

Decolonizing Knowledge: Indigenous Theories in Latin American and U.S. Empire Studies

Thursday-Friday, 30-31 January 2020, Dauer 215

Sponsored by the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere, the Department of English, the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, the Department of History, Imagining Climate Change, the Latin American Studies Program, and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies.

Tuesday, 21 January

3:00 pm Pugh 160 Workshop & Discussion of recent work by the keynote speakers.

For Reading materials, please contact Leah Rosenberg rosenber@ufl.edu

Thursday 30 January

10:00-11:30 Keynote Address

Abraham I. Acosta, "The Coloniality of Power, Settler Colonialism, and the Critique of Imperialism in Contemporary Times"

Noon-1:00 Lunch for Keynote Speakers and Graduate Students

(Please rsvp to Leah, rosenber@ufl.edu)

1:30-3:00 Keynote Address

Macarena Gomez-Barris, "Archival Disappearances and Southern Submerged Perspectives of Resurgence"

3:30-5:00 Keynote Address

Christa J. Olson "Nuestras Reliquías Históricas" and the Rhetorical Work of Ancestors at Machu Picchu"

Friday, 31 January

8:00-10:00 am Current Research at the University of Florida

Speakers:

Deepthi Siriwardena

"Towards a Sri Lankan Feminism: Reading Sunethra Rajakarunanayke's Metta"

Dan Shurley

Philadelphia's Forgotten Forebears: How Pennsylvania Erased The Lenape From Local History"

Ivette Rodriguez

"Anzaldua Pedagogies: Decolonizing Academia from the Inside"

Martina Laura Speranza

"Problematizing the gender gap: feminist, queer and postcolonial approaches to inequalities in the rural Global South."

Alexander Slotkin

Along the Cow Path: Technical Communication within a Jewish Cemetery

Keynote Abstracts and Bios

Abraham I. Acosta, “The Coloniality of Power, Settler Colonialism, and the Critique of Imperialism in Contemporary Times”

For more than twenty years now, the concepts of coloniality of power and settler colonialism have been pivotal in the formation and development of decolonial critiques of power.

Understood as names for a cultural-political modality for establishing and sustaining geopolitical subordination, the concept has become conventionalized and routinely deployed in order to assert that the epistemological and political terms of dominance over the Americas has a specific, exclusively European, provenance. A closer look at the theoretical writing on these concepts, however, reveals a more ambivalent reading. Challenging the ways in which these concepts have been fashioned together as a critical foothold for decolonial thought, this talk will suggest that coloniality of power and settler colonialism are actually quite divergent theoretical propositions that have been hastily aligned, and which may instead effectively render into crisis the entire decolonial project itself.

Abraham Acosta is Associate Professor of Latin American Cultural Studies at the University of Arizona. He specializes in literary and cultural analysis, focusing on questions of subalternity, postcoloniality, biopolitics, and posthegemonic in the Americas. His research traverses the critical realities of contemporary multilingual contexts, where assumptions of power, knowledge, and capital crosshatch with historical translations of cultural difference. Acosta’s work has been published in such journals as *Dispositio/n*, the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, *Social Text*, and *Critical Multilingualism Studies*. His book, *Thresholds of Illiteracy: Theory, Latin America, and the Crisis of Resistance* (2014) is published by Fordham University Press.

Macarena Gomez-Barris, “Archival Disappearances and Southern Submerged Perspectives of Resurgence”

In this talk, I address how to think about the colonial archive in relation to disappearance and Indigenous resurgence in the Américas, specifically focused on the legacy of Darwin and in relation to the category “los desaparecidos” that is often used to describe modern state violence, but extends back to the colonial era of discovery, scientific exploration, and monocultural occupation. Given recent approaches in decolonial and Indigenous studies, is there a way to include Southern, Indigenous, and counter-archival perspectives that give texture to the colonial anthropocene? I discuss Tierra del Fuego and the visual archive on the Selk’nam peoples as an important touchstone for addressing these questions.

Macarena Gómez-Barris is founder and Director of the Global South Center, a transdisciplinary space for experimental research, artistic, and activist praxis, and Chairperson of the Department of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. She publishes on decolonial praxis, space and memory, and submerged perspectives. She is author of *Where Memory Dwells: Culture and State Violence in Chile* (UC Press 2010), *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Duke University Press 2017), and *Beyond the Pink Tide: Artistic and Political Undercurrents in the Americas* (UC Press 2018). She is co-

editor with Herman Gray of *Towards A Sociology of a Trace* (University of Minnesota Press 2010) and co-editor with Licia Fiol-Matta of *Las Américas Quarterly*, a special issue of *American Quarterly* (Fall 2014). Her new book project is *At the Sea's Edge*. Her essays have appeared in *Antipode*, *Social Text*, *GLQ*, *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* as well as numerous other venues and art catalogues. She has been a Visiting Professor at New York University and a Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Professor at FLACSO-Quito.

Christa J. Olson “Nuestras Reliquias Históricas” and the Rhetorical Work of Ancestors at Machu Picchu”

Between 1911 and 1915, Yale University Professor Hiram Bingham III and his Yale Peruvian Expedition illegally carried thousands of objects out of Peru, adding them to the collections of the Yale Peabody Museum. Analyses of the Yale Peruvian Expedition’s work and the international arbitration that finally established Peru’s claim to the objects in 2011 has tended to frame the conflict in terms of U.S. neo-colonial scientific imperialism and Peruvian national history. Either the objects ought to be understood as scientific evidence of a past culture—in which case they have universal import—or as historical relics—in which case they tell a particular story about Peruvian national identity. Interesting as those debates are, however, they are limited. They obscure the processes by which the objects became national patrimony or scientific evidence in the first place. In this talk, therefore, I focus on the object-making processes that make the same “things” into evidence, patrimony, or—a point that has often been absent from the debate—the sacred bodies of ancestors. Taking up work on repatriation, Indigenous sovereignty, and rhetorical studies, this talk explores the different objects that conflicting arguments produce. These objects, I argue, remind us that the task of decolonizing knowledge requires attending not only to Indigenous and de-colonial epistemologies but also to the differing material worlds they bring into being. It is not merely that different perspectives lead to different interpretations of “our historical relics” but that meaningful relics which belong to one group or another are made by some epistemologies and not others. It matters, immensely, which sorts of matter come into being.

Christa Olson is Associate Professor and Director of English 201-Intermediate Composition Department of English at University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a rhetorical historian focusing on trans-American visual cultures. In her research, she returns repeatedly to the rhetorical sources and consequences of nationalism. She is the author of *Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador* and has published articles on visual culture, historiography, American rhetoric in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, and *Literacy in Composition Studies*. Olson’s current research examines the visual history of U.S.-Latin American relations in order to understand how U.S. publics came to see themselves as particularly American among Americans. She is a regular contributor to *Reading the Pictures*, an online venue dedicated to public-facing analysis of photojournalism.