

History 376A-Conquest and Rebellion in Latin America, 1492 to 1783

Subject to change

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In this course we will explore how Portugal and the Spanish Monarchy came to dominate much of the Americas and how the Indigenous and African peoples of the New World resisted this domination. The Spanish arrived in the Americas in 1492, and by 1536 had conquered an enormous empire stretching from what is now México to central Chile; the Portuguese arrived in 1500, and by the eighteenth century had subjugated much of what is now Brazil. The Indigenous peoples of Latin America responded variously to the invaders: sometimes they successfully defended their lands, but more often they were obliged to come to terms with the Europeans. The Europeans were unable to force the Indigenous to adopt their customs comprehensively, and thus the colonial era was characterized by an ongoing negotiation of power between European and Indigenous peoples, from which emerged distinctively Latin American cultures, neither European nor Indigenous, but combining elements of both to varying degrees. In coastal Brazil and much of the Caribbean basin, Indigenous peoples were largely extirpated or driven into the interior, and large numbers of African slaves were imported to sustain plantation agriculture; in these contexts cultural intermingling was also foundational to the articulation of unique identities.

In this term's version of the course we will begin by exploring how the Spanish and their Indigenous allies were able to overcome the formidable Aztec empire, which is more accurately described as the Triple Alliance. What had been the Triple Alliance became the core of the Spanish Viceroyalty of New Spain (the Spanish empire in North America and Asia, including México, most of Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Spanish Hispaniola, Greater Florida, the Philippines, the Marianas, much of the Caroline Islands, and what is now the southwestern United States); we will study the establishment of Spanish rule in New Spain through Christian evangelization and the remarkable phenomenon of "double mistaken identity," the fundamental importance of community to understanding the nature of colonial society, and why resistance to the colonial order proliferated at the periphery of the viceroyalty. Detailed case studies of the Nahua of central México, the Nudzahui ("Mixtecs") of what is now Oaxaca, and the Maya of Chiapas ("Chiapa" in the colonial period) and Yucatán will be central to this segment of the course. In the case of the Viceroyalty of Perú (until 1717, what is now Panamá as well as the entirety of the Spanish empire in South America except Venezuela), we will consider why Christianity was resisted more widely and vigorously than in New Spain and the process of *mestizaje* (cultural intermingling) as it unfolded in the Inka capital of Cusco in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We will also consider the "Great Rebellions" that convulsed the Andean world in the late eighteenth century, constituting the most serious challenge to Spanish rule anywhere in the Americas before the nineteenth century. We will conclude with a look at the vitality of African customs in Brazil in the colonial era, and consider how the perseverance of African culture fuelled resistance to the oppressiveness of slavery.

Students will be asked to submit a paper on a theme of their choosing relevant to the course, write a final examination, and participate in class discussions.