

Experimentation and Expertise: Flows of Knowledge in the Atlantic World
May 6-7, 2016
New York University

The Atlantic World was a place of entrepreneurship and risk. From the development of new markets for goods, to the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, to the spread of indigenous scientific knowledge in Europe, mutual encounters in the Atlantic world produced and encouraged novel avenues of thought to match social, economic, and political transformations. Succeeding in this world meant bending existing forms of knowledge to new challenges, experimenting and developing expertise to suit extraordinary situations. The collision of African, Native American, and European ambitions created new forms of social organization, financial instruments, political and religious discourses, commercial networks, and conceptions of bodies and environments that altered the future of all the groups involved.

This interdisciplinary conference invites papers exploring the kinds of experimentation carried out by Atlantic peoples and the expertise they developed to navigate their world. It acknowledges that questions of power and colonialism are intimately intertwined with moments of innovation and creation. How did Atlantic people create and deploy knowledge of one another to gain social and political advantage? How was expertise leveraged and appropriated by different groups? How did failed as well as successful experiments affect the development of Atlantic communities? While we seek papers that engage with oft-studied Euro-American forms of knowledge production and exchange, this conference will especially address flows of knowledge that ran west to east and south to north. These currents reorient our attention to the expertise of indigenous American and African peoples.

In an effort to engage with multiple incarnations of the Atlantic World, proposed papers may span a broad time frame, generally from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The conference will be a forum for new and established scholars to present their work, and we encourage and welcome individual or panel submissions across multiple disciplines and fields. We also hope to provoke questions of method regarding the interdisciplinary nature of Atlantic history. Possible topics include:

- *Race and Society*: creole societies, *mestizaje*, maroon communities, indigenous kinship relations, maritime culture, religious communities, kinship relations between enslaved people.
- *Gender*: legal definitions of womanhood and manhood, family structure, sex and diplomacy, and patriarchal formations.
- *Political Organization*: innovations in imperial claim-making and administration, indigenous governing structures, legal expertise and participation in courts, cross-cultural mediators and political alliances, revolutionary politics, abolitionism.
- *Commerce*: the creation of markets for new goods and staples, foodways and the circulation of new dietary practices, transitions from merchant capitalism to financial capitalism, new forms of financial exchange, chartered companies, bound labor, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, debt management.
- *Environments and Bodies*: the Columbian Exchange and experimentation with crops and farming practices, cross-cultural adoption of medicinal practices, racial taxonomies, and taxonomies of scientific and botanical knowledge.
- *Methodology*: approaches to the archive, microhistory, conceptualizing networks and entanglements, interdisciplinarity, material and visual culture, literary approaches, future directions for Atlantic history.

Send your submissions to timo.mcgregor@nyu.edu **and** emma.otheguy@nyu.edu **by January 10th**. Please include a 200-300 word abstract and CV.