

Casta Painting: Art, Race and Identity in Colonial Mexico (HI972)

Module Leader

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Aims

This module explores the distinctive vision of colonial Mexico purveyed via the artistic genre known as the casta painting. Casta paintings depict the outcomes of different types of inter-ethnic mixing, and often come in series of 16, showing many different family groups. They are quite remarkable. Consider, for example, José de Alcívar's painting showing a family group consisting, we are told in the helpful label, of a Black father, and Indian mother and their 'Wolf' son:



José de Alcívar, *De Negro y de India Sale Lobo*

Casta paintings can be seen as attempts at cataloguing the varied inhabitants of Spain's colonial universe. They thus offer a visual taxonomy of colonial space. At the same time, they have been read as statements of local pride, and usually include a wealth of details about local customs and habits. In addition, they are rich and complex documents relating to the material culture of colonial Spanish America. In Alcívar's painting reproduced above we notice not only the domestic strife but also the beautiful china (which is endangered by the parental row) and food items such as the headless chicken. How are we to interpret and understand such images?

The module will introduce students to this artistic genre, and will explore different ways of interpreting these multi-valent images. Its educational aims, therefore, are to help students consider how to read artistic works produced in a colonial setting, how to use casta paintings as a body of source material, and how to explore the relationship between visual and textual depictions of colonial space.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Assess the historiographic treatment of race in colonial Mexico.
- Understand and evaluate the scholarly literature on the emergence of creole patriotism in eighteenth-century Mexico
- Show that you have improved your research and presentation skills

- Recognise and evaluate the different ways in which scholars in different disciplines have interpreted casta paintings
- Discuss the challenges posed by the use of casta paintings as a historical source.
- Apply your scholarly and theoretical knowledge to the analysis of a specific casta painting

Assessment

1 assessed essay of 5,000 words

Syllabus

week 1: Introduction
 week 2: Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico
 week 3: Men and Women
 week 4: Materialities
 week 5: Families
 week 6: Reading Week
 week 7: Trip to Breamore House
 week 8: Student presentations.
 week 9: Student presentations
 week 10: Conclusions: Race, Class and the Colonial Imagination

Seminar Readings

week 1: Introduction

What are casta paintings?

Readings:

Peruse the illustrations in one of the following books:

Artes de México: La pintura de castas, no. 8 (1990).

Carrera, Magali, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*, University of Texas Press (Austin, 2003).

García Sáiz, María Concepción, *Las castas mexicanas. Un género pictórico americano*, Olivetti (Milan, 1989).

Katzew, Iлона, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-century Mexico*, Yale University Press (New Haven, 2004).

Katzew, Iлона, ed., *New World Orders. Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, Americas Society (New York, 1996).

Skim the chapters on colonial Spanish America in one of the following:

Bakewell, Peter, *A History of Latin America*, (Blackwell, 1997).

Bethell, Leslie (ed.), *Colonial Spanish America*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Lockhart, James and Stuart Schwartz, *Early Latin America*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Williamson, Edwin, *The Penguin History of Latin America*, (Penguin, 1992).

week 2: Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico

How well do the racial taxonomies of casta paintings reflect the lived experience of eighteenth-century Mexicans? Do you agree with Susan Kellogg that these paintings help legitimise mestizaje by making it seem 'part of everyday life'?

Readings:

Bourbon Society

Cope, R. Douglas, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*, University of Wisconsin Press (Madison, 1994).

Vinson III, Ben, 'Studying Race from the Margins: The 'Forgotten Castes'—*Lobos, Moriscos, Coyotes, Moros, and Chinos* in the Colonial Mexican Caste System', *International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World* (Harvard University, 2000).

Viqueira Albán, Juan Pedro, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico*, trans. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera and Sergio Rivera Ayala, SR Books (Wilmington, 1999).

Casta Paintings

Deans-Smith, Susan, 'Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain', *Colonial Latin American Review* 14:2 (2005)

Katzew, Iona, ed., *New World Orders. Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, Americas Society (New York, 1996).

Kellogg, Susan, 'Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts', *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 12, Number 3 (2000), pp. 69-92.

week 3: Men and Women

What sorts of intimate relationships do casta paintings depict? What role does violence play in structuring gender norms?

Readings:

Marriage and Sexualities

Boyer, Richard, *Lives of the Bigamists: Marriage, Family, and Community in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1995).

Gonzalbo Aizpuro, Pilar, *Las mujeres en la Nueva España: Educación y vida cotidiana* (Mexico, 1987).

Johnson, Lyman and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame and Violence in Colonial Latin America*, University of New Mexico Press (Albuquerque, 1998).

