

4TH COLLOQUIUM ON LATIN AMERICA

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



PARTICIPATION

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Monday, Nov. 25th 2024 – 18:00 CET

Dr. John Loewenthal

Keele University, UK

Sonic diaspora in a tropical metropolis: Colombian cumbia fuelling the spirit of Mexico City

Cumbia has been described as “perhaps the most widespread musical genre of Latin American origin” (Fernández L’Hoeste and Vila, 2013, p. 13) and “the musical backbone of the continent” (Garsd and Contreras, 2020, para. 2). Cumbia originated through cultural fusions on Colombia’s tropical coasts, combining influences from the three continents that shaped and populated the region: Amerindian (flutes and percussion), African (drumming), and European (Spanish singing and German accordion) (Fernández L’Hoeste, 2007). Later inclusion of wind and brass, including via the popularity of North American jazz, have contributed to a syncretic musical style (Fernández L’Hoeste, 2013). The genre has taken diverse diasporic trajectories out of Colombia, across Latin America (Fernández L’Hoeste, 2007). Within Mexico and its US diaspora, there are now various Mexican versions of cumbia, though original songs from Colombia remain hugely popular. In this presentation, I describe how the working-class music of cumbia plays across Mexico City. I provide ethnographic descriptions of this sunny metropolis and its many tropical qualities. Tall palm trees are planted across the city along with the purple jacaranda and the pink bougainvillea. Houses are painted in vibrant colours stretching a broad palette, infusing an uplifting aesthetic into everyday life. Cumbia has a joyous and melodic rhythm, layered with heartfelt singing. Across the Mexican working day, the genre is played loud out of shops, construction sites, and vehicles (private cars and notoriously, ‘micros’ – public minibuses). Evenings offer the chance to dance to cumbia, at home, in gardens or dance halls, or else in public squares on a Sunday afternoon. I touch upon the complex mixture of sentiments in cumbia and across much Latin American music. Lyrics concerning challenging themes such as poverty, slavery, racism, heartbreak, and death are sung atop vivacious music, encouraging bodily movement. In a seemingly therapeutic process, problems are articulated, addressed, and reconciled as lyricised struggles are matched by a conquering vitality evoked by the musical trance. In the presentation, I suggest that the convivial uptake of cumbia from Colombia is emblematic of a broader Latin American fraternity and signifies non-elite globalisation (cf. Mathews et al., 2017).

Tuesday, Dec. 3rd 2024 – 18:00 CET

Ingrid Carolina Pabón Suárez

Universidad Libre de Berlín, Alemania

Gente que encarna al estado: la implementación de la política pública de tierras en el contexto del posacuerdo de paz en Colombia

Mi proyecto de investigación está guiado por las siguientes preguntas ¿De qué manera la experiencia emocional de las personas a cargo de la política pública de tierras en Colombia incide en el proceso de implementación de dicha política? ¿Cómo se relaciona esta experiencia emocional con una esfera pública emocional caracterizada por la polarización?

Esta política pública, denominada Ordenamiento Social de la Propiedad Rural (en adelante OSPR), encarna parte del acuerdo de paz que se firmó entre la guerrilla más grande del país «Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)» y el gobierno nacional en 2016. El acuerdo reconoció como causas estructurales del conflicto armado la distribución desigual de la tierra y su uso, por esa razón se determinó como primer punto del acuerdo la reforma agraria rural (RRI en adelante).

El OSPR se define como «un proceso de planificación y gestión para ordenar la ocupación y el uso de las tierras rurales y gestionar las tierras de la Nación». Grosso modo, su objetivo es promover el acceso a la propiedad y a otras formas de tenencia, así como la distribución equitativa de la tierra. La Agencia Nacional de Tierras es la entidad encargada de esta Política Pública. Mi investigación es una etnografía sobre las burocracias de una sección de esta Agencia.

Argumento que el compromiso emocional puede ser una fuerza que impulsa el uso de la ley y otras herramientas en ciertas direcciones en relación con varios aspectos: perspectivas de justicia, de la propiedad de la tierra, sobre el campesinado, sobre los Acuerdos de Paz, ideologías particulares en un contexto polarizado, u horizontes personales como el ascenso social.

Thursday, Dec. 12th 2024 – 18:00 CET

Rebekka Krauß & Dr. Issifou Abou Moumouni

University of Bayreuth, Germany

(Il)literatecies, political participation and democratic practices in Bolivia and Benin

Commonly and by UNESCO definition, literacy is understood to be crucial for political participation and democratic action as voting, being informed on own rights and participating in processes of decision-making. Although Bolivia and Benin share common features as a colonial history, multilinguality, times of mass alphabetization campaigns and still a significant amount of citizens with little literacy competences, processes of political and democratic participation differ in both countries. Currently, the state of Benin intends to enhance civic participation through the implementation of digital tools. In Bolivia, political participation and decentralisation became law in the mid of neoliberal 90's, even though narratives tie strong civic organisations and self-administration to historic continuities.

