

First Year Exam Questions
Latin American History
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Question 1:

A. In recent years scholars have begun to challenge the once dominant division of Latin American history into discrete periods defined by conquest/empire, independence/republicanism, and late nineteenth century economic/political modernization. Discuss the specific challenges that scholars have posed to traditional framings of time and change in Latin American history making concrete reference to particular regions/ countries, situations, ideologies, etc., and the ways in which reconsiderations of period shifts have (or have not) produced new or different understandings of the past. As you frame your answer be specific and think comparatively about the impact of issues such as ethnicity/race/gender/class, labor, production, geography and systems of exchange on the possibilities/limitations of new analytical framings of Latin America's historical development since the late 18th/early 19th century through the mid-20th century.

B. Argentine historian José Moya has argued that contrary to a long-standing vision of Latin America as hopelessly lagging in its political, cultural and economic development when compared to other, especially, "western" societies – a result in part of a three-hundred plus year legacy of Iberian authority and influence – by the early 19th century Latin America was situated at the "forefront of two trends that are regularly considered thresholds of the modern world": the widespread adoption of Liberalism as a popular ideology and the development of the nation-state. Discuss the shifts in focus, sources, methodology or theoretical framework that might support or contradict a re-conceptualization of Latin American history as that of a region central, rather than peripheral to questions of historical modernity.

Question 2:

A. Generations of historians of Latin America have commented on how the region's post-Independence republics, despite offering the promise of opening up politics to mass participation and the conferring of a broad range of universal political and civil rights, consistently betrayed the non-elite majority. How have scholars explained these post-colonial regime's oligarchical tendencies? How have scholars complicated or contested this model of restricted political citizenship? In your answer, be as precise and specific as you can and be sure to think comparatively across national cases.

B. Historian Kris Lane writes in his study of late 16th century Andean society, that, "For the Spanish, like the Romans, urbanization was the handmaiden of

hegemony.” To what extent might this idea be applied to all of Latin America from the colonial through the 20th century, not just areas under Spanish rule in the colonial period? Using specific examples drawn from different regions and time periods, discuss the relationship/tensions between the rural, the urban, the construction of the nation-state, and the exercise of power in Latin America. How have historians considered the relationship between the development of urban centers and the distribution and exercise of power? How has urbanization shaped or influenced notions of individual and collective rights, identity and/or forms of association? In your answer, please consider not only the mobilization and control of populations in rural and urban areas over time, but also the broader geopolitics of Latin America’s “centers” and “peripheries.”