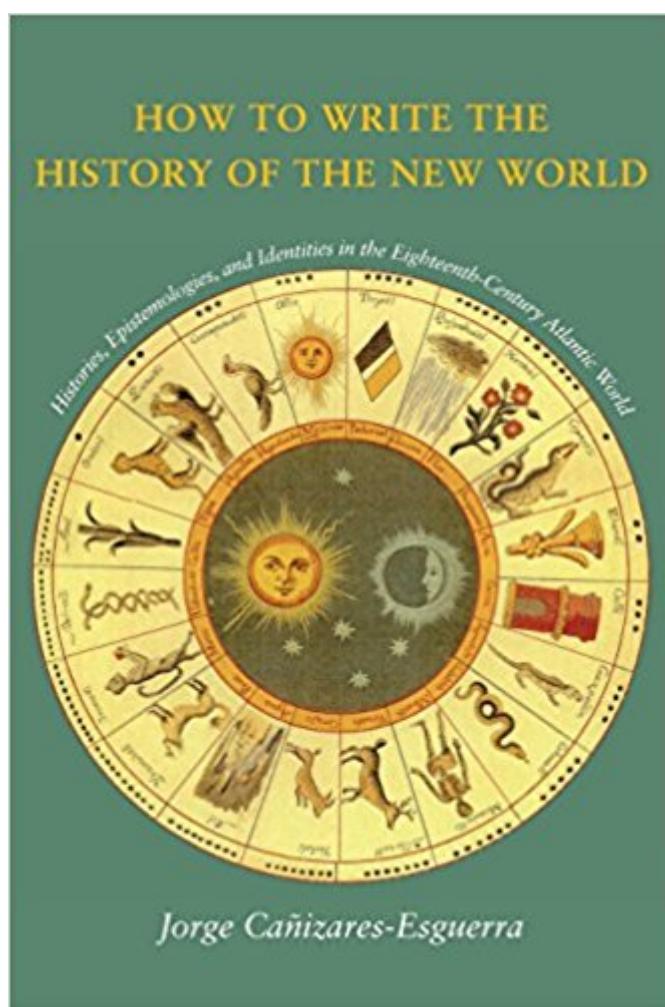


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# How To Write The History Of The New World: Histories, Epistemologies, And Identities In The Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World (Cultural Sitings)





## Synopsis

In the mid-eighteenth century, the French naturalist Buffon contended that the New World was in fact geologically new—*that it had recently emerged from the waters*—and that dangerous miasmas had caused all organic life on the continents to degenerate. In the “dispute of the New World” many historians, naturalists, and moral philosophers from Europe and the Americas (including Thomas Jefferson) sought either to confirm or refute Buffon’s views. This book maintains that the “dispute” was also a debate over historical authority: upon whose sources and facts should naturalists and historians reconstruct the history of the continent and its peoples? The author traces the cultural processes that led early-modern intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic to question primary sources that had long been considered authoritative: Mesoamerican codices, early colonial Spanish chronicles, and travel accounts. In the process, he demonstrates how the writings of these critics led to the rise of the genre of conjectural history. The book also adds to the literature on nation formation by exploring the creation of specific identities in Spain and Spanish America by means of particular historical narratives and institutions. Finally, it demonstrates that colonial intellectuals went beyond mirroring or contesting European ideas and put forth daring and original critiques of European epistemologies that resulted in substantially new historiographical concepts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Canizares-Esguerra's study skillfully explains the epistemological origins of the dispute of the New World and rescues a vibrant Spanish-American intellectual world from undeserved obscurity. General collections and advanced undergraduates and above." (Choice)"Refreshes our understanding of the colonial past and of the origins of the independence movements in the New World. A masterpiece of scholarly ingenuity." (The Economist (Books of the Year))"In view of the breakthrough represented by the achievements of this book, strikingly heterodox and impressively persuasive interpretations of the 'dispute of the New World,' it is of cardinal importance in several fields of history: Latin America, the Spanish monarchy, Enlightenment, historiography, and New World cultural encounters." (Felipe Fernández-Armesto Oxford University)"A profound, thoroughly researched, persuasively argued, seminal text about the nuances of history and its perception over 200 years ago, *How to Write the History of the New World* is very highly recommended reading for students of western hemispheric history and a core addition to academic reference collections." (The Bookwatch)"The year's best monograph: a startling excavation in Latin America's mental pre-history." (The Independent)"This is an extraordinarily ambitious and illuminating book on the search for new historical narratives in eighteenth-century New Spain. It is a remarkable journey of discovery, a veritable history of historiography for the late colonial period." (William B. Taylor, University of California Berkeley)This is a work of prodigious learning, with potentially far-reaching implications for the intellectual history of the early modern Atlantic world. It creatively adapts recent themes in the historiography of early modern science to offer a new approach to the 'dispute of the New World.'" (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History)â€"There can be no doubt about the tremendous achievements of this book . . . .In an account that can only be described as magisterial for its impressive command of an enormous archive, the erudition of its philosophical scholarship, and the tour-de-force of its scope, Jorge Canizares-Esguerraâ€"â€"s book will be indispensable in our quest for a more global and comprehensive understanding of New World historiography, â€œthe Enlightenment,â€"â€" and the making of modernity in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.â€"â€"William and Mary Quartly"Canizares-Esguerra proves a provocative model to inspire future Atlantic intellectual histories, in which both Northern and Southern metropolitans and colonials (engaging, also, the documents and artifacts of native peoples) think and write not in provincial isolation, but in complex, trans-oceanic dialogue." (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History)"A model of scholarship. . . . Explains how Latin America began to form, before independence, in colonial minds. The author leads the reader into beguiling labyrinths: Boturini's lost library, Palenque's ruins, Enlightenment rivalries." (Times Literary Supplement)

