

## ARTH398: Special Topics in Art and Society Colonial Latin America

This syllabus was designed for an intensive six-week summer lecture course for 40 students with little background in early modern art history and likely no knowledge of Latin American art. While centering artistic production in former Iberian colonies, the course maintained a transatlantic lens to provide a thematic overview of some of the main themes and questions in early modern Latin American and European art history. It also introduced students to ongoing debates about global art history. Assignments were scaffolded, moving from short-form lexicon entries, which allowed students to think about the contributions of Latin American artistic production to broader art-historical scholarship, towards an ekphrastic exercise and a final take-home exam requiring a synthesis of the topics studied, while allowing students to draw from the readings and objects that most appealed to them. Taught remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I implemented a flipped classroom model with both asynchronous and synchronous components: students would watch a pre-recorded lecture before class, and we would come together in smaller groups for discussions and debates guided by the teaching assistant and me. The class met on Tuesday and Thursday for 165 minutes.



Juan Bautista Cuiris, *Portrait of Christ*, 16<sup>th</sup> century, Hummingbird and Parrot feathers (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna)

ARTH398 CA. Special Topics in Art and Society: Colonial Latin America  
Department of Art History  
Faculty of Fine Arts  
Concordia University  
Summer 2021

**Instructor:** Daniel Santiago Sáenz  
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**Teaching Assistant:**

**Virtual Office Hours:**

Via Zoom: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 – 11:45; 2:30-3:00; by appointment

**Asynchronous Recorded Lectures:**

Via Panopto: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Synchronous Discussion Sessions:**

Via Zoom: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30 to 2:15 p.m.

Zoom Code: 943 2609 0773 / Passcode: 484601 / [Link](#)

## Territorial Acknowledgement

Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

This territorial acknowledgement was created by Concordia University's Indigenous Directions Leadership Group (2017). To read the entire territorial acknowledgement and learn more about why it was written this way, please visit <https://www.concordia.ca/about/indigenous/territorial-acknowledgement.html>.

## A note on online teaching/learning

This syllabus (and the class it reflects) was designed to be taught with all of us in the same room together, using the same materials, and looking at the same PowerPoint presentation. It was not designed to be taught online or with Zoom. As you know, however, the world in which we currently live requires us to be flexible in ways we never anticipated and to gain skills we never thought we would use. I have thus retooled the syllabus to reflect our new shared reality, in the hope that I can anticipate some of the challenges which our present condition presents. I do not know that I have been successful. The goals of the course, as articulated below, remain the same, but I will check in with you frequently – and I urge you to volunteer feedback even when I have not requested it – to make sure that what we are doing is working as well as can be expected.

*Please be patient with me, with each other, and with technology.*

## Calendar Course Description

A detailed examination of a selected aspect of art in society.

NOTE: It is strongly recommended that students have completed at least six Art History credits before enrolling in this course.

## Expanded Course Description

The so-called “global turn” in art history has led to an increasing interest in the artistic production of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas. This period encompasses starting the beginning of European colonial projects, marked by the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the continent in 1492 and the Fall of México-Tenochtitlan in 1521, up to the wars of independence in the mid-nineteenth century. This course, designed as a thematic survey, introduces students to the broad sweep of artistic production in the Iberian Americas, with a particular emphasis on New Spain (a territory known today as Mexico). Our primary concern will be how colonial Latin American society is imagined *and* imaged in the larger context of the Spanish Empire through the production and circulation of codices, feather mosaics, paintings, treatises, and sculptures. Acknowledging that invasion is a structure—both historical and ongoing—and not an event [1], we will examine the complex relationships between artistic production and conquest-settlement-colonialism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Latin America. Moving beyond the misguided assumption that the arts of the so-called ‘New’ World represent little more than an imitation of European ‘originals,’ we will think about the cross-pollination between artistic practices and objects on both sides of the Atlantic.

We begin our journey with an art-historical “boot camp” aimed at introducing students to ways of thinking, reading, and writing about visual culture. We will then consider pre-Hispanic artistic practices, such as Mesoamerican mural painting, *amantecayotl* (Nahua feather mosaics) and the work of *tlacuiloqueh* (Indigenous painter-scribes). We will then examine selected aspects of artistic production in colonial Latin America, including issues of conversion and martyrdom, gender and sexuality, the representation of race in early Mexican manuscripts and in *casta* paintings, issues of mapping and territoriality, inventories and the circulation of objects, and the development of an art history of the universal. We will conclude the course with a brief examination of contemporary engagements with the legacies of colonialism in Latin America and beyond.

