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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Department of Latina/Latino Studies

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES



Welcome to the 2023-24 Academic Year!



I'm excited to announce that I am now serving as the chair of LLS for the next few years. I look forward to working with the faculty, students, staff, and allies at and beyond the University of Illinois.

With professors Janett Barragán Miranda, José de la Garza, Nic Flores, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada making up our junior ranks, our relatively new associate professor Mirelesie Velázquez, and our new staff, new ideas and energy infuse the department. Of course, Natalie Lira, Isabel Molina, and I remain here. Please be sure to see all our accomplishments below. Alicia Rodriguez and professor Angahard Valdivia have retired.

We move forward with an ambitious agenda this year. LLS plans to hire at an associate or full professor level this year. We also are part of a cluster hire on Hemispheric Perspectives on Racial Inequality Through the Lens of the Circum-Caribbean and its Transnational Connections with African Americans, Afro-Latinx, and other Latinx people in the United States. We will be collaborating through this cluster hire with the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies (CLACS) and the History Department in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the School of Architecture in the College of Fine Arts, and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences. We also plan to revive a speaker series and the grad student conference as well as the Rolando Hinojosa Jr. Lecture Series and the alumni speaker series, among multiple other events.

Watch our social media pages and webpage for details. Please attend.

Gilberto Rosas
Chair, Latina/Latino Studies

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Please join us in welcoming two postdoctoral research associates, Dr. Gabriela G. Corona Valencia and Dr. Camila Gavin-Bravo!

Dr. Corona Valencia



Dr. Corona Valencia received her PhD in education, specializing in race, ethnic, and cultural studies, from the School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. Her research explores the bridge between 20th-century eugenic policy in the American Southwest and the contemporary sex education discourse disseminated to Chicana/Latina girls in K-12 public schools in East Los Angeles. In addition to her interests in histories of public health and medicine in education, she also uplifts the criticality of engaging with pedagogies of pleasure and desire when building liberatory realities for women and girls of color. She is excited to add a strand to her research mission, which includes the archival mining of state records and an in-depth analysis of 1980s immigration policies that targeted the reproductive experiences of Central American women and girls who sought refuge in the U.S. after escaping the violence of the Salvadoran Civil War. Dr. Corona Valencia is also co-leading the direction and production of a radiophonic historical series, American History EugeniX, a

digital media project dedicated to the art of counterstorytelling to bring justice to victims of eugenic violence. Dr. Corona Valencia will teach LLS 235: Race and the Politics of Reproduction in Spring 2024.

Dr. Gavin-Bravo



Dr. Gavin-Bravo received her PhD in ethnic studies with a specialization in critical gender studies from UC San Diego. Her research examines the U.S.-based movement in solidarity with Chile against the Pinochet regime (1973-1990). Using archives, interviews, and cultural analysis, she argues that opposition to the regime was rooted in support for the leftist presidency of Salvador Allende and the robust and creative workers' movement that supported him. Dr. Gavin-Bravo suggests that U.S.-based Latinx radical politics were shaped by the Allende era, particularly as activists debated "socialism Chilean style," or socialism through the ballot box, and considered the nature of U.S. imperialism, in particular how it affects women. As a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Associate, she will work on her book manuscript titled "The Latinx Radical Imaginary and Chile: Transnational Feminisms, Chilean Exile, and Culture." Dr. Gavin-Bravo's recent Latino Studies article is based on her second project and explores how second-generation Chilean exiles use hip hop to maintain a connection to the Allende era. Her research has also earned support from the American Council of Learned Societies. Dr. Gavin-Bravo will teach LLS 220: Latina/o Migration in Spring 2024.

New Faculty and Affiliate Accomplishments

José de la Garza Valenzuela

José de la Garza Valenzuela's "'Necessarily Hidden Truth(s)': Documenting Queer Migrant Experience in Rigoberto González's Crossing Vines" won the Crompton Noll Prize, which is jointly awarded by the Queer/Trans Caucus of the American Studies Association and Gay and Lesbian/Queer Caucus of the Modern Language Association. He also earned a Fall 2023 Humanities Teaching Release Time award from the Campus Research Board, and his article "**Chicanx Counterstories: Legal Narrative in Oscar Zeta Acosta's The Revolt of the Cockroach People**" was published by American Literary History. He won the prestigious 2023

American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship to support completion of his monograph, “Queer in a Legal Sense: Brown Citizenship and Other Lawful Fictions.”



