

## **History 591B: Writing Seminar—European Expansion to 1750**

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Spring Semester 1999  
MWF 1:25–2:15, Herter 342

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Office hours: M 2:15–3:15 PM, W 11:00 AM–12:00 noon, and by appointment.

This syllabus is also available online at the following URL:  
<<http://www-unix.umass.edu/~ogilvie/courses/spring99/591B/index.html>>.  
Updates to the syllabus, handouts, and assignments will be posted to this web page.

### **Brief description of course**

In this seminar we will write about the history of European expansion in the early modern period. By writing history, not just reading about it, we will explore the relation between written expression and historical understanding. The chronological focus will be on the sixteenth century, the geographical focus on Spanish America. Readings include epic, tragedy, self-justification, memoirs, and histories: Camões's *Lusiads*, Aztec accounts of the Spanish conquest, Cortes's letters, Bernal Diaz's *Conquest of New Spain*, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical writing. Style (clarity and grace) will be a focus, with frequent exercises aimed at improving your expressive power. Several short papers will build toward a final project.

### **Course goals**

As a junior writing seminar, this course aims to increase your ability to express yourself precisely, concisely, and elegantly, through writing and reflection on writing. At the same time, it should increase your sensitivity to the relation between form and content in historical sources and historians' accounts. Finally, you should learn something about the history of European expansion in the early modern period: not only facts but organizing schemes.

### **Your goals for the course**

You have just read my goals for the course. You should now take the time to reflect on those goals and think about any others you might have. In the space below, you can write the reasons *you* are in this course and any goals on which you wish to concentrate during it.

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## Course structure

The course meets three times a week. For the first ten weeks the structure will be fairly rigid. One meeting each week will be devoted to examination and discussion of historical sources and interpretations of European expansion in the early modern period, with a focus on the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The second meeting will focus on reading and discussing Joseph Williams's *Style* and occasional short handouts. The third will focus on discussion and in-class revision of your own writing. After the first ten weeks, the course will focus on your final ten-page essay and the structure will be more relaxed.

Because this course is a seminar, there will be *very little lecturing*. You will need to come to class prepared to discuss the day's topic.

## Course requirements and grading

This is an upper-division history course for history majors. It has no formal prerequisites. However, if this is your first upper-division history course, I urge you to read Brundage, *Going to the sources*, in the first two weeks of class.

In order to pass this course, you will need to consistently do the readings and attend class regularly. To do well, you should plan to spend six to ten hours outside of class every week reading and studying.

There are six basic requirements for the course:

### 1. Regular attendance and class participation

If you must miss a class, you should inform Prof. Ogilvie in advance of the reason, or provide documentation (such as a note from the doctor) afterwards. You may send e-mail or leave messages on voice mail (545-1599). Athletes should present a complete schedule of the days they will miss by February 12. If a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please inform Prof. Ogilvie by February 12.

Students who do not attend the first two class meetings will be withdrawn from the course and will need to petition to be readmitted.

A portion of the letter grade for the course will be based on attendance and participation. Students who attend and participate regularly will receive at least a B on attendance and participation. For each unexcused absence after the fourth, the attendance and participation grade will be lowered by one-half letter grade.

### 2. Exercises

Ten weekly homework assignments will be due, on Wednesdays. Most of them come from Williams, *Style*. We will discuss the assignments and the associated readings in the Wednesday class meetings. These exercises will be graded pass/fail: you need to do your best on them but they will not receive a letter grade. Failing to complete them will adversely affect your final grade, though (see below, under "Grading").

### 3. Short writing assignments

In the first ten weeks of the course, a 1-2 page paper will be due every Monday. The class will be divided into three groups; each group will have three of its papers examined in class the following Friday. These exercises will be graded pass/fail: you need to do your best on them but they will not receive a letter grade. Failing to complete them will adversely affect your final grade, though (see below, under "Grading").

### 4. One five-page book review

In the first six weeks of the semester, you must choose one book from the list of additional readings at the end of this syllabus and write a five-page review of it. This review is due on the Friday before Spring Break (**March 12**). It will receive a letter grade. You may rewrite it if you are dissatisfied with the grade.

