

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 296: Field School in Oaxaca: Identity, Politics & Place in a Globalizing Oaxaca

Dates: December 28, 2004 – January 11, 2005

Place: Oaxaca (City and Highlands), Mexico

Faculty: Luis A. Vivanco, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Anthropology (lvivanco@uvm.edu)

Gustavo Teran, Ed.D., University of North Carolina (gateran51@yahoo.com)

Course Description

In the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, economic globalization has weakened the ability of the state to continue centralized socioeconomic programs and has forced the redefinition of widely-circulating notions of development and political action. Oaxacans are currently struggling with the contradictory effects this has on civil society. Indigenous communities and civil society institutions have responded in innovative ways and themselves become new sites of public authority and local governance. Emerging from deliberate histories of resistance and localism, indigenous communities are engaging in cultural politics that is challenging received meanings of modernity, citizenship, participation, education, identity, and nature. This course is a field-based examination of these complex processes of socio-cultural change, with a special focus on how they play out in the domains of education, migration, tourism, and cultural/political ecology.

Course Format and Requirements

This traveling course includes lectures, discussions, small group activities, films, homestays, and field visits to communities. Although the dates of the course amount to a couple of weeks, we will meet before the trip and continue to meet sporadically during the Spring semester to continue conversations begun in Oaxaca.

You will be graded on the following:

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE
Participation	30%
Pre-trip Analytical Paper	10%
Reflection Papers (2)	25%
Post-trip Research Paper	35%

We expect you to complete the readings for this course *before* you get to Oaxaca. Upon your arrival in Oaxaca, we will collect your first assignment, which is a 6-8 page analytical paper based on some (or all, depending on your interest) of the assigned readings. In this paper, you should discuss at *least one of the books and one of the articles*, and your paper **should (1) refer to and outline the main ideas and arguments of the relevant course texts and (2) be followed by questions, commentary,**

assessments, analysis, protests, opinions, or any combination of these. There is no single way to do this – in many ways this writing assignment is open – as long as you are attempting to think critically about the readings.

You will have two short in-field assignments while we are in Oaxaca. These are focused reflection papers that meld field trips, guest presentations, readings, and your overall thoughts and questions. You should write daily in a field notebook and use your descriptive observations, reflections, and questions as a basis for your in-field papers. There is no set length, although four pages per assignment (hand-written) seems reasonable.

Reflection Paper #1 will be due towards the end of the first week. Compose it as a letter to a friend or family member. In it a) use descriptive language to convey something you have seen, smelled, tasted, or touched while in Oaxaca; b) synthesize some of the ideas important to you that you have heard from lectures or field visits; and c) discuss how you think you are being affected by your field experience.

Reflection Paper #2 will be due towards the end of the second week. It should address the following: a) since arriving in Oaxaca, in what ways have you reconceptualized your concepts of development, environment, and/or education? Give examples. b) are there ways in which you are thinking about your own life (for example, as a U.S. citizen, as an individual, as an environmentalist, as a teacher, etc.) differently? Give examples.

The final research paper or project should explore some aspect of Mexican culture, education, migration, and/or community development. Exactly what the final product will look like will be tailored to fit your needs and interests. By the end of the two weeks in the field, you should have discussed your ideas for this assignment with Luis and/or Gustavo, and handed in a brief paper topic proposal. For project proposals, describe the following: a) What do you want to do or discover? b) How will you gather the needed materials and information? c) How will you present your materials and information? and d) Why do you think this project is worthwhile? While the project option is designed to give you an opportunity to express your learning through new and creative ways (different from traditional research papers), this option also requires a written report. The research paper should follow commonly-accepted rules of academic scholarship and be at least 15 pages. **This project will be due Friday March 18, 2005.**

Required Readings

Books

NOTE: You should purchase these on your own; we recommend Amazon.com or have your local bookstore order them for you.

1. Bonfil, Guillermo (1996) *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*. University of Texas Press.
2. Gonzalez, Roberto (2001) *Zapotec Science: Farming and Food in the Northern Sierra of Oaxaca*. University of Texas Press.

Articles

NOTE: We will provide you with photocopies of these articles.

1. Cohen, Jeffrey (2001) "Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development, and Household." *American Anthropologist* 103(4): 954-67.
2. Esteva, Gustavo. (1987) "Regenerating Peoples' Space." In *Towards a Just World Peace: Perspectives from Social Movements*, London: Butterworths, pp. 271-98.
3. Toledo, Victor (2001) "Biocultural Diversity and Local Power in Mexico: Challenging Globalization." In *On Biocultural Diversity: Linking Language, Knowledge and the Environment* (Smithsonian), pp. 472-88.
4. Quinones, Sam (2001) "Zeus and the Oaxaca Hoops." In *True Tales from Another Mexico*, pp. 117-35.
5. Illich, Ivan, Carl Mitcham, and Jerry Brown. (1998) "The Politics of Friendship." In Jerry Brown, *Dialogues*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books, pp. 51-62.
6. Higgins and Coen (2000) "Chapter One: Streets, Bedrooms, and Patios: The Ordinarity of Diversity in Urban Oaxaca." In *Streets, Bedrooms, and Patios: The Ordinarity of Diversity in Urban Oaxaca*, pp. 1-20.
7. Morales, Teresa. "Cultural Appropriation in Community Museums."
<http://museumstudies.si.edu/Morales.htm>
8. Illich, Ivan. "To Hell with good intentions."

Films

Sometime before we leave campus, we will show the film "Oaxacalifornia" and "Little Injustices."