Gilberto Rosas



Gilberto Rosas’ “Unsettling: The El Paso Massacre, Resurgent White Supremacy, and the US-Mexico Border,” was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in March 2023. The book charts the material, policy, and discursive conditions leading to the mass shooting in El Paso in August 2019. He is also one of the editors, along with Mireya Loza of Georgetown University, of “The Border Reader,” which will be released in November 2023 and features key works on the US-Mexico border. Rosas also won the Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award from the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education.

Mirelsie Velázquez



Mirelsie Velázquez received a grant from the Campus Research Board to work on her second book project, “Genealogies of Empowerment and the Makings of Home: Puerto Rican/Latina Activism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1970-1992.” She was also chosen as one of nine Humanities Research Institute summer fellows. These fellowships are designed to help faculty maximize the summer in service of their ongoing professional development. They provide an infusion of resources to jumpstart or fuel an ongoing research project, undertake course development, or pursue a professional training opportunity over the summer months. Her project, “Space, Place, and Homemaking: Black and Indigenous Oklahoma, 1865-1925,” speaks to the need to center both Oklahoma and

communities of color into larger conversations within the history of education and the U.S. more broadly. By centering and documenting schools and schooling, Velázquez hopes to challenge monolithic readings of schools as not only sites of oppression within Oklahoma and Indian Territories, but similarly speak to how both groups enacted agency to situate these spaces as sites of liberation prior to statehood. Mapping the history of education for both communities, especially the documentation of the physical structures Indigenous and Black communities organized themselves to build and support, will be central to the project.

Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada



Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada has been selected to co-lead the second Humanities Research Institute Interseminars Initiative with colleagues Maryam Kashani (Asian American Studies and Gender & Women's Studies) and Junaid Rana (Asian American Studies). Their project, "Improvise and Intervene," challenges scholars to reimagine how scholarly theory and methods are taught and practiced, expanding the possibilities for innovation in interdisciplinary, collaborative research design. Faculty and students will explore texts and creative works that wrestle with pressing social issues and the multiple methods used in conducting and presenting research. They will also interrogate genealogies of improvisation and intervention through reading, listening, and watching, while engaging in weekly improvisatory exercises and responses drawn from surrealism, documentary and neorealism, speculative fiction, theater, music, and other sources. More details on the project are available on the **HRI website**.

Teachers Ranked as Excellent

Fall 2022

Barragan Miranda, J. LLS 473
Burgos, A. HIST 390
Callesano, S. SPAN 308
Cervantes-Gomez, X. SPAN 246
De La Garza, J. LLS 242
Ettinger, S. TA-LLS 100
Fernandez Doig, F. TA-LLS 100
Garcia, A. CW 106

Spring 2023

Callesano, S. SPAN 308
Carrillo, V. LLS 278
De la Garza, J. ENGL 461
Ettinger, S. TA-LLS 100
Garcia, B. TA-LLS 279
Lira, N. LLS 479
Lule, L. LLS 392
Nunez Cortez, I. CI 477

Gonzalez, M. CI 415, 536
Gutierrez, R. CI 547
Lule, L. LLS 279, 392
Nuñez Cortez, I. CI 446, 578
Ramirez, C. LLS 100, 220
Velez, E. GWS 395, 550
Ramirez, C. LLS 220, LLS 279, LLS 355
Ramírez, Y. HIST 312
Rodriguez, R. PS 316
Velázquez, M. LLS 238

Congratulations to the Class of 2023!

During the Spring 2023 semester, the LLS Class of 2023 presented their senior papers and theses at the annual LLS Major Symposium. This event brought together LLS students, faculty, and family to celebrate the wonderful research our students produced.

