

HIST 459
Spring 2010
Drugs in Latin American History

Monday 1:30-5:20

Location: Harbour Centre 2235

Instructor: Alexander Dawson

Office: AQ 6016

Phone: 778-782-3405

Email: aldawson@sfu.ca

Lately we talk about drugs a great deal. The public obsesses about the drugs our Olympic athletes may or may not take. Gunshots throughout the lower mainland are attributed to drugs, and sometimes to the pernicious influence of shadowy Mexican figures. Head shops open, close, and open again, as the public debates their relative merits and questions of what should and should not be illegal. And yet we so often talk about drugs as if they are a single category, as if everyone knows what they are, and as if they have no history.

This course endeavors to challenge many of our assumptions about the meanings of the concept “drug” by taking a historical approach to understanding their changing places in the Americas over time. We will break down the very concept of “drug”, explore questions of how things are classified as drugs, and then how those substances become licit or illicit. We will examine the varied impacts of prohibition and legality, and the ways that substances we call drugs are integrated into larger social, cultural, economic, and political phenomena. Moreover, this course will be a study of meaning, an effort to understand why one society’s sacrament is another’s evil.

Grading:

Students will be required to write two book reviews (due February 1 and March 29), a term paper (due April 12), and a take-home final exam (distributed in class April 12, due in my Office, by 3 pm April 26) for this course. They will also be required to make two class presentations, and participate regularly in class discussions.

Two Book Reviews: 20%

Research Essay: 30%

Class Presentations: 20%

Participation: 15%

Take Home Final: 15%

Assigned Texts:

Philippe Bourgeois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*.

David Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*.

Richard Evans Schultes, et al. *Plants of the Gods: Their Sacred, Healing, and Hallucinogenic Powers*.

Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, Intoxicants*.

Jay Stevens, *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 (January 4)
Introductions

Part One: Drugs in a Global Historical Context

Week 2 (January 11)
Readings: Schivelbusch, Preface, Chapters 1-4

Week 3 (January 18)
Readings: Schivelbusch, Chapters 5-8, Afterward

Week 4 (January 25)
Readings: Courtwright, Introduction, Chapters 1-6

Week 5 (February 1)
Readings: Courtwright, Chapters 6-10
Book Review One Due

Part Two: The Mythic, the Magical, and the Other

Week 6 (February 8)
Readings: Stevens, Prologue, Chapters 1-13

February 15-26 Olympic Games break; classes cancelled

Week 7 (March 1)

Readings: Stevens, Chapters 13-26, Epilogue

Week 8 (March 8)

Readings: Evans Shultes

Part Three: Networks, Commodity Chains, and the Market

Week 9 (March 15)

Readings: Gootenberg, Introduction. Chapters 1-4

Week 10 (March 22)

Readings: Gootenberg, Chapters 5-7

Week 11 (March 29)

Readings: Bourgeois, Introduction, Chapters 1-4

Book Review Two Due

Week 12 (April 5)

No Class

Week 13 (April 12)

Readings: Bourgeois, Chapters 5-8, Both Epilogues

Research Essay Due