

HIS 508
Blood, Skin, and Gossip
Ethnicity and Race in Colonial Latin America

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Course Description

This course will examine the history of ethnicity and race in Spanish America from the late fifteenth century through the early nineteenth century. Both of these concepts were important elements of social stratification in the colonial culture and were used to determine the place of individuals in society. Physical characteristics were important criteria to define the worth of peoples in the eyes of their neighbors, fellow citizens, and authorities. But other rules dictated the belonging of individuals to certain social strata, such as purity of blood, lineage, and kinship. In the context of colonial Latin America, where indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans interbred constantly, the identity of one's ancestor could have a significant impact on one's possibilities to climb the social ladder. This, however, could be tempered by the private and public reputation. This course will thus examine how blood, skin, and gossip were central to an individual's life.

Objectives

By the end of the semester, the student will be expected to have a good knowledge and comprehension of the concepts of ethnicity and race, and in particular of their adaptation and evolution in Latin America in the colonial era. In addition, the students will be able to locate, analyze, and understand the structure of primary and secondary sources. S/he will identify the argumentation of authors, gauge the strengths and limitations of written sources, be aware of the variety of interpretations, and situate them in their historiographical contexts. Finally, the student will develop the capacity to build her/his own research project and to devise her/his own explanation and interpretation of both primary and secondary sources.

Readings

All readings appearing in the calendar below are *mandatory*. They will be posted on the course website in pdf format, or will be available online via the university library. Students must have these with them in class, either in print or electronically.

We will read one book, **available online through the library website**, throughout the semester, and identified as "*Imperial Subjects*" in the course calendar: Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara, eds. *Imperial Subjects. Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009.

There is one book to purchase:

Martínez, María Elena. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Graduate Students are required to read two extra books, available online; see course calendar and assignments.

Grading and assignments

Discussion papers: 20 %

Term Paper Proposal: 20 %

Term Paper: 40 %

Participation: 20 %

All papers must be written using a computer (no manuscript will be accepted). The font must be Times New Roman 12, and the text must be double-spaced. Margins will be of one inch on each side.

All written assignments must be submitted electronically on the class website. (Details in class)

I will take plagiarism very seriously. If you quote or paraphrase another person's words, make sure to write the proper reference to their work. In doubt, please consult with the instructor and consult the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu>. I will fail any student who has plagiarized, and report him or her to the dean.

Discussion papers:

Each class, selected students will be in charge of starting and leading the discussion. They must hand in a summary review in point form of the reading assigned to them, start class by summarizing the readings, and ask two to three questions to start the discussion. I will attribute each reading to students during our first meeting. You will have to do this **four times** during the semester. **Graduate students** will be in charge of presenting the two extra readings (two books) assigned to them, in a way that will benefit all students, that is, in the form of a book review, with summary and critique.

Term paper proposal:

The student will hand in a one-page proposal, plus bibliography and primary sources. The student will present his/her proposal to the class (10-15 min.) and a discussion will follow with the objective of upgrading the work of fellow students.

Term paper: The term paper consists of an analysis of the daily experiences of colonial people through an examination of one of the major concepts discussed in this course (kinship, ethnicity, race, etc.) and requires, at least, the use of one primary source. For example, the student might ask: How did individuals perceive themselves? How did they interact with others on the basis of blood affiliation or skin colour? How did they perceive and lived the authorities' racial domination? The student will be responsible to search for their source (either in Spanish or translated in English) and to find extensive secondary literature on the subject. The objectives are to conduct research, to evaluate the strengths and limitations of a primary source, and to build an argumentation. Students can use the readings assigned for this class, but must complement these with at least one primary source, and two other secondary

works (books or articles). I strongly encourage students to consult with me and seek advice; I will guide your research and writing process, but the work is yours to do. This term paper is **due Thursday, April 28, 2016**.

Undergraduate students must write 7-8 pages papers.

Graduate students must write 10-12 pages papers.

Participation:

This seminar is **your class**. I will lecture a few minutes every class to give background information, but the crux of the learning process depends on you and on exchange with fellow students. Hence, attendance and participation is essential and mandatory. In addition to the written discussion explained above, you will have to participate every week, including during the project presentations. We meet thirteen times. For each meeting, you will receive a satisfactory or unsatisfactory mark. The final participation grade will be the number of satisfactory divided by twelve (the number of meetings, minus one excused absence).

Keep in mind respect is essential for a positive learning environment. In discussions, we will not always agree with one another, yet we welcome diverse interpretations, as a discussion where everyone agrees is more of a pep rally than a classroom, unlikely to be enlightening. We aim to foster an atmosphere in which all students feel free to express their ideas, and in which we can disagree and challenge one another openly without feeling threatened or disrespected. Thus, **personal attacks and offensive language will not be tolerated**, since they obstruct honest debate. A good rule to keep in mind: **when challenging another's arguments, try to do so in a way that assumes good faith on his or her part**. Address the strongest aspects of his or her ideas, not a cartoonish, simplistic, and easily dismissed version of them. This rule has the added benefit of requiring each of us to think harder and question our own assumptions.

