

CALL FOR PAPERS

Annual Congress of the Réseau Européen pour le Développement de l'Histoire de la Jeune Amérique (REDEHJA)

“ Spaces of power and contestation in early America, 1607-1860 ”

June 18-20, 2025, Nantes University, Nantes, France

Key words: Early American history; imperial history; continental history; spaces of power; domination, adaptation and resistance; conflict, contestation and collaboration

The development of Atlantic, hemispheric and continental methods in early American history these past twenty years, in particular the global perspective in the history of slavery and imperial commerce, have contributed to decentering traditional imperial history and its primary focus on the nature of metropolitan governance and, to a lesser extent, its impact on the peripheries of European empires (Burnard, 2024). Early American history is now continental, transatlantic and trans-imperial (Vidal, 2019 ; Dewar, 2022). The growing body of research and publications on indigenous and Native American history and the questions and methods of the recent field of settler colonialism also call for a change of scale and perspective, and a renewed focus on the “spaces of power” coveted, contested and creolized by European colonisation in the Americas in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries (Mancke, 2005; Barr and Countryman, 2014). These works reveal the role of indigenous sovereignties in resisting and adapting to the environmental and human catastrophes of white settlement (Witgen, 2012 ; Taylor, 2017; Prior, 2020; Hämäläinen, 2022), as well as the fantasies of domination entertained by settler polities, sustained by textual and historical processes invisibilizing subaltern agency in the formation of the patriarchal and racialized social orders of creolized societies, at local, regional and continental level (Gray and Kamenski, eds., 2013 ; Taylor and Zabin, eds., 2017). Social history has also become more localist, focusing on the multiple experiences of men and women whose labor and reproductive capabilities were central to the transformation of indigenous territories into spaces of colonial domination, but who were kept on the margins of creole polities through racialized and gendered violence (Morgan, 2020 ; Shammass, 2002).

These shifts of scale and perspective call for the renewed spatialization of power and resistance in early America. This conference invites scholars at all stages in their careers to share their methods and findings on political domination and contestation in the various spaces of power of European occupation in the Americas, to engage in fruitful comparisons and discussions about the relations between space, settlement and exploitation in the formation and endurance of creole polities.

Possible panels may include the following themes:

- The role of the colonial archive as a space of knowledge creation and tools of social and racial domination (Smallwood, 2016); the role of print in sustaining creolized racial and political orders (Delahaye, 2020) and imperial projects (Siddique, 2020); the contribution of cartography in the appropriation of indigenous lands (Chad Anderson, 2016; Lounissi, Peraldo & Trouillet, 2021).
- The role of colonial governments and later independent governments in the Americas in organizing expansion and racial domination through laws, practices and institutions (Cavenagh et Veracini, eds., 2016 ; Saunt, 2021; Perez-Tisserant, 2023) ; local and regional forms of power distribution and institutionalized violence (Johnson, 2020) ; white sociability in urban centers

(Capdeville, 2023) and the circulation of colonial and imperial knowledge among continental and transatlantic white and Black intellectual networks (Lounissi, 2018 ; Van Ruymbeke, 2022 ; Bourhis-Mariotti, 2023) ; the role of religion in shaping local solidarities and networks of political power or resistance (Pestana, 2009).

- The forms of real or imagined territorial sovereignty at work in expansionist settler societies (Roney, 2021) and indigenous forms and strategies of resistance to the environmental and social changes they brought (Havard, 2017, 2019; Kruer, 2024), at local or continental scale (Witgen, 2021) ;
- The structuring impact of slavery in the different spaces of land appropriation and transformation (Newell, 2015 ; Faucquez, 2021), the racialization of creole societies (Newman, 2018) and the intimate connections between expansionism and slavery in all spaces of European expansion into the 19th century (Ostler, 2019), with a particular focus on strategies of resistance to racial capitalism on the part of enslaved people and the role of abolitionism as a form of political autonomization (Rossignol, 2023).
- Forms of labor across the Americas from a spatial perspective; social conflicts over land and expansion and opportunities for social mobility for white workers; social and political allegiances in colonial rebellion and revolutions, a local (Zabin, 2020) or continental and Atlantic scale (Perl-Rosenthal, 2015) ; gender norms and masculinist violence.
- The role of credit and profit in shaping racial and expansionist transatlantic capitalism (Priest, 2006) and the emergence of local elites through the capture and improvement of indigenous lands for real estate purposes; the role of corporations, commercial companies and merchant networks in financing expansion, through a cartography that challenges traditional regional or national allegiances (Gervais, 2014 ; Bissières, 2022).

Proposals for workshops and individual papers of approximately 500 words, accompanied with short biography for participants, should be sent to Redehja2025@gmail.com by September 30, 2024.