[1] Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006): 388.

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify key aspects of the art historiography of colonial Latin American art and architecture;
- Acquire an appropriate vocabulary to critically engage with and write about the artistic production of Spanish America;
- Analyze and interpret images using key theoretical and historical writings;
- Discuss the meanings of works of art in their historical context, especially in regards to colonial expansion, *mestizaje*, evangelization, Transatlantic exchanges, and others;

- Understand the breaks and continuities between colonial and contemporary art in Latin America and on Turtle Island; and
- Develop skills in analytical writing and critical thinking.

## Evaluation

Lexicon Entries (4 x 10% = 40%)

Ekphrastic Exercise (30%)

Final Take-Home Exam (30%)

## Assignments and Requirements

### Lexicon Entries:

- For each entry, students will choose a keyword from the readings and will write a concise definition. The goal is to draw from class materials to critically examine the meanings and complexities of the vocabulary that we use as art historians and artists to think and talk about art. Take this assignment as an opportunity to rethink key terms whose meanings we take for granted. In other words, how can the artistic production of colonial Latin America help us rethink our art-historical vocabulary?
- Do not be afraid to get creative with content and/or form!
- Length: 150-250 words

### Ekphrastic Exercise:

- Select an artwork from the colonial period in Latin America (roughly 1521 to the wars of independence in the mid-nineteenth century). With reference to two sources introduced in class, develop a short formal analysis. This assignment is one of visual analysis. This is not pure description, however. Your visual analysis should be directed, using visual evidence to support a thesis statement.
- Length: 500 to 750 words, 14 pt standard font, double spaced
- Submission: upload a PDF via Moodle by 11:59 PM on the due date

### Final Take-Home Exam

- Please refer to assignment guidelines (available on Moodle and as a PDF in attachment)
- Due: August 19th, 2021 by 11:59 PM via Moodle

## Grading Scale

A+= 90-100%; A= 85-89; A- = 80-84; B+=77-79; B= 73-76; B- =70-72; C+=67-69; C= 63-66; C-

=60-62; D+=57-59; D= 53-56; D- =50-52; F=below 50.

<b>A+</b>	<b>90-100%</b> Outstanding (GPA 4.3)	<b>A</b>	<b>85-89%</b> Outstanding (GPA 4.0)	<b>A-</b>	<b>80-84%</b> Outstanding (GPA 3.7)
<b>B+</b>	<b>77-79%</b> Very Good (GPA 3.3)	<b>B</b>	<b>73-76%</b> Very Good (GPA 3.0)	<b>B-</b>	<b>70-72%</b> Very Good (GPA 2.7)
<b>C+</b>	<b>67-69%</b> Satisfactory (GPA 2.3)	<b>C</b>	<b>63-66%</b> Satisfactory (GPA 2.0)	<b>C-</b>	<b>60-62%</b> Satisfactory (GPA 1.7)
<b>D+</b>	<b>57-59%</b> Marginal Pass (GPA 1.3)	<b>D</b>	<b>53-56%</b> Marginal Pass (GPA 1.0)	<b>D-</b>	<b>50-52%</b> Marginal Pass (GPA 0.7)
<b>F/FNS</b>	<b>&lt;50% Fail/ Fail No Supplemental</b> Poor-Failure (GPA 0)	<b>R</b>	<b>&lt;20% Repeat</b> Very Poor-Failure (GPA 0)	<b>NR</b>	<b>Grade Not Reported</b> (GPA 0)

## Late Assignments

Given the fast-paced nature of this course, late assignments will **not** be accepted. If you foresee being unable to submit an assignment on a given deadline, please try to submit it *beforehand* or get in touch with the instructor to find an alternative date.

In case of unforeseen circumstances and emergencies (illness, caring for family members, mental health, etc), please let your instructor know as soon as possible. Arrangements can and will be made.

