

48-434 Aztec to Zacatecas: Mesoamerican & Spanish Colonial Architecture of Mexico & Guatemala

This course surveys the architecture and urbanism of Mexico and Guatemala during the Mesoamerican and Spanish Colonial eras. In 1519 when the Spanish conquistador Cortés landed in what is now Mexico, he encountered one of the world's largest and most spectacular civilizations. The Aztec empire, however, was only the latest urban civilization in a Mesoamerican tradition that stretched back over 2,000 years. Mesoamerica was one of the cradles of civilization that developed autonomously and shared cultural and architectural traits across its region and era, including variations on a common cosmovision and ceremonial buildings. While the ensuing Spanish architectural and urban imprints can be seen as a superimposition of colonialism's political, social, and architectural ideals on top of Pre-Columbian traditions, the colonial era is also characterized by resistance, fusion, and invention between European and indigenous practices. Our "In the News" section highlights the ongoing significance of the historical built environment.