Welcome to 2021-2022
by Angharad N. Valdivia

Welcome and welcome back as we transition into a dynamic and evolving new normal in the CoVid era.

I am elated to be joining the faculty of the Latina Latino Studies Department as its new Chair. Although I am new in this role, I have a long-standing commitment to and engagement with this department and with the field of Latina/o/x Studies. I was actually one of the faculty members who comprised the group that generated the Latina Latino Studies program in the nineties and ushered in the faculty who transformed the program into a thriving department in 2007, under the leadership of Professor Isabel Molina-Guzmán. I have participated in the recruitment and hiring of many of the stellar faculty in LLS. As a proud U of I alum of the Institute of Communications Research and the first Latina professor to be hired at the assistant level and progressed through the full professor level at the University of Illinois, I am full of energy and excitement to add chairing LLS to my responsibilities.

LLS is the fruit of student activism and demands, and I know the faculty and staff remain committed to our undergraduate students. I bring my research on Latina/o/x Studies, Media and Popular Culture, Gender and Girls studies, and Disney Studies along with my long-standing commitment to diversifying the professoriate as cornerstones of my career. Whether we examine issues of colorism within Latinx social media or the controversy regarding the whitewashing of Washington Heights in Lin Manuel Miranda’s In the Heights — visibility, production, and audience issues in contemporary media prove to be a barometer of power, belonging, and worth. I look forward to teaching a Latinx Disney course as well as Latina Girls in Contemporary Television and Movies in addition to taking turn teaching The Bronze Screen and Latinx Media and Cultural Studies.

To serve our student population, we remain committed to recruiting and retaining world class faculty. Over the summer, LLS hired two Assistant Professors and two Lecturers in addition to two Post-Doctoral Fellows who will enrich our intellectual community. Dr. Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada was a Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Research Associate here at LLS/UIUC for the past academic year and taught the Criminalization and Punishment class that some of you may have taken last Spring 2021 term. She is putting the finishing touches on a book entitled Intersectional Justice Denied: Negative Peace and Persisting Violence in Post-Peace Accords El Salvador and joins us as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Janett Barragán Miranda joins us from American University where she has been working on a book project entitled Hungering for Equality: Mexicans and Mexican Americans From Post-World War II to Civil Rights and also joins us as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Randy Rodriguez who has conducted research on Richard Rodriguez and Queer Aesthetics and Dr. Christian Ramirez whose research has focused on cultural exchange between indigenous and African peoples in Mexico both join us as Lecturers. We welcome Jack Caraves and Mauricio Ramirez as this year’s Post-Doctoral Fellows. We are excited to welcome these excellent scholars and teachers to the department and will provide many opportunities for you to meet them.

Over the summer we bid farewell to Professor Rolando Romero, who was the inaugural director of the Latina Latino Studies program and retired from the Department. We thank him for his contributions, which were essential to the establishment of the department.

We also received news in April 2021 that the Chancellor and the Provost approved commitment for a new building for Ethnic Studies and Women and Gender Studies. Department heads have begun to meet with a design firm to determine a feasibility study. We will seek input from faculty, students, and staff as we proceed with this important and necessary project.

After a year and a half of mostly virtual events, we were looking forward to safe in person celebrations, lectures, and other events. At this point the CoVid situation is still in flux, and we remain committed to a safe environment for students, staff, and faculty. We will continue to follow safety measures to ensure the health of our entire community of learners. We will remain in open communication regarding the evolving situation.

Most of all I encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities this great university offers for learning and engagement. Please come by and introduce yourself if you are new to our community so that we may get to know you. For those of you returning, I look forward to seeing you again and engaging in meaningful collaborations.
Dr. Janett Barragán Miranda is currently working on her book manuscript tentatively titled, Hungering for Equality, a monograph about the Mexican origin community’s struggle for food justice in the 1960s. Barragán Miranda completed her M.A. and Ph.D. in Chicana and Chicano Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She was also a visiting fellow in the History of Science Department and Harvard University and a Postdoctoral Fellow for Academic Diversity at American University. Through her experiences Barragan Miranda has been able to engage with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts. As a first-generation college student and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, Barragán Miranda is committed to mentorship and community building in the Latina/Latino Studies Department at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

In Spring 2022, Barragán Miranda will be teaching LLS 392 Chicana & Latinas: Self & Society and LLS 473 Immigration, Health and Society.

