

Professor Celia Cussen
Global Christianities in a Modernizing World

Introduction

This course seeks to engage students in an on-going research into the global expansion of the cult of an Afro Peruvian saint, Martín de Porres, in the twentieth century. Martín de Porres (1579-1639) was the son of a Spaniard and a former slave of African descent. His cult developed during the seventeenth century in the city of his birth, Lima, and, after an auspicious start, it moved slowly through the saint-making process in Rome until his beatification in 1837. The adoption of Blessed Martín by US black Catholics in the late nineteenth century triggered a new expansion of his cult that was promoted by the Dominican friars in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. He was canonized by John XXIII in 1963, in the apogee of the Civil Rights Movement and the decolonization of Africa as the patron of social justice, hairdressers, and

This course seeks to understand how this cult was transmitted, received and resignified throughout the Catholic world.

Objectives

- Acquire a general understanding of the theoretical basis for the study of religion
- Engage with scholarly conversations regarding the expansion of Christianity in the modern world
- Select and apply the pertinent methodologies for researching the expansion of a religious cult among Catholics worldwide.
- Locate and analyze sources of various types (visual, textual, architectural, ritual, film, etc.) that permit a critical interpretation of local adaptations and meanings of the cult in a selected geographic area.

Methods

This course consists of lectures by the professor, discussion of texts in class and the collaborative research into aspects of the saint's cult in the 20th and 21st centuries. Each student will select a local and locate and interpret sources, sharing ongoing results and research problems with the class.

The course may involve visits to local archives, as permitted.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on a final essay that presents the problem, the state of the question, the methods and interpretations of the chosen manifestation of the devotion to Martín de Porres.