

Spring 2015, Second 8-Weeks Course
HIST 362: SPAIN AND PORTUGAL TO 1808
CRN: 54489, MWF 12:00-1:50, 243 Armory, Instructor: Ryan Bean



The Alhambra, Granada, Spain

This is an exciting course that will challenge common stereotypes, myths, and misperceptions about the Iberian powers. In the modern popular imagination, the Black Legend has never completely abated. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Northern European powers started a discourse that labeled Spain and Portugal as the cruelest, most intolerant empires that successfully stomped out religious and political dissent wherever they encountered it, thereby providing other European empires (including the English, the Dutch, and the French) with a discursive avenue to justify their own imperial endeavors around the world. Not only did they assert that Spain and Portugal were cruel and intolerant, but these same Northern Europeans contended that the Iberian powers were backward and non-productive and that its people were lazy and non-productive.

This Black Legend discourse continues to today, and is rife in popular culture, popular histories, and in Northern European political discourse on Southern Europe. Indeed, one does not have to further than films and books such as *Harry Potter* or *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* to find pop culture references to the Black Legend. Additionally, as the financial crisis continues to grip the European continent, Germans and Northern Europeans from the rich countries of the European Union continue to create a strong contrast between the “industrious” workers of Northern Europe and the “lazy,” “inefficient” ones from Southern Europe. This, of course, is employed to “other” Iberia vis-à-vis the rest of Europe, as well as to justify Northern Europe’s continued hegemony over the financially insecure nations of Southern Europe. Indeed, the Black Legend discourse continues to serve as a powerful tool used to subjugate and control.

In this course, students will not only learn to appreciate Spanish and Portuguese history in and of itself, but will also gain better insights into these above issues that continue to effect Spain and Portugal today. Students interested in such themes as the history of science, labor history, conquest and colonialism, women and gender, cultural history, political history, etc. will enjoy this class.