Course Calendar

Jan 14 Introduction

Jan 21 Theory on Ethnicity, Race, and Identity

Imperial Subjects:

- Forward (Irene Silverblatt: ix-xii)
- "Introduction: Racial Identities and Their Interpreters in Colonial Latin America." (Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara: 1-37)

Nutini, Hugo G. And Barry L. Isaac. *Social Stratification in Central Mexico, 1500-2000*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009: Chap. 1: "Estates and Classes" and Chap. 2: "Race and Ethnicity" (p. 17-67) [Online through the library](#)

Jan 28 Pre-colonial Indigenous Identities

All readings for this week on class website

Berdan, Frances F. *et al.*, eds. *Ethnic Identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography*. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2008. Read chapters 1 and 4:

- Barbara L. Stark and John K. Chance, “Diachronic and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Mesoamerican Ethnicity”: 1-37.
- Frances F. Berdan, “Concepts of Ethnicity and Class in Aztec-Period Mexico”: 105-132.

Horna, Hernán. *La indianidad: The Indigenous World before Latin Americans*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001: 56-78.

Feb 4 Pureza/Limpieza de Sangre (Part 1)

Martínez, María Elena. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008: Introduction and Parts 1 (p. 1-87)

Feb 11

Imperial Subjects: 1. “Aristocracy on the Auction Block: Race, Lords, and the Perpetuity Controversy of Sixteenth-Century Peru.” (Jeremy Mumford: 39-60)

Genealogical Fictions, Part 2 (p. 91-170)

Feb 18 Africans

Bryant, Sherwin K., Rachel Sarah O’Toole, and Ben Vinson III, eds. *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Read Introduction and Part 1 (p. 1-92) Online through the library.

Feb 25 Official Categories and Fluidity

Imperial Subjects: 2. “A Market of Identities: Women, Trade, and Ethnic Labels in Colonial Potosí.” (Jane E. Mangan, 61-80)

Imperial Subjects: 3. “Legally Indian: Inquisitorial Readings of Indigenous Identity in New Spain.” (David Tavárez, 81-100)

Chance, John K. “Indigenous Ethnicity in Colonial Central Mexico.” In *Ethnic Identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography*, edited by Berdan, Frances F. *et al.*: 133-149. Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2008. On the class website.

Graduate students must read: Mangan, Jane E. *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. Online through the library

Mar 3 Frontiers

Imperial Subjects: 4. “The Many Faces of Colonialism in Two Iberoamerican Borderlands: Northern New Spain and the Eastern Lowlands of Charcas.” (Cynthia Radding: 101-114)

Boccara, Guillaume. "Rethinking the Margins/Thinking from the Margins: Culture, Power, and Place on the Frontiers of the New World." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10, no. 1 (2003): 59-81. [Online through the library](#)

Guy, Donna J. And Thomas E. Sheridan, eds. *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998. Read first two chapters (p. 3-31). [On the class website](#)

Mar 10 Spring Break: No Class**Mar 17** Presentations**Mar 24** Presentations**Mar 31** Indigenous Peoples and Africans

Restall, Matthew, ed. *Beyond Black and Red: African-Native relations in Colonial Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. Read Introduction (1-13), chap. 3 (81-114), chap. 4 (115-136), and chap. 8 (223-243). [On the class website](#).

Apr 7 Changing Categories (Part 1)

Martínez, María Elena. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008: Part three and Conclusion (p. 171-275)

Apr 14 Changing Categories (Part 2)

Imperial Subjects: 5. “Humble Slaves and Loyal Vassals: Free Africans and Their Descendants in Eighteenth-Century Minas Gerais, Brazil.” (Mariana L. R. Dantas: 115-140)

Imperial Subjects: 6. “Purchasing Whiteness: Conversations on the Essence of Pardo-ness and Mulatto-ness at the End of Empire.” (Ann Twinam: 141-166)

Imperial Subjects: 7. “Patricians and Plebeians in Late Colonial Charcas: Identity, Representation, and Colonialism.” (Sergio Serulnikov: 167-196)

Apr 21 Race and Casta Paintings

Imperial Subjects: 8. “Conjuring Identities: Race, Nativeness, Local Citizenship, and Royal Slavery on an Imperial Frontier (Revisiting El Cobre, Cuba).” (María Elena Díaz: 197-224)

Deans-Smith, Susan. "Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain." *Colonial Latin American Review* 14 (2), 2005: 169-204.

Graduate students must read: Carrera, Magali Marie. *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.