In the mid-eighteenth century, the French naturalist Buffon contended that the New World was in fact geologically new— that it had recently emerged from the waters—and that dangerous miasmas had caused all organic life on the continents to degenerate. In the “dispute of the New World” many historians, naturalists, and moral philosophers from Europe and the Americas (including Thomas Jefferson) sought either to confirm or refute Buffon’s views. This book maintains that the “dispute” was also a debate over historical authority: upon whose sources and facts should naturalists and historians reconstruct the history of the continent and its peoples? The author traces the cultural processes that led early-modern intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic to question primary sources that had long been considered authoritative: Mesoamerican codices, early colonial Spanish chronicles, and travel accounts. In the process, he demonstrates how the writings of these critics led to the rise of the genre of conjectural history. The book also adds to the literature on nation formation by exploring the creation of specific identities in Spain and Spanish America by means of particular historical narratives and institutions. Finally, it demonstrates that colonial intellectuals went beyond mirroring or contesting European ideas and put forth daring and original critiques of European epistemologies that resulted in substantially new historiographical concepts.

Written by Jorge Canizares-Esguerra (Assistant Professor of History, State University of New York, Buffalo, New York), *How To Write The History Of The New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* is a scholarly, college-level work discussing the evolving interpretation of history, including the changing European perceptions of the reliability of indigenous sources concerning the history of the New World, 18th century patriotism in Spain and its consequences, and exactly who was it who became Enlightened during the Enlightenment? A profound, thoroughly researched, persuasively argued, seminal text about the nuances of history and its perception over 200 years ago, *How To Write The History Of The New World* is very highly recommended reading for students of western hemispheric history and a core addition to academic reference collections.

Awesome!

To date this remains one of the most dry, boring and uninvolving texts I've ever had the liberty of engaging in. It offers no real message that is clear to the reader. If you can plod through the dry and

unimaginative attempts to convey its "message" using histories of Latin America, you will find the basic underlying premise the Author is trying to convey is "I don't know how to write the history of the new world so here is how you should do it". "Why?" you'll find yourself asking, "If you can't write it why should I?". How this is supposed to help students become interested in writing about history in a correct fashion, which I believe is the point of this book remains something of an anomaly. A slow read, that is not in the least bit thought provoking except for other ways to convey to others how bad the book actually is, loses its message within plodding adages about footnoting and other forms of writing stylistically, all of which should be already within the realm of knowledge to anyone who attempts to read this mess. The author would have done much better to separate the ideas between writing history, giving examples, and attempting to offer some sort of stylistic advice rather than melding them into some sort of amalgam. Of course that wouldn't cover any new ground, as that has already been done previously, all this book does is put the three together, except the end result is a difficult, dry and uninformative read that best remains on the shelf.

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