

**COLONIAL CITIES OF THE AMERICAS,
c. 1500-1800**

Course number: UN2689

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Teaching Assistant: TBA

Office hours: Baics: TBA Pizzigoni: TBA TA: TBA

Course description (short):

History of cities in the Americas in the colonial period, c. 1500-1800. First, we explore the precolonial origins of American cities. Second, we examine the various patterns of colonial city foundations and urban systems. Third, we study the forms, built and social environments of cities in the Americas.

Course description (long):

This course examines the history of cities in the Americas in the colonial era, c. 1500-1800, organized around three large themes. First, we study the precolonial origins of American urban systems, focusing especially on Mesoamerica and the Andes, and exploring questions of urban continuity, disruption and change, and the forms of indigenous cities. Second, we study various patterns of city foundations and city types across the Americas, examining Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch and French colonial urban systems. Third, we focus on the cities more closely by looking at key issues such as urban form, built environment, social structure. Specific themes include a critical analysis of the Spanish colonial grid, the baroque city, and 18th-century urban reforms, as well as race and class, urban slavery, and urban disease environments.

Prerequisites: None

Cap: 40

Learning objectives:

Students who complete this class will:

- 1) Acquire solid knowledge of the development and history of urban systems and cities across the Americas in the colonial period.
- 2) Gain a well-rounded understanding of key problems and debates in the field of colonial urban history, focusing on the Americas.
- 3) Explore comparative historical analysis through the study of urban systems and cities across various cultural regions and places in two continents.
- 4) Learn some basic tools of urban spatial analysis, focusing especially on the history of urban form and built environment.
- 5) Understand and apply key components of historical thinking: how to formulate historical questions, use primary sources, and develop historical arguments.

Course assignments and grading:

Please note: Failure to complete ANY one of the course assignments will result in an overall F in class.

1) Midterm exam (30% of final grade)—TBA

The midterm evaluation will consist of an in-class exam, which will be comprised of short-answer identifications and essays. The midterm will cover material through week 7. There will be a review session prior to the exam on date TBA.

2) Map analysis (30% of final grade)—due on date TBA via email

The written assignment for this class will be a map analysis based on a colonial map of a city in the Americas of the student's choosing. You need to compare the colonial city map to a current map of the same city found in Google Maps or some equivalent source, and explore specific aspects of what has remained, what has changed, and what has vanished of the colonial built environment. You can focus on any set of features: from the shoreline to the street layout, squares, fortifications, parks, or public and private buildings, etc., in so far as your analysis is specific and thorough. The written analysis should be about 1,200-1,500 words in length (excluding footnotes and bibliography), plus images of the maps used. Students will also present their map analysis to the rest of the class on dates TBA. For details, see the map assignment information sheet.

3) Final exam (30% of final grade)—on official exam date

The in-class final exam will consist of short-answer identifications and essays. It will cover material from week 9 to week 14. There will be a review session prior to the exam on date TBA.

4) Participation (10% of final grade)

Attendance at both lectures and discussion sessions is required. Your participation grade will be based on your active participation in both.

Attendance policy

Attendance at lectures is assumed. Students need to read the assigned texts prior to lecture. In addition, your TA will conduct discussion sessions over the course of the semester. These sessions are intended to help students process the readings and lectures. Attendance in discussion sections is required, and your active contribution will be part of your participation grade. In addition, your TA will hold regular office hours to assist you with lectures and readings.

Readings:

Readings for this class come from articles and book chapters. All of these materials will be available on Canvas in PDF. You are responsible for downloading and printing the material. Please note: changes to the reading list may be made via email or announcement in class. You will be responsible for any such changes.

Honor Code

We will follow as a guide both the Columbia College and Barnard College Honor Codes.

Columbia College

The Columbia College Student Council, on behalf of the whole student body, has resolved that maintaining academic integrity is the preserve of all members of our intellectual community – including and especially students. As a consequence, all Columbia College students will now make the following pledge:

“We, the undergraduate students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor.”

In addition, all Columbia College students are committed to the following honor code:

“I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.”

Barnard College

Established 1912, updated 2016, the Code states:

“We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.”

Disability services

Columbia

If you are a student with a disability and have a DS-certified Accommodation Letter please come to our office hours or meet us after class to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation, you should contact [Disability Services](#) at 212-854-2388 and disability@columbia.edu

Barnard

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see us to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring us your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course. Students are not eligible to use their accommodations in this course until they have met with us. ODS is located in Milbank Hall, Room 008.

