Silver and Gold in the Americas

This course considers the multiple histories of Gold and Silver in the hemispheric space of the Americas. Readings and discussions are organized around a set of wide-ranging topics, each of which might make for a seminar:

- Monetary Policy, Bimetallism, and the Gold Standard in the US.
- Silver and Gold in pre-Colombian Culture, Politics, and Trade
- Mining and Mineral Wealth as drivers of Iberian Colonialism and Globalization
- Social, Environmental, and Labor Histories of Mining in the Hemisphere

Our ambition for each of these is gaining an introductory sense of how researchers ask questions and what resources are available. For a topic of their choice, Students will prepare an annotated bibliography that then allows them to go beyond class readings to leave with a deeper sense of the scholarly work available.

Assignments and Grading (All work should follow posted rubrics)
Attendance and short assignments  20%
First Paper, 1200-1500 words  20%
Second Paper, 1200-1500 words  20%
Third Paper, 1200-1500 words  20%
Annotated Bibliography 3500-5000 words  20%

A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (88-89), B (84-87), B- (80-83), C+ (78-79), C (70-77), D (60-69).

Academic Integrity is expected:
http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html
Violations will mean an F in the course, at minimum.

Thurs Jan 17  Introduction

Tues Jan 22  We’ll start by talking about gold in the United States: history, culture, politics
Reading: James Ledbetter, One Nation Under Gold: How One Precious Metal has Dominated the American Imagination for Four Centuries (New York, USA: Norton, 2017), pp. 1-61.  **Short assignment due on Canvas.

Thurs Jan 24  “Free Silver,” Bryan’s “Cross of Gold,” and Frank Baum’s Wizard of Oz
Reading: Ledbetter, pp. 63-85, (Chapter 3). See Canvas for additional material that we will work with in class.

Tues Jan 29  How and why it became illegal to own gold stocks in the United States.
Reading: Ledbetter, pp. 87-139

Thurs Jan 31  Understanding the economics of the gold standard


Thurs Feb 7  Introduction to pre-Columbian gold and silver objects. First paper due (On Ledbetter, see rubric on Canvas).

Tues Feb 12  Class meets at the Penn Museum, with Moritz Jansen is an archaeometallurgist who will share his expertise and orient students as we begin an object study.

Thurs Feb 14 Discussion and Research Lab. Please bring Museum notes with you to class.

Tues Feb 19 Second session with metals expert Mortiz Jansen.

Thurs Feb 21 Class cancelled, second paper due (See rubric on Canvas).

Tues Feb 26 Introduction to the Conquest era and significance of gold in early Spanish colonialism

Thurs Feb 28 Introduction to Potosí and the Cerro Rico

Reading: Brown, Chapter 2, with Bakewell and Lane. See also Canvas for material we will work with in class (Descripción and Entrada del Virrey) that we will work with in class.

--Spring Break--

Tues Mar 12 Potosí in more depth

Thurs Mar 14 Mangan, Conclusion and one additional chapter--student choice.

Tues Mar 19 Reading TBA. (Something by Doug or that he recommends.)

Thurs Mar 21 Discussion with Douglas Smit, ([https://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthropology/people/douglas-smit](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthropology/people/douglas-smit))

Tues Mar 26 The gold of Minas Gerais
Reading: Kathleen J. Higgins, "Licentious Liberty" in a Brazilian Gold-mining Region: Slavery, Gender, and Social Control in Eighteenth-century Sabará, Minas Gerais (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). Introduction and Chapter 1. See Canvas for documentary material we will work with in class.

Thurs Mar 28 Higgins, Conclusion and one additional chapter of your choice.

Tues Apr 2 Where did all that Andean silver and Brazilian gold go? Bullion flows and Globalization 16th-18th C.

Thurs Apr 4  Research Lab: Potosí or Minas Gerais papers due. 10pts

Tues Apr 9-11 Back to the 19th Century: Social History of the California Gold Rush
   Reading: Susan Johnson, Roaring Camp, selected pages. See Canvas for documents we will work with in class.

Tues Apr 16-18 The Klondike rush, Charlie Chaplin, and the photographic record.

Tues Apr 23 Environmental and geomorphological issues.
   Reading: Brown, A History of Mining in LA, Chapter 8. Also Canada essay on Canvas.

Thurs Apr 25 Money laundering using gold: the “La mina” case
   Reading: Robert E. Grosse, Drugs and Money: Laundering Latin America's Cocaine Dollars (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), Chapter 6.

Tues Apr 30 Student presentations and wrap-up

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Possible topics for the annotated bibliography:

Gold in economics/culture among the Mexica (or the Muisca, or the Inca Empire, or elsewhere)
Place of gold and silver objects in indigenous trade in the Americas before 1492
Columbus, the early Caribbean expeditions (1492-1519) and Europe’s interest in gold
16th C. Andean conquistadors and the gold they took from indigenous polities
16th and 17th century silver coinage
The global flow of silver from Mexico and Peru to Asian economies in the 17th and 18th centuries
Gold mining and African enslavement in 18th c. Minas Gerais, Brazil
The Cabarrus County North Carolina gold rush (1799)
The Fraser Canyon gold rush, the Klondike rush, or comparisons of different Canadian “gold fevers”
21st c. gold mining in the Amazon (or in any other given place or set of places).
Mercury and Cyanide in the environmental history of mining
The United States public and the marketing of Kugerrand coins in the 1970s
Silversmithing in ______ / Goldsmithing in ______
Monetary policy and the Gold standard (choose a set of decades)
“Free Silver” advocates and populist politics in the late 19th c. United States
Precious metals and money laundering in the 20th and 21st centuries