

Early Colonial Contact & Conquest Narratives of the Americas, 1400s-1650s

being a reading of worthy bookes concerning notable
voyages of discovery and conquests relating to the
various possessions now styled **Newe Spain.**

**Newe France. La Florida. and Newe
England. and including sundry workes
by the peoples called *Los Indios* by
the Spaniards**

from the 1400s unto the yeere of our Lord 1650

with especial attention given to useful knowledges of the
political, social, geographic, and ethnographic situations
of the same,

AND ENCLUDING THE CRITICAL JUDGMENTS FROM PROMINENT
SCHOLARS, SUITABLE FOR BOTH UNDERGRADUATE AND
GRADUATE STUDENTS

HISTORY WITHOUT THAT SO MUCH NEGLECTED STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY IS SICK OF A
HALF DEAD PALSY
-SAM: PURCHAS

truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which
produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and
which extends it. a 'regime' of truth
-MICH: FOUCAULT

OFFERED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA (LATE OF
NEVV FRANCE) AS AN ESPECIAL TOPICS COURSE NUMBERED
ENGL 4960/8966

*Through the instructional efforts of David J. Peterson, Ph.D., Assistant
Professor of English*

Set up and typed at the offices of English and published by the same, at the sign of the ants, ASH Hall
189W, Omaha, 554-2855
MM.IX.

PREREQUISITES

Undergraduate: ENGL2410/2420 *Graduate:* Graduate Standing; ENGL8010 strongly recommended

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

The literature of the contact and conquest period has traditionally been taught from a New England perspective, as though the only texts we need concern ourselves with are those of the Pilgrims and Puritans. Rarely are the voices of the Spanish or French, two of the other major European powers who explored and colonized the Americas, heard, and rarer still have the voices of the indigenous peoples been taken into account. The course seeks to redress these absences through intensive study of narratives from various perspectives (English, French, Mayan, Aztec, Spanish, etc), all produced between, roughly, the mid-1400s (in the case of the Codex Nuttall) and the 1650s.

The colonial narratives of the contact & conquest of the “New World” unfold within what Mary Louis Pratt has called “contact zones,” which are “space[s] of colonial encounters, the space[s] in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish on going relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). The insights of Pratt, Greenblatt, Foucault, and others will inform students’ reading of these texts. Additionally, the following subjects will guide students’ reading throughout the semester:

- Narrative legitimization of inter- & intracolonial conquest, authority, & power
- Representations of “New World” space and landscape
- Narrative production of “New World” knowledges
- Narratization of a colony’s “history”
- Representations & the colonizing power’s interests
- Representations & the colony’s interests
- Representations & individual writer’s interests
- Representations of indigenous peoples
- Representations of relations between indigenous people and Europeans
- Role of gender in the production of knowledge, narrative, & representations
- Narrative (voice, style, figures of speech) & the production of knowledge/power
- Narrative definitions of the boundaries between the colonizer & the colonized
- Narrative production of knowledge of the Other & knowledge of the European self

Of course we will also pay attention to the linguistic and descriptive pleasures of these texts—which are many—delighting in their appreciation of “their” marvelous possessions (Greenblatt). But we must also interrogate the sometimes destructive ideologies that undergird them and that, we may find in some cases, still inform our understanding of America in the present.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bradford, William. *Of Plimouth Plantation*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1856. [.pdf on blackboard; online edition: Google Books <<http://books.google.com>>]

The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico. Ed. Miguel Leon-Portillo. Boston: Beacon, 1992. [0875805566]

Cabeza de Vaca, Alvaro Nunez. *Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*. Tr. Cyclone Covey. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1997. [082630656X]

[online text option—diff. translation—at <http://texashistory.unt.edu/permalink/meta-ptb-3001:1>]

- Codex Nuttall: A Picture Manuscript from Ancient Mexico*. Ed. Zelia Nuttall. New York: Dover, 1975. [0486231682]
 [online text option: <http://www.famsi.org/research/graz/zouche_nuttall/thumbs_0.html>]
- Columbus, Christopher. *The Four Voyages*. Tr. J. M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1992. [0140442170]
- de Landa, Diego. *Yucatan Before and After the Conquest*. Tr. William Gates. New York: Dover, 1978. [0486236226]
 [online text option: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cat/srchtitl.htm?search_str=Yucatan>]
- de Champlain, Samuel. *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*. Ed. W. L. Grant. Tr. Charles Pomeroy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.
 [online text—Google Books: <<http://books.google.com>> .pdf version on blackboard]
- de las Casas, Bartolome. *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. Tr. Nigel Griffin. London: Penguin, 1992. [0140445625]
- de Laudonniere, Rene Goulaine. *Three Voyages*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2001. [0817311211]
- Diaz del Castillo, Bernal. *The Conquest of New Spain*. Tr. J. M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1963. [0140441239]
- Fourth Voyage of the Frenchmen into Florida under the conduct of Captain Gourgues, in the yeare 1567. A Notable Historie containing foure voyages made by certayne French Captaynes unto Florida*. London: Imprinted by Thomas Dawson, 1587. 60-65. [online edition: EEBO; see blackboard .pdf]
- Popul Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*. Rev. Ed. Tr. Dennis Tedlock. New York: Schuster, 1996. [0684818450]

