

His 239
From Columbus to Darwin:
Investigating Nature and the Development of
Medicine, Science, Technology in the Americas

Satisfies: STAS

Thematic Categories: "Empires, Violence & Global Connections," "Health, Science & Environmental Change"

Tu/Th: 12:30pm - 1:50pm

Professor Jennifer Anderson

From the 16th to the 19th century, Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans all contributed to new knowledge production about the natural world in the Americas. The drive to find, collect, and, where possible, commodify native plants, animals, and other natural resources played a critical role in larger imperial contests to control people and places. Within many colonial contexts, Indians and enslaved Africans variously participated in or resisted those efforts. This course explores how changing concepts of the natural world—and of human beings' place within it—impacted the development of science, medicine, and technology and influenced important concepts such as race, gender, and human adaptability. Readings will emphasize current scholarship and primary documents—ranging from fantastical early travel narratives to revealing accounts of Indian and African medical/spiritual practitioners, to increasingly empirical studies by naturalists, doctors, surveyors, engineers, and scientists in the 19th century.