

Mexican Philosophy
PHIL 155 – Spring 2025
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:20pm
Peterson Hall [PETER] 104

INSTRUCTOR

Professor: Clinton Tolley
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Hours: Mon 12:30-2pm

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CANVAS SITE

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/65581>

COURSE READINGS

There are no required textbooks for the course; all the readings will be made available electronically as pdfs through Canvas / Google drive folder; for titles see the reading schedule below. One volume which has many of the readings from the second half of the course is *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century*, eds Sánchez and Sanchez (Oxford 2017; electronic access available through our library / Oxford Scholarship Online).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will serve as an introduction to Mexican philosophy, as to its history and the variety of its topics. We will focus on some of the more well-known contributions to the history of Mexican philosophy across the centuries of the emergence and development of Mexico itself as a people and eventually as a nation.

We will begin by looking at the thought of the indigenous peoples of the region (especially the Mayans and the Aztecs); then turning to philosophers wrestling with the Spanish ‘Conquest’ and the creation and maintenance of colonialism in the ‘New Spain’ (16th-17th centuries); moving on to the slow ‘modernizing’ of philosophy in the transition to Mexican Independence (18th-19th centuries); and then tracking philosophy in relation to the Mexican Revolution (early 20th century) – eventually focusing on post-WWII philosophy in the mid- and late 20th century, including the emergence of a ‘Mexican-American’ philosophy.

Some of the key themes we will discuss will include: the basic categories for understanding social groups and individual identity (e.g., family, people, race, ethnicity, nation, state); the relations between geography (land), history, and culture; the relation between truth and understanding (interpretation); the conditions for cross-cultural communication; the foundations for ethical and political value; the nature and value of science and art; the nature of religion and its place in culture; the meaning(s) of ‘progress’; the idea and fate of universal ‘humanism’.

NOTE: PHIL 155 can be used to fulfill the DEI course requirement.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. *Weekly questionnaires* (40%)

On Monday of each week, there will be a questionnaire posted on the course's Canvas page (under 'Quizzes'), to be completed on Canvas by the **end of Friday** (midnight) of the same week. The form of these questions will be multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank. The topics of the questions will be drawn from both the assigned readings and the lectures from the current week, and answering them will be a straightforward affair for anyone who attends lectures and completes all the readings.

* Extra credit: During finals week there will be an optional extra-credit questionnaire, due Friday, June 13th, 5pm.

2. *Weekly online commentary posts* (10%) & *comments* (5%)

(A) Posts (10%): By **end of Thursday** (midnight) of each week, you will need to contribute a 200-word post to our Canvas discussion forum. Your post should include:

- (1) page- and/or section-number references to a 1-2 page stretch of our readings that is most of interest to you;
- (2) a quote of one sentence (or two) of particular interest to you from this stretch of text,
- (3) an explanation in your own words of the main idea of the sentence, and how you think it fits into the particular stretch of text, and the reading more generally,
- (4) some of your thoughts and opinions about the subject-matter in question, and
- (5) at least one question about the sentence you've chosen.

(B) Comments (5%): Before the **end of Friday** (midnight), you will also need to post one 100-word (minimum) comment on someone else's post.

* Extra credit: Each week you can earn another 0.25% toward your grade by responding a second time to posts and comments made by others (50-word minimum; once per week; up to an additional 2.5%).

3. *Weekly in-class worksheets* (10%)

Each week during one of the meetings there will be one short closed-book hand-written assignment distributed, completed, and discussed 'in class'; you must be present to complete this assignment.

4. *Two medium-length essays* (30%)

By end of Friday of Week 5 (May 2nd, midnight), and then again by the end of our scheduled final exam period (Tues June 10th, 6pm), you will be required to turn in a 1000-word essay in which you critically and argumentatively engage with some of the course material on a topic of your choosing, in relation to at least one and at most two of the philosophers we have discussed. Each essay should include both a presentation of the views of the philosopher(s) on this topic, as well as your thoughts about their views, and then finally your own thoughts about the topic itself. Your essays will be submitted electronically via Canvas / Turnitin.com (see note C below). The word-count for your essay should be placed at the end. (More information will be circulated during Weeks 5 and 10.)

5. *Two 5-minute 'check-in' meetings* (2 x 2.5% = 5%)

Each student is required to have two five-minute meetings with the instructors (professor or TA) during the term, once during the first half (weeks 1-5), a second during the second half (weeks 6-10). The canonical scheduling time for these meetings will be during the weekly office hours; if none of the office hour slots work with your schedule, please be in touch (sooner than later!) to make alternate arrangement for your meeting(s).

