LONG BEFORE VICTORIAN Britain or modern America became synonymous with world empire, there was Spain. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the fractious kingdoms of medieval Iberia banded together to forge the first truly global monarchy, reaching from Latin America to the Philippines—only to watch it disintegrate almost as quickly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Understanding Spain’s Golden Age is essential for interpreting not only the histories of modern Spain and Latin America, but also the history of the early modern world as a whole. Topics will include the creation of a Spanish identity; Christian, Muslim, and Jewish relations; the Renaissance; the governance of the Spanish Empire; imperial decline; and the Enlightenment.

Required Texts


CR ..................Items reprinted in the custom course reader.

Schedule of Readings and Course Meetings

Sep. 11  Course Introduction: Iberia

Sep. 12  No precept this week.

Sep. 16  The Christian Kingdoms of Fifteenth-Century Iberia
Sep. 18  Islam in the Late Medieval Peninsula
      CR L.P. Harvey, *Islamic Spain, 1250 to 1500* (Chicago, 1990), 1–16.

Sep. 19  Precept 1

Sep. 23  Fernando and Isabel: The Structures of Governance
        Kamen, 1–61.

Sep. 25  Religion and the Renaissance

Sep. 26  Precept 2
        Cowans, documents 1–6.

Sep. 30  Spain and the Atlantic, ca. 1500

Oct. 2   Charles V
        Kamen, 62–121.

Oct. 3   Precept 3
        Extracts from Columbus’s diary [online]; Cowans, documents 7–12.

Oct. 7   A Problem: Vitoria and las Casas

Oct. 9   Spain on the World Stage  [First Paper due]

Oct. 10  Precept 4
        Cowans, documents 13–16 & 19.

Oct. 14  Philip II, the Prudent King
Oct. 16  The Habsburgs and Islam

Oct. 17  Precept 5
   Núñez; Cowans, documents 33–35.

Oct. 21  Spain vs. Europe

Oct. 23  Midterm Exam

Oct. 24  Precept 6

Oct. 26–Nov. 3  Fall Recess

Nov. 4  A Problem: Philip III, “Strategic Culture,” and the *Pax Hispanica*

Nov. 6  Governing the Empire in the Age of the Favorite
   Elliott, 114–136.

Nov. 7  Precept 7

Nov. 11  Philip IV and Olivares
   Elliott, 162–209.

Nov. 13  Art and Culture at the Spanish Court

Nov. 14  Precept 8
   Cowans, documents 39–40, 42.
Nov. 18       Portugal and Cataluña

Nov. 20       A Problem: Spanish Decline
                Elliott, 213–286.

Nov. 21       Precept 9
                Cowans, documents 36–38.

Nov. 25       Charles II: Last of the Habsburgs
                Kamen, 196–263; Cowans, documents 44–45.

Nov. 27–Dec. 1 Thanksgiving Recess

Dec. 2        The War of Spanish Succession
                Kamen, 264–275.

Dec. 4        The Spanish Enlightenment

Dec. 5        Precept 10
                Cowans, documents 47–50.

Dec. 9        The Bourbon Reforms and the Eve of Revolution

Dec. 11       The Legacy of Imperial Spain [Second Paper due]

Dec. 12       Precept 11
                Cowans, documents 51–59.

Jan. 15–25    Final Exams

Assignments and Expectations

Attendance and participation: Lectures are held on Mondays and Wednesdays; precepts are held on Thursday afternoons. Attendance at lecture and precept is crucial, as it is both (1) the
primary way for you to receive necessary background to the materials you will be reading and (2) the venue in which we will discuss those readings. Attendance—and informed participation—are both expected. I may ask you to prepare short written and/or oral assignments to aid the discussion. Altogether, class participation will count for 20% of the final grade.

Examinations: There will be a midterm as well as a final exam. The midterm, which will take place in-class on Wednesday, 23 October, will count for 15% of the final grade. The final exam, which will take place during the regular final exam period in January, will count for 25% of the final grade.

Written assignments: In addition to the small assignments which you may be asked to complete for class, there are two papers required. The first paper, of approximately 6 pages (ca. 1800 words), will focus on the interpretation of a single primary source. It will be due in class on Wednesday, 9 October. The second paper, of approximately 10 pages (ca. 3000 words), will require you to investigate a somewhat larger topic of your choosing. You may decide to do original research on a person, place, event, or theme; you may also choose to write a historiographical essay that analyzes other historians’ interpretations of an aspect of Spanish history. This paper will be due in class on Wednesday, 11 December. Note that this is the final day of courses, rather than Dean’s Date—this means that you must plan ahead and get to work in November and December, but it also means that you can genuinely enjoy your Winter Recess.