### 5. One ten-page essay

By March 26, you must select a topic for a ten-page essay. The essay will not be a formal research paper, but you must choose at least two primary and two secondary sources, beyond

those excerpted in *1492*, for the paper. You may choose the book you reviewed as one of the secondary sources. The essay will focus on analysis of the style and historical usefulness of the primary sources, so you should choose two sources that address the same topic. The essays will be discussed in class and returned with comments; the final draft, which will receive a letter grade, will be due on **May 19**.

#### 6. Course portfolio

At the end of the course you must revise your four exercises in style (see course schedule, 4/21 and 4/23) and submit them along with your book review as a course portfolio. The portfolio must also include the first draft of each paper. If you revised your book review a second time, you should include the original draft and the first revision as well as the final revision. The portfolio will receive a letter grade. It will also be due on **May 19**.

### Grading

The grading system used in this course is more complex than that often used in college courses. I think it is also more fair, because it distinguishes between assignments that develop skills and knowledge and assignments that test your mastery of those skills and knowledge.

There are two kinds of assignments in this course: graded assignments (book review, essay, and course portfolio) and ungraded assignments (short papers and exercises). The graded assignments will be graded on the standard UMass system (A, AB, B, etc.). The ungraded assignments will be marked Pass/Fail. An assignment that is not turned in, be it graded or ungraded, will receive an F. You will also receive a grade for attendance and participation.

To receive a particular letter grade in this course, you must (a) earn that grade as an average on your graded work, and (b) pass a corresponding number of your short papers and exercises. The **lowest** grade corresponding to your work will be assigned. The following table explains the system:

Letter Grade	Short Papers	Exercises	Course Grade
A	10	10	A
AB	10	10	AB
B	10	9	B
BC	9	9	BC
C	9	8	C
CD	8	7	CD
D	7	6	D
F	0-6	0-5	F

Examples: Suzie Student averaged “BC” on her graded work and passed 9 of her short papers and 10 of her exercises. She will receive a BC in the course. Joe College averaged “AB” on his graded work and passed 8 of his short papers and 6 of his exercises. He will receive a D for the course. As these examples show, not doing the ungraded work can significantly hurt your final course grade.

The **philosophy** behind this grading system is that the ungraded assignments are important parts of the course. In the aggregate, completing them successfully is necessary for learning everything that the writing seminar is supposed to teach. However, each individual ungraded assignment isn’t going to make or break your course grade, and you should not feel under pressure to excel on each of them. The short papers will prepare you for the week’s discussion, so doing well on them should have a beneficial effect on your attendance and participation grade.

The **letter grade** will be based on the following components:

Attendance and participation	25%
Five-page review	20%
Course portfolio	20%
Ten-page essay	35%

If you are a history major, remember that you must earn a grade of CD or better in order to get department credit for this required writing seminar.

### Policy on late assignments

Because there is a lot of writing in this course, it is important to keep up with the work. The following rules will apply to late assignments:

**Short papers:** If your short paper is scheduled for discussion on Friday, it will **not** be accepted late. Otherwise, short papers will be accepted up to two days late (i.e. the following Wednesday, except for the week of Feb. 15).

**Exercises:** Exercises, both those from Williams and those modeled after *Exercises in style*, will be accepted up to one week late. If they are frequently late, your attendance and participation grade will be penalized appropriately.

**Book review:** If the book review is not handed in by the Friday before spring break, the maximum grade will be reduced to B. Subsequently the maximum grade will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each additional working day that it is late.

**Ten-page essay:** If you do not turn in your draft for discussion, your grade on this essay will be reduced by one letter grade. If the final draft is not submitted by May 19, the maximum grade will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each working day that it is late. If it is not submitted by May 24, you will receive an incomplete in the course (grades are due in the History Department at 9 AM on May 25) and, if you are a senior, your graduation will be delayed.

**Course portfolio:** If the course portfolio is not submitted by May 19, the maximum grade will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each working day that it is late. If it is not submitted by May 24, you will receive an incomplete in the course (grades are due in the History Department at 9 AM on May 25) and, if you are a senior, your graduation will be delayed.