READING LIST *(Subject to Change)*

Week 1

Course introduction

PART I—PRECOLONIAL URBAN ORIGINS

Mesoamerican urban traditions

- Michael E. Smith, *Aztec City-state Capitals* (UP Florida, 2008), ch 1 (1-7), ch 6-7
- Scott Hutson, *The Ancient Urban Maya: Neighborhoods, Inequality, and Built Form* (UP Florida, 2016), ch 2 (41-69)

Week 2

Andean urban traditions

- Ian Farrington, *Cusco: Urbanism and Archaeology in the Inka World* (UP Florida, 2013), ch 2 (21, 37-52), ch 3 (56-63, 66-76), ch 13

Class discussion: Mesoamerican urban forms

- Michael E. Smith, *Aztec City-state Capitals* (UP Florida, 2008), ch 5
- Christian Isendahl, Michael E. Smith, “Sustainable Agrarian Urbanism: The Low-Density Cities of the Mayas and Aztecs,” *Cities* 31 (2013), 132-43
- Wendy Ashmore, “Site-Planning Principles and Concepts of Directionality among the Ancient Maya,” *Latin American Antiquity* 2, 3 (1991), 199-226 (read only 199-205, 215-18)

Week 3

Class discussion: Tenochtitlan

- José Luis de Rojas, *Tenochtitlan: Capital of the Aztec Empire* (UP Florida, 2012), ch 5-6 (read only 23-48)
- Barbara E. Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City* (U of Texas Press, 2015), ch 2
- [Mapa de Santa Cruz](#)

European urban traditions: Urban trends, c. 400-1600

- Peter Clark, *European Cities and Towns, 400-2000* (Oxford UP, 2009), ch 2-3
- Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (McGraw-Hill, 1969) ch 3 (56-65, 93-109)

Week 4

European urban traditions: Medieval urban forms and culture

- Jacques Rossiaud, “The City Dweller and Life in Cities and Towns,” in *Medieval Callings*, ed. Jacques Le Goff (U of Chicago Press, 1987), 138-79
- James E. Vance, Jr., *The Continuing City: Urban Morphology in Western Civilization* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1990), ch 4 (123-71)
- [Carta Històrica de Barcelona](#)

PART II—COLONIAL FOUNDATIONS AND CITY TYPES

Conquest: Mesoamerica and the Andes

- Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (Yale UP, 2000), ch 2
- Bernal Diaz, *The Conquest of New Spain* (Penguin, 1963), 392-408
- Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Discovery and Conquest of Peru: Chronicles of the New World Encounter* (Duke UP, 1998), ch 68-69, 99

Week 5

North America: Spanish, French, Dutch, British urban foundations

- Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony that Shaped America* (Vintage Books, 2004), 37-66, 104-9, 265-83
- Mannahatta: Watch [Eric Sanderson's TED talk](#) on methodology behind the Mannahatta Project; Explore [The Welikia Project](#) website and launch map explorer to study Mannahatta by area; Explore on [Oasis Map](#) Mannahatta features with historical land-use layers
- Colin M. Coates, “The Colonial Landscapes of the Early Town,” in Stéphane Castonguay and Michèle Dagenais eds., *Metropolitan Natures: Environmental Histories of Montreal* (U of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 19-36

Viceregal capitals: Mexico City and Lima

- Barbara E. Mundy, *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City* (U of Texas Press, 2015), ch 8
- Alejandra Osorio, *Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru's South Sea Metropolis* (Palgrave, 2008), ch 2

Week 6

Port cities

- Jacob Price, “Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century,” *Perspectives in American History* 8 (1974), 121-186
- Alejandro de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century* (U of NC Press, 2008), ch 2, epilogue

Silver towns

- P. J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge UP, 1971), ch 3
- Jane Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí* (Duke UP, 2005), ch 1, 6

Week 7

Missions

- Julia J. S. Sarreal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions: A Socioeconomic History* (Stanford UP, 2014), ch 2-3

- Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish Rule in Río io de la Plata* (Stanford UP, 2013), Appendix 1-4

Review for midterm

Week 8

Midterm

PART III—SHAPE OF COLONIAL CITIES

Spanish-American colonial grid

- Reuben Rose-Redwood, “Genealogies of the Grid: Revisiting Stanislawski’s Search for the Origin of the Grid-Pattern Town,” *Geographical Review* 98, 1 (2008), 42-58
- Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (U of Texas Press, 2000), ch 4-5
- Jay Kinsbruner, *The Colonial Spanish-American City: Urban Life in the Age of Atlantic Capitalism* (U of Texas Press, 2005), 23-29, Appendix
- Analysis of maps: Mexico City 1793, Lima 1764, Buenos Aires 1764, Cartagena 1764, Havana 1762