## Course Expectations

### E-mail communication:

When e-mailing the instructor, please adopt a professional, but casual, voice. In other words, include a greeting (Hello/hola Daniel) and avoid incomplete sentences or 'text-language.' In the spirit of promoting a healthier life-work balance, please allow 24-48 hours for a response for e-mails sent during regular working days (M-F, 9-5). I am always happy to answer questions by e-mail, but please ensure that the answer to your question is not on the syllabus or on the Q&A section on Moodle before e-mailing me. Finally, questions that require extensive explanation or discussion should be addressed during the live Q&A sessions.

### Complete all assignments on time and in accordance with the guidelines

All course requirements must be fulfilled in order to receive a passing grade for the course. No incomplete grades or deadline extensions are possible for late or missed assignments except on medical or other substantive compassionate grounds, and you must provide the instructor with the appropriate supporting documentation.

All assignments must be submitted via Moodle and must follow the guidelines described in the "Assignments and Requirements" section. No e-mail submissions will be considered.

### Participation and evidence of completing the required work

While the current circumstances require that the class be taught asynchronously, you are still expected to complete the required readings and assignments on time. You are also expected to make an effort to join the class for any synchronous sessions that may be deemed necessary and to actively

participate in the Q&A period.

## Assignments

Concordia University's Language Policy indicates that "*tout étudiant a le doit de passer ses examens et de rédiger ses travaux en français.*" In accordance with this policy, students may submit any written work for this class in either English or French.

All course assignments must be submitted via Moodle either as a direct text entry or voice recording (responses and lexicon) or a PDF upload (ekphrastic exercise and exhibition). No e-mail submissions will be accepted unless explicitly specified and approved by the instructor.

## Plagiarism

The most common offence under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism which the Code defines as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement."

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism.

In Simple Words:

Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it! (Source: The Academic Integrity Website:

<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/plagiarism/>)

This syllabus is an agreement between the students and the instructor. Please read the syllabus in its entirety. Taking this course means that you have agreed to accept the requirements and complete all of the assignments. Additionally, it means that you will both respect and treat our class meetings as a safe space for everyone.

## Student Services:

1. Access Centre for Students with Disabilities: [concordia.ca/students/accessibility](http://concordia.ca/students/accessibility)
2. Student Success Centre: [concordia.ca/students/success](http://concordia.ca/students/success)
3. Counselling and Psychological Services: [concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills](http://concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills)
4. Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides: [library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations](http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations)
5. Health Services: [concordia.ca/students/health](http://concordia.ca/students/health)
6. Financial Aid and Awards: [concordia.ca/offices/faao](http://concordia.ca/offices/faao)
7. Academic Integrity: [concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity](http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity)
8. Dean of Students Office: [concordia.ca/offices/dean-students](http://concordia.ca/offices/dean-students)
9. Aboriginal Student Resource Centre: [concordia.ca/students/aboriginal](http://concordia.ca/students/aboriginal)

10. International Students Office: [concordia.ca/students/international](http://concordia.ca/students/international)
11. Student Hub: [concordia.ca/students](http://concordia.ca/students)
12. Sexual Assault Resource Centre: [concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault](http://concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault)
13. The Concordia Student Union offers students many resources including:
  - HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank): [csu.qc.ca/services/housing-and-job-bank-hojo/](http://csu.qc.ca/services/housing-and-job-bank-hojo/)
  - CSU Advocacy Centre: [csu.qc.ca/services/advocacy-centre/](http://csu.qc.ca/services/advocacy-centre/)

## Accessibility:

I will strive to make learning experience as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have accessibility needs that require academic accommodations, please meet with an advisor from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) as soon as possible to set up an accommodation plan. I welcome meeting with all students to discuss their accessibility needs. [concordia.ca/students/accessibility](http://concordia.ca/students/accessibility)

## Course Materials

All readings and materials for the course will be available on Course Reserves: [reserves.concordia.ca/ares/](http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/)

## Course Outline and Schedule

\* The following schedule is tentative and therefore subject to change. Check Moodle for the most up-to-date schedule. Please note that “optional” readings are **not** mandatory but may be useful for context or for the final project.

### Week 1

#### Class 1: Introduction to the course; Writing Art History

Driving question: What is this class about? How do we write the history of art?