### Policy on academic honesty

Plagiarism is grounds for failure in the course. Plagiarism consists of either (a) copying the exact words of another work without both enclosing them in quotation marks and providing a reference, or (b) using information or ideas from another work without providing credit, in notes, to the source of the information or ideas. Submission of a paper copied from another work, or which contains fictitious or falsified notes, will result in automatic failure of the course. Please refer to the *Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities* booklet for the University's full policy on academic honesty.

Why is plagiarism so bad? Learning depends on trust—the student trusts the teacher to know the subject and to teach about it clearly, and the teacher trusts the student to show evidence of learning through exams and other assignments. Plagiarizing a paper breaches that trust. It is also theft of someone else's intellectual property.

### Books for course

The following books are available for purchase at Food For Thought Books (106 N. Pleasant, Amherst). They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library.

Brundage, Anthony. *Going to the sources: A guide to historical research and writing*. 2nd ed.

Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1997. ISBN 0-88295-936-0. **Required.** \$7.95

Lunenburg, Marvin, ed. *1492: Discovery, invasion, encounter*. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1991. ISBN 0-669-21115-X. **Required.** \$26.00

Queneau, Raymond. *Exercises in style*. Trans. Barbara Wright. 2nd ed. New York: New Directions, 1981. ISBN 0-8112-0789-7. **Required.** \$10.95

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Ten lessons in clarity and grace*. 5th ed. New York: Longman, 1997. ISBN 0-673-98243-2. **Required.** \$22.50

*American Heritage College Dictionary*. ISBN 0-395-67161-2. **Suggested.** \$24.00. If you do not already own a recent college dictionary, buy this one. It's the best.

### A note on readings

Because we are focusing on careful analysis of style and its relation to content, you **must** bring copies of the day's reading to class. If you use the books on reserve, you should make photocopies to bring to class.

### Course schedule with topics, readings, and assignments

**Wed. 1/27**      **Organizational meeting**

**Fri. 1/29**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Assignment: In-class freewriting and discussion.

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**Mon. 2/1**      **1492: Setting the scene**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 1-32; Brundage, pp. vii-15.  
Assignment: Short paper #1. Group A: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 2/3**      **Style, Lesson One: Understanding style**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. vii-12.

**Fri. 2/5**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group A in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 2/8**      **1492: Motives and goals**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 33-74; Brundage, pp. 16-28.  
Assignment: Short paper #2. Group B: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 2/10**      **Style, Lesson Two: Correctness**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 13-37.

**Fri. 2/12**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group B in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 2/15**      **NO CLASS—Presidents' Day holiday**

**Tues. 2/16**      **1492: “Discovery” and its significance  
(Monday class schedule in effect)**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 75-126.  
Assignment: Short paper #3. Group C: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 2/17**      **Style, Lesson Three: Clarity 1**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 39-70.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Three.

**Fri. 2/19**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group C in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 2/22**      **1492: Encounter in the Caribbean**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 127-156.  
Assignment: Short paper #4. Group A: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 2/24**      **Style, Lesson Four: Clarity 2**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 71-99.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Four.

**Fri. 2/26**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group A in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 3/1**      **1492: Conquest and its justification**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 157-198.  
Assignment: Short paper #5. Group B: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 3/3**      **Style, Lesson Five: Cohesion and Coherence**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 100-121.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Five.

**Fri. 3/5**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group B in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 3/8**      **1492: Reaction to conquest**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 199-228.  
Assignment: Short paper #6. Group C: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 3/10**      **Style, Lesson Six: Point of View**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 122-138.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Six.

**Fri. 3/12**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group C in-class rewriting.

**\*\*\* Last day to turn in book review \*\*\***

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**Mon. 3/22**      **1492: Other colonizers**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 229-254.

Assignment: Short paper #7. Group A: make 15 copies.

\*\*\* Book review returned \*\*\*

**Wed. 3/24**      **Style, Lesson Seven: Emphasis**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 139-155.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Seven.

**Fri. 3/26**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group A in-class rewriting.

\*\*\* Last day to choose topic for term paper \*\*\*

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**Mon. 3/29**      **1492: Mutual (mis)perceptions**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 255-286.  
Assignment: Short paper #8. Group B: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 3/31**      **Style, Lesson Eight: Concision**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 157-184.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Eight.

