



Colonial Latin America (HIST 3202)

May Intersession 2018 (May 14 – May 25)

Taught by Prof. Shawn Michael Austin

As many of us have heard it, after Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, Spanish soldiers destroyed Native empires and civilizations throughout the region. This course will critique and challenge the conventional knowledge of this first encounter and subsequent European colonial rule in Latin America. The story of Columbus becomes a complex story about relationships between European nations, individual prejudices, Spanish social and ethnic hierarchies, African slavery, and finally about relationships between Europeans and those they called "Indians." The history of colonial Latin America, however, does not begin in October 1492. Indigenous civilizations inhabited North and South America for more than ten thousand years prior to the arrival of Europeans on the shores of Caribbean islands. We will concentrate on the pre-Columbian period, the conquest period, and the ensuing three hundred years of Spanish and Portuguese rule. The lectures will progress topically with a somewhat modified chronology. To provide a breadth of experiences, we will focus on a variety of geographic areas, including central areas like Mexico and the central Andes, as well as peripheral zones like eastern Brazil. By analyzing diverse areas throughout the America, we will get a sense of how Europeans and their colonial institutions were received and rejected by variety of indigenous civilizations. We will see, moreover, that it was not only Natives that were transformed by the colonial process, but Europeans as well.