

Colonial Latin America

Rachel Moore, Associate Professor, History, Clemson University

Course Description: This curriculum guide explores a wide range of perspectives on the colonial period in Latin America. This includes encounters of the Spanish and the Portuguese (as well as the Dutch) with indigenous populations in Mexico and South America. By analyzing these images alongside readings the student will gain a fuller sense of the mindset of the participants in each historical event and, ultimately, a fuller sense of the historical event itself.



Unknown Spanish artist, Conquest of Mexico; The arrival of Cortes in Veracruz and the reception of Moctezuma's ambassadors, 16th century. Image and original data provided by Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.; artres.com

Section 1: The Age of Encounters: Impressions of the New World

Images for this selection address European impressions of the New World in the earliest years of the Spanish encounters with Latin America. Most of these images were produced by those who had no direct contact with Latin America and thus are both fantastical and reflective of pre-contact mindsets in Europe.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 2: Iberian Precedents: The Legacy of Convivencia in Spain and Portugal

Images for this selection examine in detail the precedents for the conquest of the New World set by the Muslim occupation of the Spanish peninsula from 711-1492 and the subsequent Spanish reconquest of the peninsula. These images include reference to popular figures, such as Santiago Matamoros, and building styles that would appear in Spain and Latin America as a result of the convivencia.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 3: Indian Conquistadors: Tribute Empires before the Age of Encounters

Images for this selection document how the Aztec and the Inka carried out conquest to expand their tributary empires before the arrival of the Europeans. These images, among them maps and images of indigenous gods, include reference to differing conventions among the Aztec and the Inka and the differing effects these convention had on the coherence of their empires.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 4: Conquest in Mexico and Peru

Images for this selection examine the range of interactions that occurred during the earliest years of the Spanish occupation of Latin America. In addition to several maps, the selection includes images of Hernan Cortés, the head conquistador in New Spain, and his translator and mistress Malinche as well as Francisco Pizarro, the head conquistador in Peru, and his confrontation with Inka king Atahualpa.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 5: Father and mother of Latin America: the Habsburgs and the Church

Images for this selection emphasize the other aspect of the Spanish occupation of Latin America: “the spiritual conquest.” These images include depictions of the Franciscans in the New World as well as the close relationship between the Habsburg monarchs and the Catholic Church.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 6: The fruits of conquest: Revenue makers and revenue takers

This smaller collection of images documents the labor and financial obligations that indigenous peoples faced during the Spanish occupation of Latin America. Images of the Andean city of Potosí emphasize the importance of silver to the Spanish economy during the conquest period.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 7: Brazilian counterpoint: The Portuguese in the New World

Images for this collection reflect the distinct history of the Portuguese in Latin America. These images include maps documenting Portuguese settlement along the coasts of Brazil (as opposed to the Spanish settlement of the interior of their territories) as well as the experience of African slaves in Brazil.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 8: The Baroque period in Latin America

Images for the selection capture some of the opulent decoration and vivid (sometimes brutal) detail that characterized Baroque art and architecture in Latin America. The images in this selection showcase the opportunities for the coexistence of indigenous and European conventions of art provided by the Baroque style. They also reflect the ways in which Europeans used Baroque art to embody the power of both the Spanish empire and the Catholic Church.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 9: Decadence and diligence: from Habsburg to Bourbon rule

Images for this selection document the change of leadership in Spain from the Habsburg monarchy to the Bourbon monarchy. This small selection of images uses portraits of the royal families to explore how the Habsburg monarchy had fallen into decadence whereas the Bourbon monarchy represents a move towards diligent monitoring of activities in Spain's colonies.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 10: Creole patriotism

Images for this selection turn to the prominent community of creoles – those of pure Spanish blood born in Latin America – in the New World. Images include examples of the intellectual contributions of the creole community as well as their detractors. The Aztec goddess Coatlicue is depicted in this selection as an example used by creoles to indicate the rich classical heritage of Latin America.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 11: The Virgin of Guadalupe

Images for this selection examine both historical and contemporary depictions of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Early images reflect the appeal of the story of the apparition of the Virgin to indigenous communities in Mexico. Later images reflect the continuing appeal of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a national symbol.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 12: Independence in Mexico

Images in this selection document the independence movement in Mexico, beginning with the Hidalgo Revolt in 1810, and ending with the crowning of Agustín de Iturbide as Emperor.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)

Section 13: Independence in South America and Brazil

Images in this selection document the independence movement in South America and Brazil. Images include reference to Simon Bolívar and Brazil's distinct path to independence through a Portuguese monarch.

[View the images in the Artstor Digital Library](#)