

HIST 271-FALL 2025

## **INTRODUCTION TO COLONIAL LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY (1492-1810)**

### **Course Description:**

This is an introduction to the history of colonial Latin America, from the arrival of Columbus (1492) to the beginning of Independence (1810). The encounter between Natives and Europeans and the subsequent process of colonization entailed profound changes for the former and gave rise to unprecedented economic, political, and cultural circumstances for both. In this course, then, we will study some of the historical specificities that shaped the development of Colonial Latin America, such as the nature of pre-Columbian societies, the economic, military, and ideological dimensions of the Conquest, the formation of a society of “castes”, the construction of an administrative apparatus over vast new territories, the collapse of the Spanish empire in the Americas at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, etc. These historical phenomena would eventually have a significant influence in the formation of modern Latin American nations and, therefore, the course will also point out the continuities between this apparently “distant” history and contemporary realities in the region. Finally, the study of the colonial experience in the origins of Latin America will help students reflect more generally about the importance of European colonialism in the formation of societies on the other side of the Atlantic and, more specifically, about the US.

**Learning outcomes:** 1) Students will learn about the complexity of the Latin American realities during the formative period of the region. 2) They will be prepared to reflect comparatively about their own history. 3) Students will recognize different forms of historical reflection and will understand the role of critical thinking in the creation of historical knowledge as well as the research challenges that the latter entails. To achieve these goals we will read primary and secondary sources and combine lectures, discussions, essay exams, quizzes, and written assignments.

### **Books:**

- Burkholder and Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*, 10th edition (Oxford University Press).
- Ross Hassig, *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest*, 2nd. edition (University of Oklahoma Press).
- Sergio Serulnikov, *Revolution in the Andes: the Age of Tupac Amaru* (Duke University Press).

### **Class Schedule:**

#### Week 1

Introduction to the course.

Reading: On Learning, Bias, and Understanding

Week 2

America and Iberia before the Conquest: the Maya, the Aztecs, and the Inka. The Spanish Reconquest and the European expansion.

Week 3

The arrival of Columbus and the occupation of the Caribbean. The Conquests of Mexico and Peru. The “Columbian Exchange”.

Week 4

Special reading assignment and **quiz**: Hassig’s *Mexico and the Spanish Conquest*.

Week 5

Government and Administration. The Colonial Church and Religion.

Week 6

Population and Labor. Native population and its changes. Spaniards. Africans and “Castas”.

Week 7

**-Review and first exam**

Week 8

**Oct. Break**

The Colonial Economy. Silver and Sugar. Trade and Taxation.

Week 9

The Social Economy. Estates and Social Hierarchies.

Week 10

Special reading assignment and **quiz**: Reis on Slavery in Brazil (Brightspace)

Week 11

Family, Marriage, and Women. Colonial Culture and Crime.

Week 12

Caroline Reforms, Crisis, and Independence.

Week 13

**Review and Second Exam**

Week 14

**Thanksgiving**

Week 15

Special Reading Assignment and **quiz**: Serulnikov's *Revolution in the Andes*.

Week 16

Final paper due.

Grades will be determined as follows: two exams= 70% (35% each); three quizzes= 18% (6% each); a paper= 12%.

Grade Scale:

90-100=A

80-89=B

70-79=C

60-69=D

0-59=F