**Fri. 4/2**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group B in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 4/5**      **1492: Cultural conditioning**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 287-308.  
Assignment: Short paper #9. Group C: make 15 copies.

**Wed. 4/7**      **Style, Lesson Nine: Shape**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 185-209.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Nine.

**Fri. 4/9**      **Writing/rewriting**  
Group C in-class rewriting.

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**Mon. 4/12**      **1492: Biology and demography**  
Reading: *1492*, pp. 309-354.  
Assignment: Short paper #10.

**Wed. 4/14**      **Style, Lesson Ten: Elegance**  
Reading: Williams, *Style*, pp. 210-232.  
Assignment: Exercises in Williams, *Style*, Lesson Ten.

**Fri. 4/16**      **General discussion of historical research and writing**  
Reading: Brundage, pp. 29-84.

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**Mon. 4/19**      **NO CLASS—Patriots Day Holiday**

**Wed. 4/21**      **Style—Exercises in style**

**(Monday class schedule in effect)**

Reading: Queneau, *Exercises in style*, through p. 99.

Assignment: choose a description of an event from one of the primary sources you are using in your ten-page essay, and rewrite it in two of the styles Queneau uses in this part of *Exercises in style*.

**Fri. 4/23****Style—Exercises in style**

Reading: Queneau, *Exercises in style*, pp. 100-197.

Assignment: write two more descriptions of the event you used in Wednesday's exercise, employing two of the styles Queneau uses in this part of the book.

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**Mon. 4/26****NO CLASS—Work on your final paper**

Prof. Ogilvie will hold office hours during class if you want to discuss your paper.

**Wed. 4/28****NO CLASS—Work on your final paper.**

Prof. Ogilvie will hold office hours during class if you want to discuss your paper.

**Fri. 4/30****Short meeting**

Ground rules for the remaining five class meetings; distribution of ten-page essay drafts (groups 1-3).

**\*\*\* Drafts of ten-page essay due: groups 1-3 (15 copies) \*\*\***

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**Mon. 5/3****Discussion of drafts: Group 1**

Assignment: comment on your peers' drafts.

**Wed. 5/5****Discussion of drafts: Group 2**

Assignment: comment on your peers' drafts.

**Fri. 5/7****Discussion of drafts: Group 3**

Assignment: comment on your peers' drafts.

**\*\*\* Drafts of ten-page essay due: groups 4-5 (15 copies) \*\*\***

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**Mon. 5/10****Discussion of drafts: Group 4**

Assignment: comment on your peers' drafts.

**Wed. 5/12****Discussion of drafts: Group 5**

Assignment: comment on your peers' drafts.

**Wed. 5/19****Final paper and course portfolio due at noon in Herter 617!**

I will be in my office from 8:30 to noon to collect papers.

### Resources for writing

A select list of useful books and reference works for the thoughtful writer.

Fowler, H. W., and F. G. Fowler. *The King's English*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931.

Fowler, H. W. *Modern English usage*. 2nd ed. Revised by Ernest Gowers. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. A classic. Fowler was a picky, prescriptive authority, but he knew how to draw the line between precision and mere pedantry.

Follett, Wilson. *Modern American usage*. Revised by Erik Wensberg. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998. An American Fowler. The earlier revision (1966) by Jacques Barzun is also useful.

Becker, Howard S. *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. More broadly useful than its title suggests.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing without teachers*. 2nd. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. The 1973 edition is the foundational document for the writing approach used in UMass's College Writing course.

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White. *The elements of style*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1979. The classic, now dated in some regards but still worth reading, despite what Williams says about it.

Kaye, Sanford. *Writing under pressure: The quick writing process*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. Useful tips for those times when you need to write quickly and effectively.

Miller, Casey, and Kate Swift. *The handbook of nonsexist writing*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. An eye-opener for anyone who still thinks that "man"="person."

Turabian, Kate L. *A manual for writers of term papers, theses, and dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

### Selected secondary sources

Books marked with an asterisk (\*) may be used for the book review assignment. If you would like to review a different book, please talk to Prof. Ogilvie.

\*Blaut, James M. *The colonizer's model of the world: Geographical diffusionism and Eurocentric history*. New York: Guilford Press, 1993.

