**Mesoamerica, Oaxaca, and Francisco Toledo**

Teacher: Phillip Callaway

Level: Middle School (11-14 years of age)

Subject: Spanish (can be used for language instruction, or modified for cultural instruction in English)

Time Needed: parts of 12 weeks during the 2nd semester

Collaboration: Work with Art and Social Studies/Georgia History Teachers

Date Created: September 21, 2015 (but edited by Stephanie Wood, November 2015)

**PART I, BACKGROUND**

**Essential Questions**

* What are some traditional symbols of Oaxacan culture and history?
* What are the sources for these symbols?
* How is Oaxaca known outside Mexico?
* Who are the Oaxacans?
* Who are some well-known Oaxacans?
* How does Oaxaca seem similar or different from the Mexico you have learned about?

Teacher’s Role: Teacher will provide introductory and background information and model daily activities.

Students’ Role: Students will participate actively by listening, asking questions, and doing the required activities.

Activities:

1. Map exercise: Students consult several maps (in textbook **En Español** or online) to locate the state of Oaxaca and the city of Oaxaca. Then they locate it within the broader boundaries of Mesoamerica.
2. Map exercise: Students research 3-5 ancient archaeological sites. They will read about Monte Albán, Atzompa, and Mitla, for example, give basic dates and two other facts about those sites (starting point Stephanie Wood, NEH Mesoamerica 2015 website). How do these sites compare and contrast with sites in Georgia, such as the Indian mounds in Macon and Cartersville (online, visits)?
3. Pelota research: Students research Mesoamerican and modern Mexican *pelota* (ball) courts, other artifacts, and images. They ask themselves whether the ancient Mesoamerican *pelota* game reminds them of any games they play or know. Who plays? What’s the goal? Is there a significance beyond the game itself (NEH website and links)?
4. Numbers and the Calendar: Using handouts provided, students learn about and practice writing numbers in order to count days of the month (online sources).
5. Glyphs and the Calendar: Using handouts provided, students sketch and color their birthdays or some other important dates. For glyphs, see M. Jansen and G.A. Pérez Jiménez, **Codex Bodley** (Oxford: Bodlian Library), pp. 17–18.
6. Records of Tribute: Using handouts provided, students learn some typical tributes and how to count them (NEH website and links; Jansen and Pérez Jiménez, [Codex Mendoza, Folia 43], p. 23).
7. Food words in Nahuatl and Spanish: Students create a restaurant menu using the vocabulary of both languages. They decorate their menus with images and words learned in activities 1-7 above (Michel Launey, **An Introduction to Classical Nahuatl**, glossary; James Lockhart, **Nahuatl as Written**, glossary.
8. Wordle: Students use Wordle to create a “word design” using vocabulary related to Oaxacan themes.
9. Indigenous peoples of Oaxaca: Students will research the Zapotecas and Mixtecas, writing a page on each. They need to answer at least the following questions: Who are they? Where do and did they live? When did they live in the state of Oaxaca? Are they connected with known historical locations and events? Which documents tell us about them? What can you learn about their languages? What contributions have they made to civilization. Students may substitute another indigenous group for either the Zapotecas or the Mixtecas (NEH website).
10. Indigenous peoples of Georgia: Students research one indigenous group from Georgia such as the Cherokee and ask and answer questions like those in 9 above (Georgia History textbook and online resources).
11. Assessment 1 on Mesoamerica and Oaxaca: students make a travel brochure showcasing what they have learned.

**PART II, THE OAXACAN ARTIST FRANCISCO TOLEDO**

**Essential Questions**:

* Who are some famous Oaxacans?
* Who is Francisco Toledo?
* Where is he from?
* What does he do?
* What are his contributions as an artist?
* Is his Zapotec heritage reflected in his art?
* What are his contributions as a citizen of Oaxaca?
* What do you like about his art?
* What contributions to your community might you make one day?

Teacher’s Role: Based on research and experience in Oaxaca, the teacher will create a PowerPoint presentation that introduces students to famous Oaxacans with emphasis on the person and art of Francisco Toledo. Students will learn about the biography of Francisco Toledo and be introduced to his work in various media, but especially painting. Students will be introduced to some of his fantastic creatures, including some of those in ***Zoología Fantástica*** (Francisco Toledo & Jorge Luis Borges). They will read parts of the Zapotec story “Cuento del Conejo y el Coyote,” illustrated by Toledo in English, and be able to look at the text in Zapotec, perhaps learn a few words. Students will view select illustrations in Toledo’s ***Pinocho***. Students will be introduced to Francisco Toledo’s contributions to Oaxaca’s culture and his social activism. Finally, students will become acquainted with his collection of kite designs and create their own.

Students’ Role: Students will participate actively by listening, asking questions, and above all asking themselves how they personally relate to Francisco Toledo’s art, cultural contributions, and civic activism.

1. Students will research and write a 2-page essay on Francisco Toledo, include a photograph of him and a piece his art that they like (a total of 3 pages). After watching a PowerPoint on Toledo, his life, his art, and social-political activities, students will conduct online research for what interests them about Toledo.
2. Students will study Toledo’s own website in order to comprehend the breadth of his artistic production (www.franciscotoledo.net).
3. Students will learn the Zapotec names of some animals featured in his repertoire (online site).
4. Students will make rabbit and coyote masks (conducted in collaboration with the art teacher).
5. Students will read and act out in English (for 8th-graders perhaps simplified Spanish) the story “Cuento del Conejo y el Coyote.” Teacher selects several scenarios in “Cuento del Conejo” as a Zapotec example of the trickster and has students read/act them out.
6. Students will discuss whether this story has counterparts in Georgia folklore or even or cartoons which feature two conflicting characters (animals). Students learn or are reminded of the tales of Joel Chandler Harris from Georgia (whose house and center are in Atlanta. Students often take field trips to listen to the resident storyteller).
7. Students will read a handout about Toledo’s contributions to the Ethnobotanical Garden, the creation of the Institute of Graphic Arts of Oaxaca, the CASA, and MACO, and social activism in Juchitán and Oaxaca (Pro-Oax).
8. Students read excerpts from two interviews with Toledo (Christopher Goodwin, “His Name is Francisco Toledo, but Everyone Calls him El Maestro,” and George M. Moore, “Francisco Toledo"). For fuller documentation, see the PowerPoint to this Part II, slides. After making notes on the interviews, students will write 2 pages about 5 facets of Toledo’s life, art, and activism.
9. Students may watch the documentary “El Informe Toledo” found online and record 10 things they learned from it.
10. Students will write a 2-page essay about how they would enhance cultural and social aspects of their own school, town, or recreational areas in light of what they have learned about Francisco Toledo.
11. Students will research Toledo’s kite collection as well as review Oaxacan images from Part I and choose a kite shape and theme. Students will use several class periods to initiate and complete their kites, which will be displayed at an appropriate place in the school. Students will model their kites of a Toledo origin with elephant motif.

Major Assessment 2 on the Francisco Toledo, his Works, and his Civic-Mindedness: Students will write a reflection essay using their notes and other resources.