- **Guadalupe Araiza.** Senior paper: Observing the Current State and Impact of Latine Studies through the Latina/Latino Studies Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- **Josymar Garcia Loza.** Senior paper: Queer & Chicana: Autoethnography
- **Samantha Garcia** (High Distinction). Honors thesis: Mental Health Reflections of Latina Youth
- **Valerie Garcia** (High Distinction). Honors thesis: Negating the Aesthetics of Latinidad: A Critique on Latino Identity and Visual Representation
- **Dalila Juarez.** Senior paper: Latinx Students and the Higher Education System
- **Priscilla Roman.** Senior paper: The Beginning of a Mexican-American Artist from Chicago: New Age Cumbia and the Future of Chicano/Mexicanos: A Collection of Inspiration from Mexican Culture, Music, Mexican Inspired Fashion, and a Chicano Manifesto for the Future of Mexican and Mexican Americans in the United States
- **Odeth Rubio.** Senior paper: Latinx Through the Television Lens
- **Estela Santillan** (High Distinction). Honors thesis: Existence of Fatphobia: The Intersectional Barriers of Fat Latina Women/Femmes
- **Fatima Valerio.** Honors thesis: Political Participation in Belmont Cragin: Identifying Strategies and Issues when Building Political Power in a Latinx Neighborhood of Chicago

May 2023 graduates: LLS undergraduate minors

- Gabriela G. Aguilar-Ripley
- Addy Alvarado
- Adan Baez
- Claudia Irene Pensamiento
- Sofia Perez
- Jenny Resendiz

- Grecia Bahena
- Paola Beltran Gutierrez
- Jesus Bucio
- Kiara Del Carpio
- Dominique Del Valle
- Blanca R. Estrada
- Fiona Garcia Byrne
- Elenia Samanta Marroquin
- Daniela Martinez
- Priscilla Martinez
- Samantha Reyes
- Itzel Rivera
- Sofia Rivera
- Angela Sanchez Soto
- Julissa Leilani Sanchez Ortega
- Daniel Soto
- Alec Thomas
- Giselle Torres
- Julissa Velazquez

May 2023 graduates: LLS graduate minors

- **Sean Ettinger:** PhD, history. Dissertation: “Phantoms of the Barrio: Chicana/o Urban Spatial Politics and Muralism, 1965-1985" (faculty advisor: Adrian Burgos)
- **Fabiola Fernández-Doig:** PhD, Spanish. Dissertation: “Approaching Devices in Personal Narratives in Lambayeque, Peru” (faculty advisors: Jonathan MacDonald and Krystal Smalls)
- **Michael Rodriguez:** M.M., music education. Master’s thesis: “Issues Faced by Latinx Music Students” (faculty advisor: Adam Kruse)

2023 scholarship and undergraduate research award winners



From left to right: Adriana Serrano Matsumoto, Abby Carbajal Garcia, and Kailey Reyes

Adriana Serrano Matsumoto is the winner of the 2023 **LLS Undergraduate Research Award**. Adriana is a junior double-majoring in political science and Latina/Latino studies with a minor in sociology. Their original research paper, "The Punishment of Privatization: The Rising Use of Solitary Confinement within Immigrant Detention," highlights that private detention facilities lead to higher rates of confinement and abuse for extended periods of time, as well as the lack of medical care and attention. Adriana has worked hands-on with the immigrant community as a legislative intern at the Illinois House of Representatives. During this experience, Adriana aided undocumented Illinois residents in enrolling in healthcare and promoted a recent bill that extended healthcare coverage to individuals regardless of their status. Adriana's research makes the bold (and necessary) claim that the privatization of detention centers should be outlawed. Informed by these research findings, Adriana seeks out opportunities to intervene for the benefit of the Latina/o community.

Abby Carbajal Garcia, a senior accounting major with minors in Latina/Latino studies and technology & management, is the winner of the 2023 **Dr. Jorge Chapa Memorial Scholarship in Latina/o Studies**. This award honors Dr. Jorge Chapa's social justice legacy by recognizing students who plan to use or have used the material they learned in LLS to make positive change in the world. Abby is involved as a program assistant in technology and management, as well as a university housing resident advisor. Abby is also a mentor for La Casa's ACE program and the vice-president and treasurer for Prospanica. In their application Abby writes, "there is power in knowledge, and I aim to leverage this power to continue empowering those around me and my communities back home." We look forward to Abby's continued success in their home and university communities.

