

Social Movements in the Americas: Power, Rights, and Resources

Latino/Latin American Studies Fall 2019 Series

Dr. Michael Wilson-Becerril: "Recognizing and Confronting Violence: The Evidence from Latin America"

Wednesday, September 18, 7:00pm, Gorecki 204A, CSB



Latin America reportedly has the world's highest rates of homicide, economic inequality, violence against women, and killings of environmental activists. One dimension of the problem is conceptualization. Most people accept and even rationalize different forms of violence. Therefore remedying injustice and transforming violent conditions requires critical examination of how people give it meaning. Drawing on his research of Latin American politics and social movements, Dr. Wilson-Becerril will lead a discussion of the many faces of violence and violence as a discourse, and will provide an overview of regional social movements and how they resist and transform it.

Dr. Michael Wilson-Becerril is an activist-scholar specializing in the political ecologies of violence and resistance in Latin America. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Resistance Studies*, *Peace Review*, *Feminist Review*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Human Rights Review*, *Western Hemispheric Review*, *NACLA*, *Waging Nonviolence*, *The Washington Post*, and in the co-edited volume *Violent Conflict and Civil Resistance in Latin America* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), among others.

Leider Valencia: "Eradicating Peace: The Other Side of the Colombian War on Drugs"

Wednesday, October 2, 7:00pm, Quad 264, SJU

In 2016, the Colombian government and the country's largest guerrilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) signed a historic peace accord to end six decades of armed conflict. Despite this, and despite a new U.S. aid package known as Plan Peace Colombia aimed at supporting implementation of the peace accord, many local human rights organizations and communities continue to call for international solidarity as they face continued paramilitary activity. Leider Valencia will discuss forces that threaten the Colombian peace process in rural areas, and how movements in the U.S. can contribute to solidarity and support for projects like the COCCAM – the National Coordinator of Growers of Coca, Poppy, and Marijuana, which was formed in 2017. The COCCAM is a national organization of Colombian campesino, indigenous, and afro-descendent growers of crops criminalized as a consequence of their illicit use. The COCCAM advocates for voluntary crop substitution by growers, and defends the traditional ancestral uses of coca leaf and the legitimate alternative industry in marijuana and poppy. Members of the COCCAM have been targets of death threats and assassinations.



Leider Valencia is a leader of the Colombian National Coordinator of Growers of Coca, Poppy, and Marijuana (COCCAM, Coordinadora Nacional de Cultivadores de Coca, Amapola, y Marijuana). The COCCAM was formed in January 2017 with the objective of promoting the implementation of point 4 of the Havana peace accords between the Colombian government and the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas), which addresses the issue of illicit drugs.

Dr. Elena McGrath: "I Am Too Poor to Fear Death: Indigenous Miners and the Defense of Natural Resources in the Andes"

Wednesday, October 23, 7:00pm, GOR 204C, CSB



Since 1545, the indigenous communities working to extract Bolivia's natural resources have provided immense wealth to first the Spanish and now multinational mining corporations. Throughout its history as a nation, Bolivians have tried to take control of this resource wealth, but found mining to be a risky foundation on which to build national prosperity. Moreover, mines are simply dangerous places, both for workers and the communities that live around them. Dr. McGrath traces several moments in the 20th century when indigenous communities and workers confronted international mining companies and the Bolivian state alike in order to try to control their livelihoods and protect their families, and what these can teach us about social movements today. Understanding why these workers and neighbors fought to mine can help us think about the emergence of indigenous and environmentalist social movements throughout the Andes.

Dr. Elena McGrath (she/her) is a historian of revolutionary movements, race, gender, and natural resources in Latin America, with an emphasis on the Andes. Her research explores the material conditions that create revolutions as well as the ideological and cultural visions that sustain them over time, and how such forces help create community and individual identity. Her current project is a book, *Devil's Bargains: Workers, Indians, and Citizens at the Limits of the Bolivian National Revolution, 1930-1989*. *Devil's Bargains* uses the case of mining communities in Bolivia's 1952 revolution to explore the limits of nationalism and populism as drivers of revolutionary change. Dr. McGrath is Visiting Assistant Professor of History at Carleton College in Minnesota.