Dr. Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada earned her M.A. (2013) and Ph.D. (2017) in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. Elizabeth’s book in progress, tentatively titled, Intersectional Justice Denied: Negative Peace and Persisting Violence in Post-Peace Accords El Salvador, draws on two and a half years of ethnographic research in El Salvador. Her book examines the central paradox of Salvadoran male gang members who are simultaneously purveyors of violence and peacemakers. Elizabeth’s research builds on working-class Salvadoran women’s critical perspectives to unravel how gang members reproduce the state’s negative notion of peace by seeking to restore political control predicated on the continued oppression of those they purport to protect. Her manuscript traces how women relatives of gang members engage in supporting and challenging gangs’ peacemaking efforts and explores the layered politics of their demands for intersectional justice.

To deepen her existing research and prepare her book manuscript for publication, Elizabeth is currently analyzing how the U.S. and Salvadoran governments define MS-13 gang as an internal and transnational source of radical insecurity. This discourse obscures the root causes of violence in El Salvador and their connection to U.S. policies, violence which continues to create massive immigration of Salvadoran asylum seekers to the U.S. Elizabeth is also researching how gang members and their relatives have begun to challenge the state-led racialization of gangs in Salvadoran society and find parallels to the racial oppression of Black people in the U.S. This connection is enabling them to articulate a critique of mestizo Salvadoran society as based in racialized inequalities. She argues that the Salvadoran state has consistently used racist tropes to war against those it considers subversive or terrorist and emphasize their separation from society.

Elizabeth’s research has been supported by the Inter-American Foundation’s Grassroots Development Fellowship and the Social Science Research Council’s Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship: Gender Justice in the Era of Human Rights. She has published in Social Justice, co-authored an article in Cultural Anthropology and has a forthcoming article in American Anthropology. She is a member of a collective of activist feminist scholars with whom she is currently co-editing a Wenner-Gren Foundation supported volume on racialized and gender violence in the field, tentatively titled, Fugitive Anthropology. She served as a mentor for the Association of Latina/Latinx Anthropologists (ALLA) in 2020-2021. Elizabeth taught at Pacific University in 2019-2020 and The Evergreen State College in 2018-2019.

In Spring 2022, Velásquez Estrada will be teaching LLS 320 Gender & Latina/o Migration and LLS 343 Criminalization and Punishment.
NEW LECTURERS

Dr. Christian V. Ramirez received his dual Ph.D. in Chicano/Latino Studies and Sociology from Michigan State University (MSU). He also holds a M.A. and B.A. in Sociology and a graduate certificate in Mexican American Studies from the University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley. Dr. Ramirez was most recently a lecturer in the Office of Latino/Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He was also the lead instructor for the International Engagement in Mexico study abroad course at MSU. This course focused on Mexico’s colonial history, its’ racial projects across time, and a service component in five cities including Huatulco, Oaxaca, Merida, Puebla, and San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas.

His research engages the cross-cultural exchange and rebellions forged by Indigenous and African peoples in colonial Veracruz. Through his research, Dr. Ramirez examines the multiple ways Afro-Indigenous peoples institutionally and epistemologically carved out routes to freedom in the 17th and 18th centuries. These histories challenge narratives of mestizaje and the discipline of Chicanx Studies to complicate the Euro-Indigenous dichotomy.

His research has been published in *Equity & Excellence in Education* and *Río Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands* and has been interviewed by news outlets about his activist work. His published and public work focus on access to Ethnic Studies for the Latinx community. He is the lead educational advisor for C.R.A.F.T Cultura, a civic organization located on the U.S.-Mexico border in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas.

Prof. Ramirez is teaching LLS 100 Intro to Latina/Latino Studies and LLS 220 Latina/o Migration in Fall 2021.

Dr. Randy Rodriguez completed a Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, did graduate work in Government, focusing on political theory, at The University of Texas at Austin and Cornell University, and obtained a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Spanish from Brigham Young University. He taught Chicana/o literature and cultural studies as a graduate instructor at the University of Minnesota, the Introduction to Minority Studies as a Visiting Assistant Professor at St. Cloud State University, and a variety of Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies courses as a Visiting Assistant Professor and Lecturer at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Dr. Rodriguez exemplified his critical, interdisciplinary approach to scholarship in a path breaking article “Richard Rodriguez Reconsidered” chosen by preeminent Latino Studies scholar Jose Limón to lead a special issue of *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* focusing on the successful and controversial essayist Richard Rodriguez who has confounded and angered scholars for decades. In the piece that one Chicana/o Studies scholar called “...probably the best interpretive piece on Rodriguez’s work...,” he argued that central to the trouble caused by Rodriguez was an inadequately addressed and understood gender/queer performance aesthetic that challenged and undermined the “straight” heterosexual expectations of his mainstream and academic readers. To properly understand the Richard Rodriguez “problem” one had to reevaluate and complicate the hardened demands of a limiting and, too often, uncritical heroic, resistant masculinity. Dr. Rodriguez brings this kind of innovative work to his teaching as well and looks forward to engaging with University of Illinois students to thoughtfully reimagine how we can engage and shape our worlds.

Professor Rodriguez is teaching LLS 240 Latina/o Popular Culture and LLS 250 Latinas/os on the Bronze Screen in Fall 2021.
Dr. Jack Cárraves (he/him/they/them) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences and teaches in the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program at San José State University. He received his Ph.D. in Chicana, Chicano, and Central American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Using qualitative mixed methods, Jack’s research examines the role of transgender identity and gender variance in shaping migration, family relationships, identity formation, spirituality, and world-making for trans Latinxs in southern California. Jack has published in The Journal of LGBT Youth, the Association for Mexican American Educators Journal, Transgender Studies Quarterly, Latino Studies and in the anthology: Queer and Trans Migrations: Dynamics of Illegalization, Detention and Deportation. His research has been funded by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the Latino Center for Leadership Development—Southern Methodist University, and the Institute of American Cultures and The Center for the Study of Women at UCLA. He is currently working on his book manuscript, Trans Power: Trans Latinxs in Los Angeles Struggle for Self-Preservation. Jack is also co-creator and co-host of the podcast, Anzaldúing It, along with Angélica Becerra—a podcast dedicated to navigating the borderlands of queer latinidad. With over half a million listens, the podcast has been used as a teaching tool for underrepresented students and has been featured on Hiplatina, Autostraddle, PRIDE.com, GOMAG, and was featured in the 2019 Google Youth Tech Summit.

Dr. Mauricio E. Ramírez earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Latin American and Latino Studies with an emphasis on Visual Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz. He also holds an M.A.T. in Visual Arts from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and a B.A. in Arts from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Born and raised in San Francisco, he is an artist and curator with an interest in U.S. Central American and Latinx visual art of the San Francisco Bay Area. Mauricio was intrigued by public art and murals as a youth and grew up painting several community murals with the non-profit Precita Eyes Muralists in the Mission District of San Francisco. Recognizing the lack of scholarship on U.S. Central American artists and their influence on the San Francisco art scene, he dedicates his research to U.S. Central American visual artists of San Francisco. Recently, he co-curated CARAVANA: Mobilizing Central American Art (1984-Present) at SOMArts Cultural Center in San Francisco. This multidisciplinary traveling exhibition centers U.S. Central American artists living across the United States to examine their lived experiences in relation to the impact of mass migration, family separation, and the legacy of political action and solidarity with the people of Central America.

Mauricio is currently working on a book, “Painting Central America: U.S. Central American Visual Art of San Francisco,” which explores the visual expressions and solidarity that emerged in San Francisco’s Mission District as a response to the civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua beginning in the 1980s. His research sheds light on the history of Central American art and activism, the emerging 1.5 and second-generation U.S. Central American artists, and the intersections of Latinx solidarity with Central Americans. His research has been awarded grants from the University of California Office of the President, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Social Science Research Council, and UC Santa Cruz’s Research Center for the Americas.
After another year of living with the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruptions that it causes, the graduating class of LLS majors presented their senior project papers or thesis at a virtual end-of-the-year LLS major symposium on May 1st. Participants included the department faculty and staff and the family and friends of the majors. Below are the names of the majors and their paper titles. Also, listed below are the names of the LLS minor graduates. Congratulations to all of the LLS graduates!

