulting from religious imperialism and confluence in the colonial period and up to the present
- The study of religious history and key scholarly arguments about cultural imperialism
- How to use primary and secondary source evidence to construct a coherent written argument
- Improved communication and writing skills

**Policy on Late Submissions, Missed Assignments, and Extra Credit:**

Late assignments lose points at 10%/day late. I will NOT give make-up assignments for missed in-class assignments. Be sure to attend class on days that have Response Paragraphs due and get the other assignments in on time to avoid this penalty. However, there will be a few options for Extra Credit, which will bulk up Participation points and ‘boost’ your score on the Final.

**Grading rubric:**

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards, but which exhibits some engagement with the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

This class is not graded on a curve.

**Course Policies:**

1. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. I will take role daily and a portion of your participation score will come from you simply sitting through class. Our classes will
follow a Lecture/Discussion format with the first portion of class devoted to a contextual lecture on the day’s topic, then a brief break/intermission, followed by a group discussion. I will do my best to facilitate an interesting discussion, however, I will rely on you to bring your engaging thoughts and questions to the table.

2. **Respect:** Mutual respect and courtesy are necessary for a safe and healthy learning experience. I want your thought provoking questions, but I and your peers will not tolerate disrespectful behavior.

3. **Tech. Policy:** This is a tech friendly environment. Smartphones, tablets/IPads, laptops, and portable electronic devices used for note taking or course text referencing are welcome. However, this privilege will end if these devices become a class distraction.

4. **Student Conduct and Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Cheating will result in an F for the course and a permanent mark the cheater’s student record. All students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct and Plagiarism Guide for Students available through the UO website: https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx

**Accessibility:**
The University of Oregon works to create inclusive learning environment. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

**Class Schedule:**
Note: all readings are to be completed before the class for which they are assigned. All readings will be located online, in the Documents section of the course website.

[Calendar TBA]