



Department of

LATINA/LATINO STUDIES

FALL 2016 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Associate

Wednesday, October 12

3:30-5:00PM

Room 103

1207 W. Oregon, Urbana



"High-Risk Citizenship: 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' Criminal Exposure, and Queer Belonging in Michael Nava's *The Death of Friends*"

The end of the 20th century ushered an unprecedented public debate that spoke openly about queer identity, departing from previous vague descriptions of queer communities. The consequent institutionalization of criminal exposure laws that sought to protect citizens from sexual contact with people living with HIV, the infamous "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and the recently repealed Defense of Marriage Act underscore the national interest in determining the conditions under which a person's public identification as queer was legally sanctioned. Collectively, these statutes defined queer people as high-risk subjects, sexually, militarily, and morally threatening the livelihood of citizens and U.S. national security. Bringing together legal and literary critique, José A. de la Garza Valenzuela interrogates the interest in citizenship in contemporary social advocacy through a critical analysis of gay Chicano writer Michael Nava's *The Death of Friends*. The 1996 novel offers a unique insight into how queer communities made sense of their own public criminalized identities following the U.S. neglect of HIV/AIDS treatments and restrictions on military service for queer citizens. Nava, de la Garza Valenzuela argues, is less concerned with challenging the notion of minoritized communities as high-risk communities and instead depicts the procurement of citizenship as a high-risk cultural enterprise.