NOTE: participating in **at least one** of the one-on-one meetings is **required** in order **to pass** the class.

NOTES ABOUT REQUIREMENTS

A. No extensions will be granted for any assignment or exam, except in cases of genuine emergency (e.g., earthquake, flood, fire, death in the family, illness certified by a doctor). No extensions can be granted for the weekly questionnaires *at all*, due to the distribution of the correct answers shortly after the due date.

B. The UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship must be observed in this course. This includes observance of the following six principles:

As a student,

1. I will not receive or provide unauthorized assistance in examinations.
2. I will not use unauthorized materials during an examination.
3. I will not use materials from sources without proper quotation, acknowledgement or citations.
4. I will not alter examinations, essays, or other assignments for regrading.
5. I will not fabricate data or references.
6. I will not use false excuses to obtain extensions of time for examinations or writing assignments.

C. Maintaining academic integrity: Though students are strongly encouraged to discuss the assignments with one another, each student must submit answers to the assignments independently of one another, written in her or his own words. Additionally, students agree that by taking this course, their mid-term examinations and final papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted exams and papers will be included as source documents in the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) site.

D. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing (i) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, (ii) will receive a failing grade on the assignment at issue, and (iii) will be in jeopardy of failing the entire course, depending on the nature of the breach of academic integrity.

E. The use of technology (phones, tablets, computers, etc.) is to be limited to engagement with course material; all technology is prohibited during any closed-book assignment.

F. If any accommodations are needed due to a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible. Students requesting accommodations for the course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and also to the OSD Liaison in the Philosophy Department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

{subject to change; 'sel' = 'selections'}

week	Tues		Thurs	
1 intro; pre-1500	Apr 1: introduction, what is 'Mexican philosophy'?	[no reading]	Apr 3: the problem(s) of the 'beginning' of Mexican philosophy	Enrique Dussel, The Spiritual Conquest (1995)
2 pre-1500s indigenous thought	Apr 8: Mayan philosophy	Popul Vuh (sel)	Apr 10: Aztec / Nahuatl philosophy	fragments from Nezahualcōyotl and others
3 16 th century conquest and colonialism	Apr 15: Bartolomé de las Casas	The Only Way (sel) (1537)	Apr 17: Las Casas (cont.)	In Defense of the Indians (sel) (1552)
4 17 th century renaissance humanism	Apr 22: Sor Juana de la Cruz	Ballad (1689); Loa for Divine Narcissus (1689)	Apr 24: Sor Juana (cont.)	Redondilla (1689); Letter to Nuñez (1682)
5 18 th & early 19 th centuries: toward Independence	Apr 29: Juan Diaz de Gamarra	Errors of the Human Understanding (sel) (1781)	May 1: José Morelos; & José Mora	Sentiments of a Nation (1813); Anahuac Discourse (1813); Political Catechism (1831)
(1 st check-in due by end of 5 th week)			* Fri May 2: 1st paper due midnight	
6 late 19 th century modernism and positivism	May 6: Gabino Barreda	Civic Oration (sel) (1867)	May 8: Justo Sierra	Discourse on the Inauguration of the National University (1910)
7 20 th century the 'Ateneo' group near 'Revolution'	May 13: Antonio Caso	Existence as Economy, as Distinterest, and as Charity (1916)	May 15: José Vasconcelos	Race Problem (1926); Mestizaje (sel) (1925)
8 'lo mexicano' and the 'Hiperion' group	May 20: Samuel Ramos	Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico (sel) (1934)	May 22: Emilio Uranga	Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican (1949)
9 philosophies of community	May 27: Luis Villoro	Solitude and Communion (1948)	May 29: Jorge Portilla	Community, Greatness, and Misery (1949)
10 modern 'Mexican' identities	Jun 3: Rosario Castellanos	Meditation (1972); Sor Juana (1963); Abnegation (1971); Woman (1973); Friendship (1964)	Jun 5: Gloria Anzaldúa	Borderlands/La Frontera (sel) (1987)
(2 nd check-in due by end of 10 th week)				
exam week	* Tues June 10: 2nd paper due 6pm		Fri Jun 13 extra credit due 5pm	

Note: Students are very much encouraged to read all of the texts carefully twice over (e.g., once before class, once after), to aid comprehension.

Suggested background readings (also available in our Google drive)

Guillermo Hurtado, Robert Sanchez, 'Philosophy in Mexico', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online (2020); Carlos Sánchez, Robert Sanchez, 'Introduction', *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century* (2017); Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas* (1992); Octavio Paz, *Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950/59)