

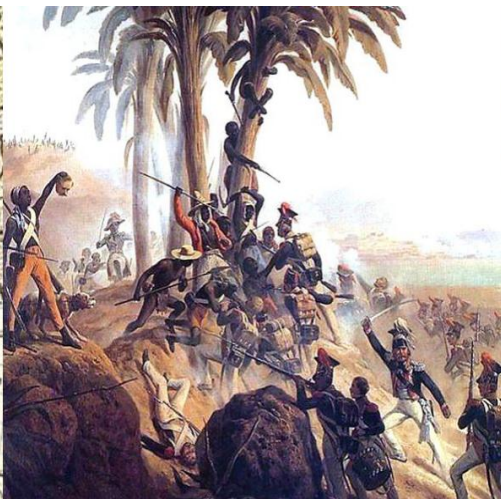
# HISTORY 355

## *Colonial Americas:*

### *An Introduction to Comparative History*

**DR. RYAN DEARINGER**

**SPRING 2012 ~ MW 1-2:50, F 1-1:50**



\*History 355 offers an introduction to the comparative history of European colonization in the Americas. It explores the central debates, themes, and interpretive shifts in a rapidly expanding field responding to ongoing globalization and the interconnectedness of the Americas. The field of comparative history asks, as historian Lewis Hanke famously did over a half-century ago, **DO THE AMERICAS HAVE A COMMON HISTORY?** Traditionally, Spanish, English, French, Dutch and Portuguese American colonies have been treated in isolation and understood primarily in terms of European national differences. In the United States, the “classic” story of English colonization emphasizes its exceptional nature, its traditions of liberty, equality, and self-governance in contrast to other regions of the Americas which are cast as failed versions of the Anglo-American democratic experiment. Challenging this earlier concentration on European cultural difference, History 355 emphasizes *who* and *what* Europeans encountered—Indian and African cultures, other Europeans, natural resources, and evolving systems of labor, commerce, and governance—as crucial determinants of regional difference in the early Americas. This course explores cross-cultural interaction among Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans in a variety of colonial settings. We will examine cultural practices and belief systems; gender; labor; slavery; trade; missions; colonial politics; and revolutionary struggles for independence. We will not treat economic or social development comprehensively nor examine politics and diplomacy as traditionally conceived. Instead, we will concentrate on **CULTURE**: the everyday practices and systems of meaning through which human communities make sense of their world. Europeans never imposed culture unilaterally on Native Americans and Africans. More accurately, all three groups engaged in a cultural conversation that produced new understandings and cultural forms within the constraints of unequal power relations.

**\*COUNTS TOWARD HISTORY MAJOR/MINOR. ANYONE IS WELCOME TO JOIN THIS COURSE!**