



Department of

# LATINA/LATINO STUDIES

FALL 2015 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## Dr. Natalie Lira

Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Associate

Wednesday, November 4  
3:30-5:00PM

Room 103, 1207 W. Oregon,  
Urbana



### "Allies, Resisters, and Runaways: Locating Agency and Defiance in Mexican-Origin Patient's Reactions to Eugenic Sterilization in California, 1920-1950"

During the first half of the twentieth century, Mexican-origin youth were disproportionately targeted for institutionalization and reproductive surgery under California's eugenic sterilization law. Drawing from legal cases, sterilization requests, and interdepartmental letters this research complicates the reductive narrative of Mexican-origin women and men as mere victims of the State by showing that Mexican-origin patients and their families were far from complacent when facing compulsory sterilization. In fact, as this project illustrates, they sought to prevent sterilization in various ways including refusing to sign consent forms, appealing to community allies, filing legal claims, and even running away from state institutions. These actions not only paint a picture of Mexican-origin women and men's early engagement in anti-sterilization efforts, but they also push us to rethink the way we understand the relationship between racial and reproductive justice struggles during this period.