Assigned readings:

- Syllabus
- Robert Glass, “Introduction to art historical analysis,” in *Smarthistory*, October 28, 2017, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-art-historical-analysis/>.
- Watch: Beth Harris and Steven Zucker, “How to do visual (formal) analysis,” in *Smarthistory*, September 18, 2017, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://smarthistory.org/visual-analysis/>.

Optional readings:

- Castellanos, M. Bianet. “Introduction: Settler Colonialism in Latin America.” *American Quarterly* 69:4 (2017): 777-781.

- Cohen-Aponte, Ananda. “Decolonizing the Global Renaissance: A View from the Andes.” In *The Globalization of Renaissance Art*, edited by Daniel Savoy, 67-94. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017.

## Class 2: Indigenous Americas

Driving question: What did the artistic production of the pre-Hispanic Americas look like?

Assigned readings:

- Maya Jiménez, "Defining “Pre-Columbian” and “Mesoamerica”," in *Smarthistory*, August 19, 2016, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://smarthistory.org/pre-columbian-mesoamerica/>.
- Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank, "Mesoamerica, an introduction," in *Smarthistory*, September 12, 2017, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://smarthistory.org/mesoamerica-an-introduction/>.

Optional readings:

- Brittenham, Claudia. “About Time: Problems of Narrative in the Battle Mural at Cacaxtla.” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (2011): 74-92. Accessed July 2, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23647783>.
- Dean, Carolyn. “The Trouble with (The Term) Art.” *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (July 1, 2006): 24. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20068464>.

## Week 2

### Class 3: Early Years of the Colony

Driving question: How is the encounter/collision between Mesoamerican and European ways of seeing and being represented? What effects did this collision have on making practices?

Assigned reading:

- FitzPatrick Sifford, Elena. “Mexican Manuscripts and the First Images of Africans in the Americas.” *Ethnohistory* 66, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 223–48. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-7298747>.
- Hill Boone, Elizabeth. “This new world now revealed: Hernán Cortés and the presentation of Mexico to Europe.” *Word & Image* 27:1 (2011): 31-46.

### Class 4: Indigenous Painting in New Spain

Driving question: How did Indigenous making-practices change after the Conquest? Which elements or practices persist and thrive?

Assigned readings:

- Douglas, Eduardo de Jesús. “Indigenous painting in New Spain, circa 1521-1600: iconic-script manuscripts, feather paintings, and murals.” In *Painting in Latin America, 1550-1820: From Conquest to Independence*, edited by Luisa Elena Alcalá and Jonathan Brown, 71-101. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Russo, Alessandra. “Mosaics.” In *The Untranslatable Image: A Mestizo History of the Arts in New Spain, 1500-1600*, pp 83-108. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.

## Week 3

### Class 5: Conversion, Evangelization, Pedagogy

Driving question: What is the role of the visual in the evangelical and pedagogical projects of Christian missionaries in New Spain?

Assigned readings:

- Cummins, Tom. “To Serve Man: Pre-Columbian Art, Western Discourses of Idolatry, and Cannibalism.” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 42, 2002: 109-130.
- Ødemark, John. “Preaching with Pictures, Transforming Memories: Catechisms and Images as Contact Zones in Sixteenth Century New Spain.” In *Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: The Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*, edited by Antje Flüchter and Rouven Wirbser, 331–67. London: Brill, 2017.

### Class 6: New Spanish Painting

Driving question: What does *New Spanish* painting look like? How is it different from Mesoamerican or European painting?

Assigned readings:

- Alcalá, Luis Elena. “Painting in Latin America, 1550-1820: a historical and theoretical framework.” In *Painting in Latin America, 1550-1820: From Conquest to Independence*, edited by Luisa Elena Alcalá and Jonathan Brown, 15-68. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Cummins, Tom. “On the Colonial Formation of Comparison: The Virgin of Chiquinquirá, The Virgin of Guadalupe, and Cloth.” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 74-75 (1998): 51-77.

## Week 4

### Class 7: Religious Bodies

Driving question: What is the relationship between visual representation, sanctity, and the body? How do images intended for devotion differ from earlier ones intended for evangelization?