Week 9

North American grids and “organic” forms

- John W. Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton UP, 1965), selections
- Analysis of maps: New Haven 1748, Boston 1772, Philadelphia 1683, 1797, 1802, Charleston 1711, Savannah 1734, New Orleans 1764, NYC 1661, 1767, 1797, 1811 grid plan, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Recife

Baroque city

- Alejandra B. Osorio, “Courtly Ceremonies and a Cultural Urban Geography of Power in the Habsburg Spanish Empire,” in Leonard von Morzé ed., *The Circulation of Culture in Atlantic Cities: From Early Modern to Modernism* (Palgrave, 2017), 37-72
- Richard Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (Yale UP, 2000), ch 6

Week 10

"Treasure Hunt": walking colonial Manhattan [no class meeting]

- Using a 1797 map of NYC posted on Canvas (also available [here](#) geo-referenced on the current street grid), you need to hit at least EIGHT out of these sixteen sites, and take field notes of your walk in preparation for Thursday's class discussion: (1) “Fresh Water Pond”, (2) “The Park”, (3) “The African Burial Ground” (note: it’s not marked on the map), (4) “Coledge” (King’s College – former Columbia University), (5) “St. Paul Church”, (6) “Trinity Church” (note: it’s not marked on the map), (7) “The Battery”, (8) “The Governor’s House”, (9)

“Coenties Slip-The Old Slip and the wharves in between”, (10) “The Fly Market”, (11) “The Old Ferry to Brooklyn”, (12) “The New Ferry to Brooklyn”, (13) “James Street”, (14) “Rope Walk”, (15) “Bridewell” (NYC municipal jail), (16) “Hudson Square”.

Class discussion: The “walking city”

- Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (U of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), ch 1 (focus on 11-21)
- Betsy Blackmar, “Re-Walking the Walking City: Housing and Property Relations in New York City, 1780-1840,” *Radical History Review* 21 (1979), 131-48
- Bring your field notes from the walking tour!

Week 11

MAP ANALYSIS DUE on date TBA by midnight via email.

Presentations of student map analyses 1

Presentations of student map analyses 2

Week 12

PART IV—SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF COLONIAL CITIES

Class and poverty in the colonial city

- Martin Minchom, *The People of Quito, 1690-1810: Change and Unrest in the Underclass* (Westview Press, 1994), 49-63, 153-58, 170-91
- Gary B. Nash, “Urban Wealth and Poverty in Pre-Revolutionary America,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, 4 (1976), 545-84

Urban slavery

- Mary C. Karasch, *Slave life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850* (Princeton Press, 1987) ch 3
- Jill Lepore, “The Tightening Vice: Slavery and Freedom in British New York,” in Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris eds., *Slavery in New York* (The New Press, 2005), 57-89
- Serena R. Zabin ed., *The New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741: Daniel Horsmanden's Journal of the Proceedings: with Related Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), selections

Week 13

Disease environments

- J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge UP, 2010), 4-5
- Simon Finger, *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* (Cornell UP, 2012), ch 4, 8

- Benjamin Rush, *Observations upon the Origin of the Malignant Bilious, or Yellow Fever in Philadelphia...* (1799)

Urban governance

- Jay Kinsbruner, *The Colonial Spanish-American City: Urban Life in the Age of Atlantic Capitalism* (UT Press, 2005), ch 4
- Jon C. Teaford, *The Municipal Revolution in America: Origins of Modern Urban Government, 1650-1825* (U of Chicago Press, 1975), ch 2, 4, 7
- *Laws and Ordinances, Ordained and Established by... the City of New-York* (Hugh Gaine, 1793), 6-25

Week 14

Bourbon reforms and social unrest in the city

- Chuck Walker, *Shaky Colonialism: The 1746 Earthquake Tsunami in Lima, Peru, and Its Long Aftermath* (Duke UP, 2008), ch 1 (1-2), 5
- Anthony McFarlane, “The ‘Rebellion of the Barrios.’ Urban Insurrection in Bourbon Quito, 1765,” in Silvia M. Arrom and Servando Ortoll eds, *Riots in the Cities: Popular Politics and the Urban Poor in Latin America, 1765-1910* (SR Books, 1996), 17-69

Review for final

Final