

HI/RE 390Y: The Spanish Inquisition

This course examines both the institution of the Spanish Inquisition and the lives and circumstances of those who came before it. Just what sorts of sins concerned the Inquisition depended on the time and place, and the crimes prosecuted in sixteenth-century Spain or eighteenth-century New Spain reveal a great deal about early modern (ca. 1500-1800) culture and society. As strange as it may sound to extol the benefits of the Inquisition, it has been a boon to historians. Its dedication to careful record keeping as well as the unique (but not unproblematic) nature of its records allow us rare glimpses into people's daily activities, thoughts, beliefs, and relationships. We will read and analyze selected Inquisition cases as well as examples of how scholars have used such cases to study a wide range of topics, including religious orthodoxy (e.g. saints and those who aspired to be saints) and religious deviancy (e.g. witchcraft or heresy) as well as race relations and family life. The course covers both Spain and New Spain (colonial Mexico), recognizing the unique situations of the two continents as well as the underlying values that spanned the Hispanic Atlantic World.