Kailey Reyes is a junior majoring in Latina/Latino studies and is the winner of the 2023-24 **LLS Major Scholarship**, which recognizes an LLS major achieving excellence in the classroom and impacting their community. Kailey has shown compassion, excellent work ethic, and genuine interest when collaborating with peers in the classroom. They are also engaged in student-run organizations, such as I-Cause, which assists undocumented or DACA students to navigate the university successfully. This engagement fostered in Kailey is a commitment to pursuing a law degree, as she seeks a career as an immigration attorney in order to put her interdisciplinary knowledge and skills at the service of her Latina/o/x community and help its members thrive.

NEW STAFF

Sean Ettinger, academic program coordinator

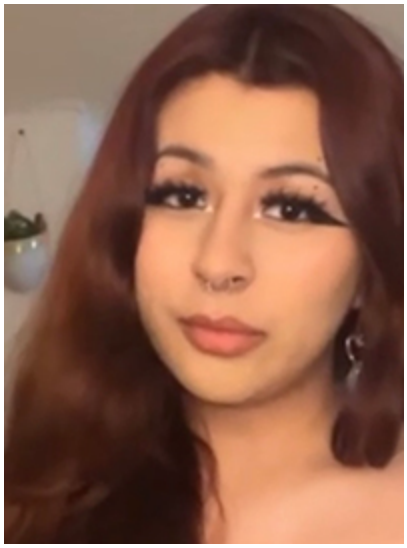
Sean Ettinger is the new academic program coordinator for LLS. He earned his PhD in history from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2023, an MA in history from Illinois in 2018,



and a BA in history and English from Indiana University in 2014. His research interests include modern U.S. history, Latina/Latino studies, urban history, muralism, and placemaking. His dissertation, "Phantoms of the Barrio: Chicana/o Urban Spatial Politics and Muralism, 1965-1985," examined how Mexicans and Mexican Americans in U.S. cities engaged in placemaking through interweaving muralism with grassroots community activism to address the spatialization of inequality that shaped their neighborhoods, especially in relation to issues of ethnoracial discrimination, residential displacement, urban renewal, and political marginality. He earned a graduate minor in Latina/Latino studies and worked as a teaching assistant for the department for four semesters.

Dr. Ettinger is excited to continue his relationship with LLS in this new role. He is looking forward to supporting LLS students as they progress through their academic journeys, facilitating meaningful programming for the department, and working to uphold the department's mission.

Alexa Rodriguez, student outreach and media coordinator



Alexa Rodriguez is majoring in Latina/Latino studies and sociology with a minor in social work. In addition to her new role as the student outreach and media coordinator, she is also an LAS 101 Intern, assisting 25 first-year student in making a successful transition from high school to college. Alexa is from the southside of Chicago; their parents are from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. They have an older sister and a younger brother. They love to try new coffee shops. In addition to their new role as the student outreach and media coordinator, they also host LLS study hours from 5-7 p.m. every Tuesday.

ALUMNI PROFILES

Illinois State Sen. Celina Villanueva

by Zion Trinidad

This past summer I was given the opportunity to interview LLS alum **Celina Villanueva** (BA, '08, Latina/Latino studies) who represents Illinois' 12th District in the Illinois State Senate. **Sen. Villanueva** represents much of the southwest side of Chicago, including her home neighborhood of Little Village and other neighborhoods such as Pilsen, Bridgeport, and Brighton Park. She began attending U of I in 2003 and graduated in 2008 with a bachelor's in Latina/o studies. After completing her bachelor's degree, she went on to work for the Illinois Migrant Council and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, among other organizations. Her political career began 10 years after obtaining her bachelor's when in 2018 she was appointed as the state representative for the 21st District. She then became a state senator in 2020.



Image courtesy of senatorvillanueva.com

Surprisingly, when Sen. Villanueva was a student, Latina/o studies was not a department or even a major; there were just a handful of classes that made up a minor. In order to have a BA in LLS, Sen. Villanueva had to find her own advisors, such as recently retired LLS advisor Alicia Rodriguez, and pursue an individual plan of study. While her individual plan of study may have been different than what LLS majors have now, she described the program as being incredibly robust. She also decided to pursue minors in both Spanish and African American studies. This allowed her to have a well-rounded education that gave her a concrete foundation of knowledge on the issues that impact black and brown communities.