NOTE ON REQUIRED TEXTS, ONLINE TEXTS, AND ONLINE TEXT OPTIONS

Students are expected to purchase or otherwise acquire—AND READ—all required texts. I have provided ISBN numbers for the exact editions to facilitate online purchases (often you can find the text at a substantial discount). See the reading schedule for the order in which we will discuss the texts.

Texts denoted as **online** require students to access the specific text indicated. In some cases a .pdf of the text will be provided on Blackboard. Students may either print out reading copies or work with the texts via laptops. Note that students' previous experience suggests printing out a copy works best. In either case, students are expected to carefully annotate texts to facilitate classroom discussion.

Texts denoted as **online option** indicate students need not purchase the bookstore copy. In some cases, the online versions are easy to download, in other cases (such as with the Codex Nuttall or de Landa's text) they are not. In some cases the text is the same translation as the commercial copy. Regardless, students who opt not to buy the commercial copy will be responsible for bringing the online version to class, for figuring out how to annotate, and other wise prepare their online copies to facilitate classroom discussion.

Texts without these designations must be purchased. Either no online editions exist or those that do will not serve the purposes of the class. Some of our discussions will take into account material available in facsimile editions from the period (such as the 1583 and 1656 English editions and the original 1552 Spanish edition of de las Casas's narrative). These will be indicated on the syllabus, and material will generally be available via Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS

UNDERGRADUATE

- Critical Essay Presentation: 10-15 minutes
- Short Essay: 5-8 pages (could be prelim for research essay)
- Research Essay: 10-15 pages (must engage critical/cultural theory)
- Participation: class discussion, etc.

GRADUATE

- Presentation: Critical book length work, 15-20 minutes
- Graduate Discussion Lead-off: 20-25 minutes
- Short Essay: 6-10 pages (could be prelim for research essay)
- Research Essay: 20+ pages (must engage

critical/cultural theory)

GRADING

UNDERGRADUATE

Presentation	15%
Participation	20%
Short Essay	30%
Research Essay	35%

GRADUATE

Critical Book Presentation	10%
Discussion Lead-Off	10%
Short Essay	30%
Research Essay	50%

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1

August

M24	Course Introduction
W26	<i>Codex Nuttall</i>

Week 2

M31 *Codex Nuttall*

September

W2	Columbus, <i>Four Voyages</i>
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Week 3

M7 Labor Day

R9	Columbus, <i>Four Voyages</i> Todorov Presentation 1
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Week 4

M14 Diaz, *Conquest of New Spain (7-277)*

W16 Diaz, *Conquest of New Spain (278-413)*

FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNED

Todorov Presentation 2

Week 5

M21 *Broken Spears (1-90)*

Todorov Presentation 3

W23 *Broken Spears(91-182)*

Todorov Presentation 4

Week 6

M28 de las Casas, *Short Account (xiii-130)*

W30 Research & Drafting Day

Online discussion board forum

Week 7

October

M5 Cabeza de Vaca, *Adventures (7-108)*

Moffit & Sebastian presentation

Cabeza de Vaca bio & SW Tribes

W7 Cabeza de Vaca, *Adventures(108-151)*

Week 8

M12 Laudonniere, *Three Voyages (xi-147)*

Laudonniere bio & La Florida Tribes

W14 Laudonniere, *Three Voyages (149-184)*

Fourth Voyage of the Frenchmen (60-65)

Week 9

M19 **Fall Break**

W21 de Landa, *Yucatan*

FIRST ESSAY DUE

Week 10

M26 de Landa, *Yucatan*

SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNED

W27 Reading/Research Day

Week 11

November

M2 Research Discussion

W4 *Popul Vuh (15-88)*

Week 12

M9 *Popul Vuh (91-198)*

W11 *Popul Vuh*

Week 13

M16 de Champlain, *Three Voyages (all)*

de Champlain bio & 'New France' Tribes

W18 de Champlain, *Three Voyages*

Week 14

M23 Bradford, *Of Plymouth(vii-71)*

Bradford bio & 'New England' Tribes

W25 Thanksgiving break

Week 15

M30 Bradford, *Of Plymouth (72-277)*

Graduate Discussion Lead

December

W2 Bradford, *Of Plymouth (278-385)*

Week 16

M7 Research Paper Workshop

W9 Course Wrap-Up & Research Paper

Workshop

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE W16

A Selective Bibliography of primary and secondary texts is available on Blackboard