COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a course about race, which does not exist. More specifically, we will examine the often violent, social construction of difference in Latin America from the 16th century to the present, focusing primarily on 19th- and 20th-century Mexico and Brazil. Furthermore, this course will investigate the innumerable ways that religion, gender, and class inform what it meant to be a “scrambled Indian,” to live in a “racial democracy,” and to be “Afro-Mexican.” Classes will consist of brief lectures and ample time for (semi-)directed discussions.

AREA OF CONCENTRATION: Americas

PREREQUISITIES: None

TEACHING METHOD: Seminar

EVALUATION METHOD: Two Response Papers (based upon course content), & Research Essay (word count =2,000)

GRADING BASIS: ANC

READING LIST: TBD

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: Professor K. Aaron Van Oosterhout, Ph.D., is a visiting assistant professor at Northwestern University. His research interests include popular religion, the social and political construction of race (particularly for people of African descent in Mexico), and anti-state rebellion. His most recent publication, “Confraternities and Popular Conservatism on the Frontier: Mexico’s Sierra del Nayarit in the Nineteenth Century,” appeared in The Americas, one of the leading peer-reviewed journals of Latin American studies, in 2014. Outside academia, Aaron serves as the vice-chair of the International Relations Commission for the City of Holland, Michigan, and conducts freelance research work. He is currently working on a project on long-term incarceration for the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan.