

Silver and Gold in the Americas



Clockwise from top right: gold bullion, Gilded altar in Brazil, Klondike-bound miners at the Chilkoot Pass, woodcut of Silver-rich Potosí, 14th century Serpent *tentetl*, made by goldsmiths of the Aztec Empire.

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 3500-500 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

Reading: Barry J. Eichengreen and Marc Flandreau, "Editors' Introduction," in *The Gold Standard in Theory and History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1997), with (recommended) Marc Flandreau and Kim Oosterlinck. 2012. "Was the emergence of the international gold standard expected? Evidence from Indian Government Securities." *Journal of Monetary Economics* 59 (7): 649-69. Professor [Marc Flandreau](#) will join our discussion.

Tues Feb 5 After the gold standard --- Reading: Ledbetter, pp. 141-end. With excerpts from Peter L. Bernstein, *The Power of Gold: The History of an Obsession* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2012).

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.

Reading: Julie Jones and Justin Kerr, *The Art of Precolumbian Gold: The Jan Mitchell Collection* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985) and Joanne Pillsbury, Timothy F. Potts, and Kim N. Richter, *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury Arts in the Ancient Americas* (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017). Excerpts.

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
Reading: Chapter 1 in Kendall W. Brown, *A History of Mining in Latin America: From the Colonial Era to the Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012). See Canvas for additional material (Las Casas, Quesada de Jiménez, Ceiza de León).

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

Reading: Jane E. Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), Introduction and Chapter 1.

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>)

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.

Reading: Magda von der Heydt-Coca, "Andean Silver and the Rise of the Western World," *Critical Sociology*, Volume 31, Issue 4 (2005) pp. 481-513, along with Flynn and Giraldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6:2, See also

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.

Reading: Matthew Solomon, *The Gold Rush* (London: BFI, 2015)

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

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