

Getting Mexican History Right

January 10, 2011 12:45 PM Ryan Rivet
rrivet@tulane.edu

When history professor Colin MacLachlan decided on the topic for his latest two books, he looked back at the way he taught Mexican history in the past and thought that he needed to take a fresh look at the subject in order to “get it right.”



“People don't realize that Mexican history is complex; it's not one that you can easily deal with and understand,” says Colin MacLachlan, the John Christy Barr Distinguished Professor of History. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

He admits that the information and his interpretation have changed since he began teaching the subject and thus the motivation to give his students what he calls “the very latest information available.”

“Every couple of years I would think to myself that I should write to my former students and apologize for missing the point,” says [MacLachlan](#), the John Christy

Barr Distinguished Professor. "It struck me that there were a lot of misunderstandings about Mexican history because it was viewed in a very simplistic way."

The books, *Mexico's Crucial Century, 1810-1910* and *Mexicans in Revolution 1910-1946* focus on Mexican independence from Spain and the social revolution that followed. MacLachlan says he's proud that the books take a dense topic and make it accessible.

"I've always had the big problem of making Mexican history understandable without overwhelming people with the complexity of it," MacLachlan says. "I'm not sure I could have written them earlier in my career."

Last year marked the 100- and 200-year anniversaries of Mexican independence and the revolution. With that in mind, MacLachlan decided it was the right time to tackle the subject. While these are the 12th and 13th books he's penned, MacLachlan is not resting on his laurels. He's currently working on two more and hasn't ruled out revisiting this period in Mexican history if he decides he still hasn't gotten it right.

"Both of these books are what I know right now," MacLachlan says. "I may need to do something more, depending on what the future holds for a country currently under extreme stress."