



Teaching the Relationship between the Indigenous and the Spanish Colonizers through 'The Mission'

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Abstract

*This article is based on my experience of teaching Spanish American civilizations and culture. Conducted in Spanish, The Cultures of Spanish America is a junior level course at Middle Georgia State University for students of Spanish who are mostly native speakers of English. This survey course encompasses the entire Spanish America from the pre-Columbian era to the present day and covers a wide range of cultural aspects, including history, politics, society, religion, and fine arts. Factoring in the student level of proficiency in the target language and the time constraints during a semester, one has to be highly selective when choosing materials that can supplement the main textbook in order to facilitate teaching and student learning. Since many writings written in Spanish from the colonial period tend to be difficult for third-year students, films can play multiple pedagogical roles by making historical and cultural events visually and aurally available for the present-day viewers, taking them along the journey of vivid storytelling. For example, when it comes to teaching the relationship between the indigenous people and the Spanish colonizers in the Spanish-American continents, the film *The Mission* can bridge the gap between what can be considered to be remote historical times and the students in the twenty-first century who need to relate to the topic by visualizing the encounter of the Old and the New Worlds. *The Mission* depicts the development of the relationship between the native Guarani people and the Jesuit priests. It also depicts the violent subjugation of the former by the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers. The film is an effective tool to study the relationship between the natives and the colonizers in the eighteenth century and provides an important context to understand the violent exploitation of the indigenous by the conquistadores in the sixteenth century. For the purpose of assessment, students wrote an essay analyzing the film with the focus on studying the development of the relationship between the indigenous and the colonizers.*

*Keywords: teaching Hispanic culture, *The Mission* as a teaching tool, violent encounters of the indigenous and Spanish colonizers.*

References:

- [1] Las Casas, Bartolomé de. *The Devastation of the Indies: A brief Account*. Translated by Herma Briffault. The Johns Hopkins UP: Baltimore and London, 1992.
- [2] *The Mission*. Directed by Ennio Morricone, performances by Robert de Niro and Jeremy Iron, Goldcrest Films, 1986.