

LATIN AMERICA TO 1800
SPRING 2013

Dr. Christin Cleaton-Ruiz

Email: ccleatonruiz@westfield.ma.edu

This class is designed to introduce you to the colonial experience in Latin America from the period before conquest through independence. Given the enormous terrain and expanse of time, we will necessarily focus on particular issues within this 300-year period covering a continent and a half. In particular we will focus on some of the pivotal shifts in Latin America as societies challenged and forged their “new” colonial environments. We will discuss the development of Spanish colonial societies in areas such as Mexico, Peru, the Caribbean and more peripheral areas in conjunction with themes concerning indigenous societies, race, imperialism, and revolt.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, among other objectives, I hope that students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the major political, economic, and cultural components of the Aztec and Inca empires;
- Explain the factors contributing to Spanish success in conquering the Americas in both the short- and long-term;
- Analyze the essential political and economic structures of the Spanish empire;
- Explain the causes and consequences of African slavery in the Americas, as well as the mechanisms that helped European perpetuate this system of labor exploitation;
- Think critically about the role of race in Latin America, and how it might have differed from that of the English colonies of North America;
- Analyze indigenous responses to Spanish conquest and empire – including resistance, adaptation, and cooptation of Spanish authority;
- Understand the extremely complex and often contradictory role of Roman Catholic church in the conquest of American peoples; and
- Identify the causes of the movements for independence at the turn of the 19th century, and explain how and why these movements manifested differently depending on regional contexts.