**HUMA E-220 Frida Kahlo's Mexico: Women, Arts, and Revolution**

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**Dr. María Luisa Parra**

Department of Romance Languages and Literatures Harvard Univeristy

Parra@fas.harvard.edu

Office hours by appointment

This course revolves around the short, creative life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, one of the most prominent figures in art history, as a window to the cultural and political revolution that shaped Mexico's identity in the twentieth century and continues to influence Latinos today. Through Frida's life and artwork, we see how two international influences in Mexico's cultural and political life—Soviet politics and French avant-garde—merged with national agendas that sought to redefine Mexico's identity through the integration of their indigenous and people's heritage. The result was a time of booming creativity in the arts, radical expansion of educational and political agendas, as well as a redefinition of women's identity, sexuality, and the Mexican family. We trace her romantic and artistic relationship with Diego Rivera and explore her impact on the intensely creative social circle that included: the Taller de Gráfica Popular, the three Mexican muralists (Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozoco and David Alfaro Siqueiros) and Rufino Tamayo; photographers Lola Álvarez Bravo and Tina Modotti; important female artists such as María Izquierdo and Aurora Reyes; the composers Manuel M. Ponce, Silvertre Revueltas and Carlos Chavez. The course includes special sessions at to the Fogg Museum for local students to see some of the Mexican muralist art work on display, and also a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts to see the newly acquired painting by Frida Kahlo, *Dos mujeres. (Salvadora y Herminia).*

**Course goals**

At the end of the course students:

1. Will be familiar with the cultural and political Mexican context within which Frida Kahlo developed her work.

2. Will identify the main political and cultural personalities that influenced Frida's life and work.

3. Will have a foundation for appreciating, analyzing and interpreting the works of influential Mexican artists from the first half of the twenty century, in particular those of Frida Kahlo.

**Course Requirements:**

* **Class attendance.** Absences impede the flow of the course and interfere with the learning process. For these reasons I encourage students to attend every class and weekly section. **If you are taking the course for credit** attendance is mandatory. After the first week, unexcused absences for three or more classes will affect the overall grade. We encourage students to contact their instructor or course head in such cases. After a third absence, your grade drops from A to A-, A- to B+, and so on.
* **Participation.** Students are required to read the assigned reading before class and participate in every class. Preparation and quality participation in class are essential and important parts of the course success.
* **Discussion board entry**: Students are also encouraged to post on the class discussion board comments, news or articles they find about a theme related to Frida or topics discussed in class. Students should participate in this board weekly. This counts as part of participation.
* **Written assignments.**
* **Weekly reading reports (10):** Students will write a weekly reading report (no more than 250 words each (see guidelines on Canvas) commenting and reflecting on the reading of the week they found more interesting.
* **Graduate students are expected to** include an extra paragraph to reflect on the conexion between each reading and their own graduate work.
* Reports are due every Friday at 10pm.
* **Essays:** There will be 4 written essays related to description, analysis and interpretation of several works of art from Frida Kahlo and other artists studied in the course. All written essays will be turned in on FRIDAY of the corresponding week.

1) "Training your eyes" (Descriptive exercise, 2 pages). Week 3-September 20.

2) "Knowing the historical background" (Interpretive exercise, 4 pages). Week 6-

October 11.

3) "Finding 'Frida's Mexico' nearby" There will also be one project where

each student will research the presence (in a museum, university or private

collection) of Mexican art in their city, community or near by town. (5

pages). Week 9-November 1st.

4) "Interpreting Frida" (5 pages) (This exercise will be part of the final

project). Week 13-November 22.

* **Final project and essay. Due date: Week 15. December 13.** "Frida's Mexico and me." In this final project, students will have the opportunity to create an art work and write an essay where they integrate what they have learned about Frida's life and historical context with their own life experiences. (1 art work and 4 pages). Over the years my students have found both personal fulfillment and academic success in doing this type of art-writing project.
* **Graduate students are expected to** include an extra page to reflect on the conexion between their final art project and their own graduate work.

**Grades:**

Participation in class and weekly discussion blog (15%)

Weekly reading report (10%)

"Training your eyes" essay (10%)

"Knowing the historical background" essay (15%)

"Finding 'Frida's Mexico' nearby" essay (15%)

"Interpreting Frida" (15%)

"Frida's Mexico and me" (Final creative project and essay) (20%)

**Readings:**

* We will work with several excerpts and chapters from history and art books. PDFs will be posted on the course Canvas site.

