

2021 IMC Presentation Abstract

Presentation Title: Francesco Guicciardini's Influence on Spain and the New World

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My presentation focuses on the contribution of Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540) as one of the first European historians of political economy and his influence in the New World historiography. For non-Italian scholars, Guicciardini would not be a familiar name. Instead of being recognized as one of the prominent Renaissance intellectuals in his own right, he has been known as a close friend and critic of Niccolò Machiavelli. In contrast to his more famed acquaintance, Machiavelli, the younger Florentine paid heed to subjects related to economy, trade and finance. In 1512 Guicciardini was sent to a diplomatic assignment in Spain. During his stay in the Iberian Peninsula, he composed *Relazione di Spagna (Report from Spain)*, which surveys the country's economy, trade and productivity in the time of the gold influx from the New World. Moreover, Guicciardini's correspondence from this period reveals that he prudently studied Portuguese trade with the East, and his masterpiece, *Storia d'Italia (History of Italy)*, discusses Portuguese commerce with Asia and its impact on the trade of Venice, which previously had a monopoly in transporting the sought-after Asian goods to Europe. The *History of Italy* has been regarded as an innovative historiography, particularly because of his reference to government sources to offer a realistic analysis of events and people of his time. This new cogent methodology later influenced Spanish and Novohispanic historiography and inspired his admirers to evaluate the financial management of the expansionist Spanish empire.