While the senator is in the amazing position that she is in today, that wasn't without a few changes in her career plan. Originally she came to U of I as a psychology major but quickly realized that it was not for her and decided to study Latina/o studies. After completing her undergraduate degree, she said that she wanted to be a corporate lawyer but got waitlisted for law school and then got into an educational policy studies PhD program. Unfortunately, after she was accepted, the professors that she wanted to work with moved away, causing her to decide to not do the program. Later on, when she applied and was accepted into NYU, the financial aid package that she was going to receive fell through because of the recession, once again causing her to not pursue higher education. Even through all this, she found a successful career that she loves, helping and representing her Latino community.

If there is one thing that a major in Latina/o studies afforded the young senator, it has been knowledge. She described how Latina/o studies classes gave her a space to become more informed on the issues that directly impacted her community. Her classes, such as Latina/o Social Movements, empowered her to take a stand for Latinos on campus. During her time as an undergraduate, a fraternity hosted a "Tacos and Tequila" party. While the theme of the party

itself is not alarming, what ensued was a large group of white students dressing up as racist and stereotypical depictions of Mexicans. Photos of this party were then spread on Facebook, where Celina raised her concerns to the university's chancellor. She understood that unless she stood up for her community, like how many of the activist groups she learned about in class had, racist parties such as that one would continue to take place on campus. Even now, the senator says that the research methods that go into her legislative work are based on the practices she learned and developed during her LLS program.

When hearing about Sen. Villanueva's story, the pride and passion she shared for being in a growing community of young Latino leaders was clear. She proudly stated how the majority of the Latino Legislative Caucus is younger than 40 and that there is a generation behind hers that is ready to step up as leaders. In a statement she said, "We literally are Donald Trump's biggest fear...They're afraid of our power, of our ability to organize, and our ability to have self-determination. All of those are things that I learned about through LLS."

If you would like to keep up to date with Sen. Villanueva's work you can follow her on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **X** (formerly Twitter). Furthermore, for those interested in getting involved, Sen. Villanueva shared that not only does her office have internships, but the Latino Legislative Caucus also hosts fellowships for all interested undergraduates.

Zion Trinidad is a junior with a double major in history and LLS.

Lydia Socorro Alvarez



I am a second-year graduate student in the College of Education. I have recently begun my position as a TA for Latino/a studies 100, and I am loving it! It's a very full circle moment for me since LLS 100 was the first class I took as a freshman at UIUC. In 2017, I came into the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as the first incoming student to declare Latino/a studies as a major. I chose Latino/a studies because I attended Chicago's most diverse high school, Whitney M. Young, yet I recall the lack of ethnic studies offered there. Since then, I have been extremely involved in the department's success, as a recipient of the LLS Major Scholarship, a panelist for LLS at various LAS symposiums, and a peer mentor throughout the years. I graduated in 2021 with high distinction in Latino/a studies and was awarded the LLS Undergraduate Research Award with Dr. Nic Flores as my research advisor.

Growing up in Pilsen, Chicago, I have always been involved in the Latinx community, and I have continually observed methods of resistance and organizing as it has evolved with our society.

Both sides of my family decided to settle down in the inner city of Chicago from different areas of Mexico and have been instrumental to my growth as a Latina scholar. I am excited to continue my journey as a researcher and an educator while learning from the Latinx community here on campus.

Jorge Chapa Memorial Library

In October 2022, LLS celebrated the dedication of the Jorge Chapa Memorial Library, named in honor of the late scholar, educator, and LLS faculty member Dr. Jorge Chapa. The library is home to over 1,600 books and 118 LLS senior papers and honors theses. The library also houses quiet study spaces for students and is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the week. Stop by 1207 W. Oregon St., Room 107 to view our collection in person, or **online**!



Department of Latina/Latino Studies

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences | University of Illinois
1207 W. Oregon Street | Urbana, IL 61801 | MC-136
Phone: (217) 265-0370 | Fax: (217) 244-4526 | Email: lls-studies@illinois.edu