This course will take a broad view of the critical issue of sovereignty that arises in the history of colonialism and neocolonialism in the Americas and in the political struggles of native peoples over the centuries since European conquest. One of the challenges in the course will be to determine the layers of meaning in the important category of “sovereignty.” Often taken to mean simply “supreme power” when referring to political authority in a state or community, it can overlap with notions of autonomy, self-determination, and others. We will reflect on questions of foreign rule and self-rule as they concern Native Americans, in conceptual, legal, political, administrative, and cultural dimensions. A second challenge in the course will be temporal: we will trace the long arc of shifting power relations involving indigenous people, focusing on the conquest and colonial periods from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, but considering later ramifications in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well. A third challenge will be spatial: to compare and connect the histories of Iberian, English, and French colonial powers and the political processes involving indigenous people in the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America.

The range of specific topics and questions during the semester will include:

The differences or similarities in patterns of colonization among distinct European empires and their implications for native peoples.

The distinctive patterns of political struggle and subjugation in borderland regions and in regions of dense indigenous settlement with significant preconquest state organization (especially the Mexica, Inka).

What notions of political identity, territory, and sovereignty did native peoples possess as they confronted European colonization? How were native political structures affected by indigenous response to colonial settlers and states? How have native peoples asserted their own claims for territory and self-determination?

What were the legacies of the conquest and colonial processes for conflicts over sovereignty in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as today?

We will adopt a collaborative approach for the work this semester. The course will have a colloquium format that emphasizes group reflection and discussion based on common readings. The course materials will range widely, from outstanding historical scholarship
to key primary sources, film documentaries, a novel, and current journalism, produced by native and non-native authors. The readings will be posted to NYU Classes, or available electronically through Bobcat or the internet.

To address our two challenges, students will team up to focus on particular regions of interest to them – whether North American or Latin American. This division of labor will help us develop more depth for distinct regional cases and greater strength with regional comparison.

Students will individually submit seven short responses (1-2 pages) to course materials/readings – you choose seven weeks during the semester you wish to respond. They are due by 5:00 pm on Monday, the day before we meet, and should be sent to the professor by email: st19@nyu.edu.

There will be a final team research paper due at the end of the semester. It will be written by the work-team as a whole, according to the strategy for collective intellectual labor that the team decides on. Each student will be responsible for writing a section of 15 pages as part of the overall paper. All students in the group should review and critique the sections of the other team members and offer editorial suggestions to strengthen those sections. One potential paper topic would be for the work-team to focus on the conflicts over sovereignty of one native people from the colonial period until the present; other topics are acceptable but should be confirmed with the instructor. More than mere description, the papers should offer an original interpretation of the long-term historical process and points of contention, drawing from existing scholarship and primary sources. To get started, each member of the team will submit a short proposal and bibliography (1-2 pages) of the material she or he intends to cover.

Participation in discussion will constitute one-sixth of the final grade; the weekly responses one-third; the proposal and preliminary bibliography one-sixth; and the final paper one third.

**Week 1 (Week of Feb. 4)  Introduction**

Review the plan for the semester.
Discuss current cases of struggle over natural resources and sovereignty in South America and North America.
View and discuss “Espíritus guerreros” (Lina Britto and Forrest Hylton, 2014).

**Week 2 (Week of Feb. 11)  Notions of Sovereignty and Self-Determination**

Reading:


**Week 3 (Week of Feb. 18)  Violence and Sovereignty in the Conquest**

Reading:


**Week 4 (Week of Feb. 25)  Debating the Legitimacy of the Conquest**

Reading:


**Week 5 (Week of March 4)  Early Colonial Conflict and Hierarchy**

Reading:

Week 6 (Week of March 11) Colonial Sovereignty Defied – North America and the Atlantic World
Reading:

Week 7 (Week of March 18) Colonial Sovereignty Defied – The Andes and the Atlantic World
Reading:

Week 8 (Week of March 25) Indian Empire
Reading:

Week 9 (Week of April 1) Group Meetings
This week the teams will meet to plan their final papers. The instructor is available to discuss ideas over the course of the semester.

Week 10 (Week of April 8) Republican Repression and Native Reemergence
Reading:
The preliminary proposal and bibliography (1-2) pages is due today. It should indicate the topic, potential arguments, and sources that you think you will use as part of your team project.

**Week 11 (Week of April 15)  The Resurgence of Indian Claims**

Reading:
Fausto Reinaga, selection from *Revolución india* [1969], in Sinclair Thomson et al., eds., *The Bolivia Reader* (draft).

**Week 12 (Week of April 22)  Semester break**

**Week 13 (Week of April 29)  Gender Violence and Sovereignty**

Reading:
Review online the congressional battle over the Violence Against Women Act and the specific provisions for Native American jurisdictions.

**Week 14 (Week of May 6)  Current Claims**

We will view and discuss “Los descendientes del jaguar” (Eriberto Benedicto Gualinga Montalvo, 2012) in class.

**Week 15 (Week of May 13)  Final Session**

The work-teams will present their projects.