Books:(Students can but the books at the place of their convenience)

* M*exican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* by Desmond Rochfort (Required)
* *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings* by Hayden Herrera (Recommended: We will work with most of the paintings of this publication).

**Documentary and Films: Students can see them on the web and Canvas.**

# The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo | PBS America

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrC1s5qde3Y>

* Ccoco, [Lee Unkrich](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS719US719&q=Lee+Unkrich&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LVT9c3NEw2LjA1qCiMV-LUz9U3SMrKtizUEstOttJPy8zJBRNWKZlFqckl-UUAXGHrjzQAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjrioHWl4PdAhWBiOAKHUyEDTgQmxMoATAuegQIBRA6), 2017. Pixar.
* Frida, Julie Taymor, 2002.
* Frida: Naturalueza Viva (en español) (Frida:Still life), [Paul Leduc](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS719US719&q=Paul+Leduc&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LSz9U3SCq0LDJOV-IEsQ2LitPztMSyk6300zJzcsGEVUpmUWpySX4RAEhYPL8xAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiJ9ayUmIPdAhWMmOAKHZOEDY4QmxMoATAkegQIBxA2), 1983.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8N4sEAW8_o>

**Important Information**

* **Accessibility** The Extension School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Office offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities. Please visit www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources/disability- services-accessibility for more information.
* **Extra help and support for the course.** Students should always keep in communication with their teacher about their needs for extra support and help.
* **Plagiarism.** It is Harvard University's policy not to tolerate plagiarism of any kind. Extension School students are responsible for following the standards of proper citation to avoid plagiarism. Please visit the website for Academic integrity policies http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student- conduct/academic-integrity and other useful resources: *The Harvard Guide to Using Sources* and the Extension School’s tips to avoid plagiarism.

**¡BIENVENIDOS al México de Frida!**

**Introduction**

**Week 1. September 4**

Welcome and Introduction to the course Setting up the global context of Frida's Mexico.

Readings:

Tibol, Raquel: Introducción. *Frida Kahlo: An open life*. pp.1-7

Discussion:

What to look for in Mexican visual art (“A guide to observe Mexican art”).

Handout: What to look for in Mexican visual art: Exercise "Training your eyes."

**Week 2. September 11**

**The Mexican context of Frida's life.**

Discussion documentary "The life and time of Frida Kahlo", Part I. (In class). See handout in Canvas

Readings:

Speckman-Guerra, E. (2013). The Porfiriato. In P. Escalante-Gonzalbo, *A new compact history of Mexico* (p. 216-228). Mexico, D.F: El Colegio de México.

Garciadiego, J. (2013). The Revolution. In P. Escalante-Gonzalbo, *A new compact history of Mexico* (p. 229-266). México, DF.: El Colegio de México.

Mestizaje: Entry from The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures.

Douglas, M. (1984, c.1966). *Purity and danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo.* London, Boston: Ark Paperbacks. (Selections).

**Week 3. September 18**

**Frida's family and La Casa Azul**

Readings:

Herrera, H. (c.1983). Chapters 1 and 2. *Frida, a biography of Frida Kahlo.* New York: Harper & Row. 3-21.

Tibol, Raquel. Approximations. *Frida Kahlo: An open life*. pp.9-18 / 29-41.

Olcott, J. (2005). *Revolutionary women in postrevolutionary Mexico.* Durham: Duke University Press.

• Friday September 20: Due date for essay "Training your eyes."

**Week 4. September 25**

**Frida's Fashion and indigenous roots**

Readings:

# How Frida Kahlo's fashions brought Mexican politics to the world stage.

# https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/frida-kahlo-mexican-fashion/index.html

Aragón, A. F. (2014). Uninhabited Dresses: Frida Kahlo, from Icon of Mexico to Fashion Muse. *Fashion Theory, 18*(5), 517-550.

Block, R., & Hoffman-Jeep, L. (1999). Fashioning National Identity: Frida Kahlo in "Gringolandia." *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Autumn, 1998 - Winter, 1999), pp. 8-12

Lindauer, M. A. (c.1999). Fetishizing Frida. In *Devouring Frida* (p. 151-179). Hanover: University Press of New England

**Week 5. October 2**

**José Vasconcelos and Lázaro Cárdenas: Men of their times**

Readings:

Encinas, R. (2002). José Vasconcelos. *PROSPECTS: quarterly review of comparative education, XXIV*(3-4), 719-29.