Boxer, C. R. *The Portuguese seaborne empire, 1415-1825*. New York: Knopf, 1969.

Boxer, C. R. *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600-1800*. New York: Knopf, 1965.

Calloway, Colin G. *New worlds for all: Indians, Europeans, and the remaking of early America*. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Brief survey of the ways in which mutual interactions between Native Americans and Europeans changed both cultures in North America.

\*Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian exchange: Biological and cultural consequences of 1492*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972.

\*Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

\*Diamond, Jared. *Guns, germs, and steel: The fate of human societies*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997. Controversial book by an anthropological epidemiologist.

Elliott, J. H. *The old world and the new, 1492-1650*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. Reprinted with new bibliography, 1992. Excellent introduction to the impact of the

Americas on early modern Europe.

- \*Grafton, Anthony, April Shelford, and Nancy Siraisi. *New worlds, ancient texts: The power of tradition and the shock of discovery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- \*Greenblatt, Stephen. *Marvelous possessions: The wonder of the New World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. *New World encounters*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Collection of essays.
- Kupperman, Karen Ordahl, ed. *America in European consciousness, 1493–1750*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. Collection of essays.
- \*Landes, David S. *The wealth and poverty of nations: Why some are so rich and some so poor*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998. Controversial book by a noted economic historian.
- \*Morison, Samuel Eliot. *The European discovery of America*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971–1974. Old-fashioned but thoughtful and occasionally dramatic account by a master historian and skilled sailor who revisited many of the places described by early European explorers in the Americas.
- \*Pagden, Anthony. *Lords of all the world: Ideologies of empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500–c. 1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- \*Pagden, Anthony. *The fall of natural man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Parry, J. H. *The age of reconaissance*. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1963. Still a useful basic survey.
- Prescott, William Hickling. *History of the conquest of Mexico, and History of the conquest of Peru*. New York: Modern Library, 1936. Originally published in 1843 and 1847, these volumes provide gripping narratives based on extensive reading in Spanish archives. Prescott was nearly blind when he wrote these books. Many versions, including an abridged edition, are available. Beware of Eurocentrism, both implicit and explicit.
- \*Todorov, Tzvetan. *The conquest of America*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: HarperPerennial, 1984. Difficult and flawed but rewarding attempt to explain how so few Europeans could defeat so many Americans.
- \*Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. (The modern world-system, vol. 1.) New York: Academic Press, 1974. Influential theory of economic interactions between different parts of the “European world-economy.”
- \*Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. Standard overview; some mistakes but worth reading. Theoretical, but the theory is useful. The title is ironic.

### Selected primary sources

This is only a tiny selection of primary sources available in English. These sources may be used for the ten-page essay.

Hakluyt, Richard. *Voyages and discoveries: The principal navigations voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation*. Edited by Jack Beeching. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985. A useful abridgment of the first important English collection of travel narratives; the complete set is available in the library.

Camões, Luis Vas de. *The Lusiads*. Translated by William C. Atkinson. London: Penguin

Books, 1952.

- Leon-Portilla, Miguel, ed. *The broken spears: The Aztec account of the conquest of Mexico*. Revised and expanded ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Columbus, Christopher. *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to America, 1492-1493*. Abstracted by Bartolome de las Casas; transcribed and translated into English, with notes and a concordance of the Spanish, by Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- Columbus, Christopher, ed. *The book of prophecies edited by Christopher Columbus*. Edited by Roberto Rusconi. Translated by Blair Sullivan Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Vespucci, Amerigo. *Letters from a new world: Amerigo Vespucci's Discovery of America*. Edited by Luciano Formisano. Translated by David Jacobson. New York: Marsilio, 1992.
- Cortes, Hernan de. *Letters from Mexico*. Translated and edited by A. R. Pagden. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971.
- Las Casas, Bartolomé de. *A short account of the destruction of the Indies*. Edited and translated by Nigel Griffin. London: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Acosta, José de. *The naturall and morall history of the East and West Indies*. Translated by Edward Grimestone. London: for E. Blount and W. Aspley, 1604. (Available on microfilm in the Early English Books series.)
- Diaz, Bernal. *The conquest of New Spain*. The conquest of New Spain. Translated by J. M. Cohen. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963.