

Charlton Yingling

Dissertation Abstract

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

“Colonialism Unraveling: Radicalism and Religion, Race and Nation in Santo Domingo during the Age of Revolutions, 1784 – 1822”

Abstract:

Santo Domingo, the Americas’ first European colony, was the original thread of an expansively woven Spanish imperial tapestry. From 1784-1822 this hem frayed and unraveled the most basic stitches that tied Caribbean colonies to Spanish imperial power. My dissertation analyzes colonial Santo Domingo’s cultural, racial, political trajectories amidst influences of the Haitian and French revolutions, Spanish reaction, African Diaspora, and Latin American independence movements. The intersections of these social and cultural forces produced a unique Dominican cultural politics of race and nation that set terms of inclusion and engagement with their Haitian neighbors for generations to come. As Dominicans of color pursued their own often radical social ambitions, Spanish colonialism regressed across the 1790s from inclusive counterrevolution and popular piety to link blackness with republicanism, immorality, and violence. From 1802-1809 the French occupied Santo Domingo, and despite Spanish recolonization from 1810-1821 Dominicans increasingly abandoned decrepit empires to explore national self-definitions. Popular Dominicans undertook frequent anti-colonial, pro-republican conspiracies in collaboration with Haitian conspirators. By 1822 demands for citizenship and sovereignty propelled Santo Domingo toward two competing independence movements – one popular and pro-Haitian, the other reactive, elite, and moderate. I argue that Dominicans navigated the signature contests of this era to ultimately achieve the most progressive Spanish American independence – immediate emancipation, unqualified citizenship, and stable sovereignty – as they were bound into a New World fabric of anti-colonial racial solidarity via annexation in 1822 to Haiti, the world’s first black republic.