Manrique: Dreaming of a cosmic race: José Vasconcelos and the politics of race in Mexico 1920s-1930s.

Petroleos Mexicanos, (n.d.). In *Britannica Online Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/print/article/454265

UNAM, F. a. (n.d.). *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.* Retrieved from www.global.unam.mx

Weston, C. H. (January de 1983). The political legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas. *The Americas, 39*(3), 383-405.

Optional: Coffey. Vascocelos, The Cosmic Race.

**Week 6. October 9**

**Arts and social cause: El taller de Gráfica Popular**

Readings:

Benítez, F (1987). The demonds of José Guadalupe Posada. *Images of Mexico*. Dallas Museum of Arts. pp. 88-90.

Avila, T. (2008). Laborious arts: El taller de Gráfica Popular and the meaning of labor in Las estampas de la revolución mexicana. *Hemisphere, Visual Cultures of the Americas, 1*, 62-82.

Avila, T. (2014). El Taller de Gráfica Popular and the Chronicles of Mexican History and Nationalism. *Third Text, 28*(3), 311-321.

Díaz , M.E. (1990). The Satiric Penny Press for Workers in Mexico, 1900-1910: A Case Study in the Politicisation of Popular Culture . *Journal of Latin American*

*Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 497-526.

Reyes Palma, F. (1987).Workshop of Popular Graphics during the times of Cárdenas. *Mexico Images*. Dallas Museum of Arts. Pp.110-116.

* Optional: Watch the movie ***Coco*** and comment about it on the discussion board!
* Friday October 11: Due date for essay "Knowing the historical context"

**Week 7. October 16**

**Mexican Muralism I: Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco.**

Readings:

Schmeckebier, L. E. (c.1939). The syndicate. In *Modern Mexican art* (p. 31-51). Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Rochfort, Desmond. (1993). Mexican Muralist. Chapters 4, 6.

Homan, J. G. (2003). Mexican Identity Through the Eyes of Diego Rivera.

*Indiana University South Bend Undergraduate Research Journal, 6*, 26-32.

Optional:

Lucie-Smith, E. (c.1993). A Climate of Change. In *Latin American art of the 20th*

*century* (págs. 110-120). New York: Thames and Hudson.

Harris, J. C. (April 2012). Diego Rivera’s Man at the Crossroads. *ARCH GEN*

*PSYCHIATRY, 69*(4), 337-338.

Wolfe, B. D. (1947). Diego Rivera, People's Artist. *The Antioch Review, 7*(1), 99-

108.

**Week 8. October 23**

**Mexican Muralism II: David Alfaro Siqueiros and Rufino Tamayo.**

Readings:

Rochfort, Desmond. (1993). Mexican Muralist. Chapter 7.

Villaurrutia, X. (1987). Rufino Tamayo. *Images of Mexico.* Dallas Museum of Art. pp.137-140.

**Week 9. October 30**

**Music and the national project: Manuel M. Ponce, Silverstre Revueltas and Carlos Chavez.**

Readings:

Latin American music, c.1920-c.1980 (n.d.). *Cambridge Core.* Retrieved from http:/www.cambridge.org/core.

Malmström, D. (1974). *Introduction to twentieth century Mexican music.* Uppsala: Akad. ach. Uppsala univ.

Velasco Pufleau, L. (2012). Nationalism, Authoritarianism and Cultural Construction:Carlos Chávez and Mexican Music (1921–1952). *Music & Politics, 6*(2), 1-19.

**Week 10. November 6.**

**Frida’s friends: In search of mexican female identity: Olga Campos; Tina Modotti, Lola Álvarez Bravo and María Izquierdo.**

Readings:

Vaughan, M. K. (2006). Pancho Villa, the Daughters of Mary, and the modern woman : gender in the long Mexican Revolution. In J. Olcott, *Sex in revolution : gender, politics, and power in modern Mexico* (p. 21-32). Durham: Duke University Press.

Olga Campos: My Memory of Frida, in Grimberg, S. *Frida Kahlo. Song of Herself*.

pp.33-53.

Mulvey, L. (1989). Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti. *Visual and other pleasures*

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : Macmillan. pp. 81-107.

