According to Stuart B. Schwartz, climate—which includes geography and environment—“set the parameters of culture, politics, and history.” Earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts, and epidemic diseases constitute environmental conditions that affect the manner in which individuals live and interact with each other. As Schwartz reminds us, it is important to pay attention to the manner in which “people, governments, and societies have responded to them.”

Natural disasters also impact the ecology of a place. Ecology is usually defined as the science “that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings” (Oxford Dictionary). These physical surroundings include the environment, climate, topography, animals, plants, and nature in general. Human actions play a major role in the manner in which ecosystems are changed and transformed. In this sense, ecology, natural disasters, and human actions are intrinsically intertwined.

This course is an introduction to narratives of colonial Spanish America from the 15th to the 19th centuries by centering on how natural disasters and climate in general have impacted human interactions and ecosystems in the so-called “New World.” The course will examine the dynamics of identity construction of the colonial subject and their environment in relationship to issues of race, slavery, gender, migration, religion, government control, and cultural identity. We will read texts in relationship to visual material that originated at the time. Finally, we will examine the connections between the colonial past and today Spanish American society with regard to ecological concerns and recurrent natural disasters. Texts, discussion, and written assignments will be in Spanish.

**Prerequisite:** SPAN 250.