**CLASS OF 2021**

**UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mario Barajas</td>
<td>“City Under Siege”</td>
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<td>Rosario Barrera</td>
<td>“Border Patrol: What it Takes to Be a Racist”</td>
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<td>Xiomara F. Cardona</td>
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<td>Fatima Castillo</td>
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<td>Lesly Castro</td>
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<td>Cerrena Galvan</td>
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<td>Acacia R. Hernandez</td>
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<td>Roy Jaime</td>
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**UNDERGRADUATE MINORS**

- Lydia Secorro Alvarez
  - “El Acción de Gentrificación: Exploring the Contradictions of Community Organizing, Art, and Social Media in the Pilsen Neighborhood of Chicago”

- Karen Bahena
  - “Mi Cuerpo, Tu Cuerpo: The Latina Body in Media”

- Karen Bucio
  - “Barriers to Healthcare Access Among Undocumented Immigrants”

- Melody Contreras
  - “Fornesian Dreamscapes: Navigating Queer World Making”

- Isabella Rose Márquez
  - “Reggaeton’s Resistance: Bad Bunny & the Aesthetics & Politics of Perreo”

- Jocelyn Rodriguez
  - “Reproductive Injustices of Latinas in the U.S.”

- Gabriel Sanabria
  - “Pushing the Boundaries of Gender: The Life of Jenni Rivera”

- Jailine Santiago
  - “Resisting Neoliberal Conceptualizations of Worthiness: Articulations of Care for My (un)Deserving Parents”

- Ivan Saucedo
  - “City Under Siege”

- Cristian Solorzano
  - “Border Patrol: What it Takes to Be a Racist”

**GRADUATE MINOR**

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<tr>
<td>Aída Rosalia Guhlincezzi</td>
<td>Ph.D., Geography and Geographic Information Science</td>
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<td>Dissertation: “¿Hablas Español?” Constraints encountered by Latina immigrant women seeking linguistically appropriate health care in the Chicago suburbs</td>
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(Faculty Advisor: Prof. Sara McLafferty)
It gives us great pleasure to announce the winners of this year’s LLS scholarships and paper award.

Isabella “Issy” Marquez, Latina/Latino Studies, English, and Political Science major, and May 2021 graduate, is the winner of the Dr. Jorge Chapa Memorial Scholarship in Latina/o Studies. Issy graduated Magna Cum Laude and as a James Scholar and with High Distinction in Latina/Latino Studies. When Issy added Latina/Latino Studies as a third major she became interested in Latina/o literature and the analysis of Latinidad through language. She will continue exploring these interests as a MA/PhD student in English and a Latina/Latino Studies graduate minor at UIUC starting in Fall 2021.

Erica Gonzalez, Latina/ Studies and Community Health major, is the winner of the LLS Major Scholarship. Erica is a rising senior and is the Latina/Latino Studies student outreach and media coordinator. Erica’s inspiration to pursue degrees in Latina/Latino Studies and community health was largely influence by Prof. Viruell-Fuentes when Erica took LLS 100 during her first year. She is currently engaged in a summer internship at Crisis Nursery in Urbana where she is assisting them with their communication efforts generally and outreach to Latina/o populations in Champaign-Urbana. After graduation next year Erica plans to pursue a career that focuses on health inequality and health care access for Latina/o populations and others who are most marginalized.