Video: Frida Kahlo & Tina Modotti - Part 1 Dir. Laura Mulvey & Peter Wollen, 1983

https://vimeo.com/236224316

Greeley, R. A. (2000). Painting Mexican Identities: Nationalism and Gender in the Work of María Izquierdo. *Oxford Art Journal, 23*(1): 53-71.

Billeter, E. (1987). Frida and María. *Images of Mexico*.. Dallas Museum of Art. pp. 129-136.

# Ferrer, E. (1994). Lola Álvarez Bravo. A modernist in Mexican photography*. History of*

# *Photography*, (18) 3: 211-218.

• Friday November 1st: Due date for essay "Finding 'Frida's Mexico' nearby"

**Week 11. November 13**

**"To paint the unspeakable": Feminist artists paint their voices .**

Readings:

Bakewell, L. (1993). Frida Kahlo: A Contemporary Feminist Reading. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, 13*(3), 165-189.

Borsa, J. (1990). Frida Kahlo: Marginalization and the critical female subject. *Third Text, 4*(12), 21-40.

Comisarenco Mirkin, D. (2008). To Paint the Unspeakable: Mexican Female Artists' Iconography of the 1930s and Early 1940s. *Woman's Art Journal, 29*(1), 21-32.

Garber, E. (March 1992). Art Critics on Frida Kahlo: A Comparison of Feminist and Non-Feminist Voices. *Art Education, 45*(2), 42-48.

**Week 12. November 20**

**Frida’s journey to become Frida: Travels, love and success.**

Readings:

Kettenmann, A. (c.1993). A Mexican artist in "Gringolandia". In *Frida Kahlo, 1907-1954 : pain and passion* (p. 31-57). Köln: Benedikt Taschen.

Fuentes, C. (1995). Introduction. *The diary of Frida Kahlo: an intimate self-portrait.* New York, México: HN Abrams, La vaca independiente SA de CV. pp. 7-24.

Lowe, S. (1995). Essay. *The diary of Frida Kahlo: an intimate self-portrait.* New York, México: HN Abrams, La vaca independiente SA de CV. pp. 25-32. (Love letter to Diego).

Bridges, L. (July/August 2015). Trotsky's End. *Russian Life*, 49-56.

Frida’s letter to Trotsky.

Mahon, A. (2011). The Lost Secret: Frida Kahlo and the Surrealist Imaginary. *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas, 5*(1), 33-54.

Frida’s letter to Jacqueline Lamba. In Funetes, C. (1995). *The diary of Frida Kahlo: an*

*intimate self-portrait.* New York, México: HN Abrams, La vaca independiente SA de CV. pp. 208-211.

Frida’s letter to Dr. Murray (from Paris). In Tibol, R. (2003). *Frida by Frida* (p. 169-177). Mexico: RM.

Optional: Rosenthal, M. (2015). Diego and Frida high drama in Detroit. In *Diego Rivera*

*& Frida Kahlo in Detroit* (p. 18-123). Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts.

More letters to Diego: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/04/19/frida-kahlo->diary-love-letters/

Song "La llorona" (Chavela Vargas)

**Week 13. November 27: HAPPY THNAKSGIVING!**

**Optional:**

Readings:

Haynes, D. J. (1995). The Art of Remedios Varo: Issues of Gender Ambiguity and Religious Meaning. *Woman's Art Journal, 16*(1), 26-32.

Kunny, C. (1996). Leonora Carrington's Mexican Vision. *The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, 22*(2), 166-179+199-200.

• Friday November 22: Due date for essay "Interpreting Frida"

**Week 14. December 4**

**Frida’s commodification, media and Latina ethnic identity**

Readings:

Molina Guzmán, I. (2006). Mediating Frida: Negotiating Discourses of Latina/o Authenticity in Global Media Representations of Ethnic Identity. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 23*(3), 232-251.

Pankl, L., & Blake, K. (2012). Made in Her Image: Frida Kahlo as Material Culture. *Material Culture, 44*(2), 1-20

**Week 15. December 11**

**15. Frida's dead and after: Course conclusions**

Readings:

Tibol, R. (1983). After her death. *Frida Kahlo: An open life*.pp205-207.

Discussion of documentary "The life and time of Frida Kahlo", Part II.

Course conclusions (handout)

**Final project due date: December 13th.**

