

## [“Arguing for the Rule of Law: Using the Hebrew Bible and Caricatures of Foreigners in British and Spanish America.”](#)

Announcement published by Richard Ross on Tuesday, September 4, 2018

Type:

Conference

Date:

October 26, 2018

Location:

Illinois, United States

Subject Fields:

American History / Studies, Jewish History / Studies, Intellectual History

On Friday, October 26, 2018, at the Newberry Library in Chicago, the Symposium on Comparative Early Modern Legal History will be presenting a conference on “Arguing for the Rule of Law: Using the Hebrew Bible and Caricatures of Foreigners in British and Spanish America.”

How did settlers, imperial officials, indigenous peoples, and Africans in the New World seek to demonstrate, or disprove, that a polity respected the rule of law? (The phrase “rule of law” is modern; but the core of the idea is not). Colonial rule invited accusations of arbitrary government and systematic lawlessness. This conference will focus on two common techniques used to assess whether a polity respected the supremacy of law. First, controversialists asked whether governance accorded with God’s expectations of justice as laid out in Scripture, particularly the Hebrew Bible. Second, caricatures of other societies could be held up to make one’s own appear lawful and just, or the reverse. British American settlers applauded the civility of their law by reference to the presumed barbarism of the Irish and Amerindians. They saw liberty in their exploitive legal order by opposing it to the supposed absolutism of the Spanish and French empires. Spanish settlers justified their rule and *derecho* by contrasting them to the law of indigenous polities and of their New World rivals. The conference will bring together historians, law professors, and social scientists to think about the complex debates about the rule of law in the English and Iberian Atlantic.

Attendance at the Symposium is free and open to the public. Those who wish to attend should preregister by sending an email to Richard Ross at [Rjross@illinois.edu](mailto:Rjross@illinois.edu). Papers will be circulated electronically to all registrants several weeks before the conference.

Citation: Richard Ross. “Arguing for the Rule of Law: Using the Hebrew Bible and Caricatures of Foreigners in British and Spanish America.” . H-Announce. 09-04-2018.

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/2301137/%E2%80%9Carguing-rule-law-using-hebrew-bible-and-caricatures-foreigners>

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For information about the conference, please consult our website at <https://law.illinois.edu/faculty-research/specialty-programs/legal-history/> or contact Richard Ross at [Rjross@illinois.edu](mailto:Rjross@illinois.edu) or at 217-244-7890.

Contact Info:

Richard Ross, University of Illinois College of Law and History Department. [Rjross@illinois.edu](mailto:Rjross@illinois.edu)

217-244-7890

Contact Email:

[Rjross@illinois.edu](mailto:Rjross@illinois.edu)