Lydia Alvarez, Latina/ Studies and Spanish major, and May 2021 graduate, is this year’s winner of the LLS Undergraduate Research Award. This award recognizes exceptional undergraduate research and/or critical analysis in the field of Latina/Latino Studies. Lydia graduated with High Distinction in Latina/Latino Studies. Lydia’s paper titled, “El Acción de Gentrificación: Exploring the Contradictions of Community Organizing, Art, and Social Media in the Pilsen Neighborhood of Chicago,” tracks the transition of community organizing among the Latinx population in Pilsen to better understand how social media has worked to effectively organize the community. The overall purpose of the paper is to understand the role and effects of political and social organizing within the Latinx community of Pilsen, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who applied for the scholarships and paper prize. We received a lot of wonderful applications. We wish we could have provided awards to everyone.
**FACULTY, STAFF & AFFILIATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Xiomara Cervantes** is the winner of the 2021 Premio Sylvia Molloy for Best Article in the Humanities for “Paz’s Pasivo: ThinkingMexicanness from the Bottom,” presented by the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Sexualities Studies Section. Xiomara was also awarded the 2021 Andrew W Mellon Career Enhancement Fellowship by the Institute for Citizens & Scholars (formerly the Woodrow Wilson Foundation).

**David Cisneros** was named the 2020 Cordóva–Puchot Scholar of the Year by the Latina/o Studies Division of the National Communication Association.

**Julie Dowling** is a co-winner of this year’s Public Sociology Award of the American Sociological Association’s International Migration Section.


**Mónica González Ybarra** was awarded the 2021 Cathy Acevedo Award at the 2021 La Casa Congratulatory. The award is presented to a faculty or staff member who has shown extraordinary commitment to Latina/Latino students and the Latina/Latino campus community and has shown advocacy for the issues, challenges and successes that shape their higher education experiences.

**Natalie Lira** was awarded the 2020-21 Latina/Latino Studies Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award honors the Department’s best teachers.

**Juan Mora** graduated with a PhD in History and is now working at Indiana University-Bloomington as a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society (CRRES) and as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History.

**Carolina Ortega** graduated with a PhD in History and is now a tenure-track Assistant Professor of History at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

**Sandra Ruiz** was awarded a Humanities Research Institute (HRI) Campus Fellowship for the 2021–22 academic year for her project titled, “Minoritarian Pedagogy: Psychoanalytic Affections in the Space of Aesthetics.” Ruiz was also named a 2021 Conrad Humanities Scholar. Ruiz plans to use the award to continue her work on several book projects, including a book of poetry entitled “The Edge of Death,” and two theoretically focused books called “Grief-time: The Aesthetic Life” and “Minoritarian Pedagogy: Psychoanalytic Affections in the Space of Aesthetics.”

**Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada** has an article titled "Intersectional Justice Denied: Negative Peace and Persisting Violence in Post-Peace Accords El Salvador" forthcoming in American Anthropologist.

**PROFESSOR ROLANDO ROMERO RETIRES**

by A. P. Rodriguez and A. N. Valdivia

Professor Rolando Romero, the first director of the Latina/Latino Studies Program who directed the unit from 1996 to 1998, retired this Summer 2021. Professor Romero is our first faculty member to retire and achieve the rank of Associate Professor Emeritus. Professor Romero was born in northern Mexico and moved to Texas in his teens. He majored in Finance at the Wharton School, completed all the requirements for a degree in Spanish, and was one of the founders of MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) while a student at the University of Pennsylvania. He also worked as a voting rights research analyst for the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund and the Texas Rural Legal Aid.

In 1996 he was hired as the Inaugural director of the Latina/Latino Studies Program and was tasked with composing the faculty with a plan to eventually transition into a Department. He worked with the College of LAS and several Latina/o professors across campus to develop a vibrant program, which under his leadership developed an undergraduate minor.

A humanities scholar, Professor Romero specializes in US Latina/o literature, Mexican literature, cultural studies, and film theory. He taught classes such as 19th Century US Latina/o Literature, Latina Literature and Iconography, Bilingualism in US Latina/o Culture, Contemporary US Latina/o Literature, and Latina/os on the Bronze Screen. Professor Romero published in journals such as Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture and Borderlines: Studies in American Culture, and in various edited volumes. Professor Romero was also an active member of the UIUC faculty senate.

Undoubtedly, Professor Romero has made an impact on many lives. As he enters a new chapter, we at LLS thank him for many years of dedication to the department and wish him lots of happiness and adventures in retirement.