Lavrin, Asunción, ed. *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America* (Lincoln, 1989).

Lipsett-Rivera, Sonya, 'The Intersection of Rape and Marriage in Late-Colonial and Early National Mexico', *Colonial Latin American Review*, vol. 6:4 (1997).

McCaa, Robert, "Marriageways in Mexico and Spain, 1500-1900", *Continuity and Change*, vol. 9 (1994), pp. 11-43.

Schwaller, Robert C., "'Mulata, Hija de Negro y India': Afro-Indigenous Mulatos in Early Colonial Mexico", *Journal of Social History* (spring 2011).

Seed, Patricia, *To Love, Honour and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574-1821*, (Stanford, 1988)

Stern, Steve, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill, 1996).

Twinam, Ann, *Public Lives, Private Secrets. Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*, Stanford University Press (Stanford, 1999).

Casta paintings

Kellogg, Susan, 'Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts', *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 12, Number 3 (2000), pp. 69-92.

week 4: Materialities

How should we interpret the abundant material culture depicted in casta paintings? What is the importance of all that food?

Readings:

Commodities and Identities

Bauer, Arnold, *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 2001).

Earle, Rebecca, "'Two Pairs of Pink Satin Shoes!!': Clothing, Race and Identity in the Americas, 17th-19th Centuries", *History Workshop Journal*, issue 52 (2001), pp. 175-95.

Earle, Rebecca, 'Consumption and Excess in Colonial and Early Independent Spanish America', *Imported Modernity in Post-Colonial State-Formation: The Appropriation of Political, Educational and Cultural Models in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, eds. Marcelo Caruso and Eugenia Roldán Vera, Peter Lang (Frankfurt am Main, 2007), pp. 341-61.

Earle, Rebecca, 'Clothing and Ethnicity in Colonial Spanish America', *The Fashion History Reader: Global Perspectives*, eds. Giorgio Riello and Peter McNeill, Routledge (London, 2010), pp. 383-5.

Casta paintings

Fisher, Abby Sue, 'Mestizaje and the Cuadros de Casta: Visual Representation of Race, Status, and Dress in Eighteenth Century Mexico', D.Phil, University of Minnesota, 1992

Katzew, Iona, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-century Mexico*, Yale University Press (New Haven, 2004).

Scott, Nina, 'Measuring Ingredients: Food and Domesticity in Mexican Casta Paintings', *Gastronomica*, Winter 2005, Vol. 5, No. 1, Pages 70-79.

week 5: Families

To what extent do casta paintings engage with Enlightenment debates about domesticity and the family? What images of paternity and maternity do they promote?

Readings:

Families

Fernández de Lizardi, José Joaquín, *The Mangy Parrot: The Life And Times Of Periquillo Sarniento Written By Himself For His Children*, trans. David Frey, Hackett (2005).

Premo, Bianca, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, & Legal Minority in Colonial Lima*, University of North Carolina Press (Chapel Hill, 2005).

Casta paintings

López Beltrán, Carlos, 'Hippocratic Bodies: Temperament and Castas in Spanish America (1570-1820)', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 8:2 (2007).

Loren, Diana DiPaolo, 'Corporeal Concerns: Eighteenth-Century Casta Paintings and Colonial Bodies in Spanish Texas', *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 41, No. 1: Between Art & Artifact (2007), pp. 23-36.

week 6: Reading Week

week 7: Trip to Breamore House (Hampshire) to view collection of casta paintings

week 8: Student presentations.

Please present an analysis of a specific casta painting.

week 9: Student presentations, con't.

week 10: Conclusions: Race, Class and the Colonial Imagination

What accounts of the current popularity of casta paintings?

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Primary Sources

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Deans-Smith, Susan, 'Creating the Colonial Subject: Casta Paintings, Collectors, and Critics in Eighteenth-Century Mexico and Spain', *Colonial Latin American Review* 14:2 (2005)

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Ebert, Anne, 'La representación de las Américas coloniales en los cuadros de castas', *Scientia*, vol. x, no. 10.

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- Kellogg, Susan, 'Depicting Mestizaje: Gendered Images of Ethnorace in Colonial Mexican Texts', *Journal of Women's History*, Volume 12, Number 3 (2000), pp. 69-92.
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- Barker-Benfield, G.J. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1996).

Material Culture

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- Carrillo y Gariel, Aleardo, *El traje en la Nueva España*, Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1959.
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- Arrom, Silvia, "Marriage Patterns in Mexico City, 1811," *Journal of Family History*, vol. 3/4 (1978), pp. 376-391
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Race and Caste

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