Assigned readings:

- Bailey, Gauvin Alexander. "A Missionary Order without Saints: Iconography of Unbeatified and Uncanonized Jesuits in Italy and Peru, 1560-1614." In *Art and Reform in the Late Renaissance after Trent*, edited by Jesse M. Locker, 241-261. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- McAllen, Katherine. "Jesuit Martyrdom Imagery Between Mexico and Rome." In *The New World in Early Modern Italy, 1492-1750*, edited by Lia Markey and Elizabeth Horodowich, 143-165. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Robin, Alena. "The Wound on Christ's Back in New Spain." *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 32:1-2 (2007): 79-93.

### Class 8: Gender and Sexuality

Driving question: What are the relationships between gender, sexuality, and colonial power? How are they represented or reinforced through art?

Assigned readings:

- Sigal, Pete. "Queer Nahuatl: Sahagún's Faggots and Sodomites, Lesbians and Hermaphrodites." *Ethnohistory* 54:1 (2007): 9–33. DOI 10.1215/00141801-2006-038.
- Villaseñor Black, Charlene. "Love and Marriage in the Spanish Empire: Depictions of Holy Matrimony and Gender Discourses in the Seventeenth Century." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 32:3 (2001): 637-667. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/2671506](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2671506).

### Week 5

### Class 9: Portuguese Imperialism

Assigned readings:

- Fromont, Cécile. "Dancing for the King of Congo from Early Modern Central Africa to Slavery- Era Brazil." *Colonial Latin American Review* 22:2 (2013): 184-208.
- Valerio, Miguel A. "Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, Ouro Preto, Brazil," in *Smarthistory*, March 14, 2021, accessed July 20, 2024, <https://smarthistory.org/church-our-lady-of-the-rosary-ouro-preto/>.
- Zimmerman, Rachel. "Introduction to colonial Brazil," in *Smarthistory*, May 24, 2020, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://smarthistory.org/introduction-to-colonial-brazil/>.
- ————. "Albert Eckhout, Series of eight figures," in *Smarthistory*, June 11, 2018, accessed July 20, 2024, <https://smarthistory.org/eckhout-series/>.

### Class 10: Representation of Race and Social Classification

Driving question: How is race constructed in this period? What are the relationships between visual representation, knowledge, and power?

Assigned readings:

- Cohen-Aponte, Ananda. "Making Race Visible in the Colonial Andes." In *Envisioning Others: Race, Color, and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, edited by Pamela A. Paton, 187-212. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016.
- Earle, Rebecca. "The Pleasures of Taxonomy: Casta Paintings, Classification, and Colonialism." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 73:3 (2016): 427-466.

## Week 6

### Class 11: Travelling Objects

Driving question: What kind of meaning or effect is produced by objects from/about the 'New World' as they travel around the world? How is 'travel,' loosely defined, made visible in the artistic production of the period?

Assigned readings:

- Hamman, Byron Ellsworth. "The Mirror of Las Meninas: Cochineal, Silver, and Clay." *The Art Bulletin* 92:1-2 (2010): 6-35.
- Russo, Alessandra. "Cortés's Objects and the Idea of New Spain: Inventories as Spatial Narratives." *Journal of the History of Collections* 23, no. 2 (November 1, 2011): 229-52. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/fhq041>.

### Class 12: Artistic Humanity

Driving question: To what extent does the artistic production from colonial Latin America put the art-historical canon under pressure?

Assigned readings:

- Russo, Alessandra. "Lights on the Antipodes: Francisco de Holanda and an Art History of the Universal." *The Art Bulletin* 10:4 (2020): 37-65.
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## Week 7

### Class 13: Reverberations in Contemporary Art

Driving question: How do contemporary artists engage and resemanticize the artistic legacies of the colonial period?

Assigned readings:

- Robin, Alena. "Mapping the Presence of Latin American Art in Canadian Museums and Universities." *Latin American and Latinx Visual Cultures*. 1:2 (2019): 33-57.

- Uribe Pereira, Conrado. “Continuidades y transformaciones. Reflexiones a partir del Viacrucis de Fernando Botero / Continuities and Transformations: Reflections on the Work of Fernando Botero in the Viacrucis Series.” In *Viacrucis: La pasión de Cristo*, 5-15. Medellín: Fondo Editorial del Museo de Antioquia, 2012.