In this presentation, we will discuss modalities and frames in which citizens with little literacy competences participate in political decision-making and self-administration. We will look on local practices of citizenship and the often-ambivalent (local) state measures for democratic participation. We will draw on insights from the interdisciplinary research project "Learning beyond the classroom: Coping with illiteracy in urban contexts in Benin and Bolivia". In our analysis on political participation, we will rely on a relational understanding of literacy and illiteracy conceptualizing both as intrinsically entangled and processual. We will argue that also in the context of political participation multiplicities of (il)literacy practices dominate.

In both Benin and Bolivia, despite their different status, illiteracised persons have a clear desire to participate in the democratic process and in politics. They find ways to participate not only in certain decision-making processes, but also in local governance. Thus, they use a variety of strategies depending on the circumstances and the importance of literacy. Literacy is embedded in the intersection of policies implementation, state absence/weak presence and practices of self-organization.

Tuesday, Jan. 14th 2025 – 18:00 CET

Esther Neira

Queen's University Belfast, UK

“A esa ya la destriparon”: local narratives on the clinic, medicalisation, and intervention on the body in a Ñuu Savii community in Oaxaca, Mexico

By taking my master's thesis research conducted during five months ethnographic fieldwork between 2019 and 2020 in the ñuu savii community called Santa Cruz Mitlatongo in Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca (Mexico), this article talks about reproductive dynamics within this Mixtec community. Against the background of the historical dispute between the so-called 'traditional' medicine and biomedicine, medical and often obstetric violence seemed to permeate women's stories of this community, whilst the midwife was still a highly important alternative for most of the locals. This paper reflects on how the Mixtec myth of origin shapes the notion of body and the role this plays within the processes of health/illness/assistance and draws upon the local narratives on conception, pregnancy and postpartum and their practices, as well as the (un)balance of cold/warmth that permeates the sui generis notion of body, as well as the importance of pain during birth and the role of the placenta, to give a better overview and understanding on the relationship and narratives that this community had portrayed on the clinic. Narratives in this community picture the clinic as a cold place, where women's will on how to give birth is violated and medical staff carry out unhealthy practices that cause irreversible changes to the body due to the excessive intervention in it, materialised in the rejection and fear towards C-sections and anaesthesia. Narratives that also explain the role of the only midwife who was still alive as a local leader and an example of resistance and ancestral knowledge keeper.

Tuesday, Jan. 21st 2025 – 18:00 CET

Prof. Dr. Catherine Whittaker

Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Sacred Spectacle: The Politics of Tourism, Authenticity, and Kinship at a Mesoamerican Ballgame Tournament

Recently, the Mesoamerican hip ballgame (pok-ta-pok in Yucatec Maya; ulamalitzli in Nahuatl), is being revitalized across Mesoamerica and the American Southwest. This paper will discuss how an international tournament at Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico, marked a transition: from a touristic spectacle towards an everyday sport.

Touristification is both an event and a process, defined as much by moments of rupture as by the potential for openings. The extraordinary extent to which the Riviera Maya has been commodified for and through mass tourism constitutes a point of rupture in history: the transformation of the area into a 'tourist paradise' (Urry 1990). Thus, the cultural history of the Maya and the beauty of biodiverse Caribbean beaches has been upstaged by commercially curated tourist experiences (Leatherman/Goodman 2005).

Accordingly, the founders of an international ballgame league, themselves Maya, cultivate a highly aesthetic and athletic performance for the daily consumption of large audiences at the Xcaret theme park, which claims to represent the ballgame authentically. Some performer-athletes also play and revere the ballgame as a sacred sport. When the league had the opportunity to hold their international tournament at Xcaret in November 2022, the organizers faced a difficult choice: Should they play in the spectacular, custom-built Maya-style ballgame court? Or should they switch to a regular sports location, the Poliforum, and play on basketball courts, to make the tournament accessible to everyone, including their families?

This example shows that the spectacular does not exclude the normal, the sacred, or the authentic; however, this requires prioritizing the honoring of one's relations. Local Maya can harness tourists' appetite for the spectacular presentation of their ancestral heritage to advance their own goals, including to gather resources and publicity. However, realizing their goals means opening towards routinized everydayness—towards their kin. This research is part of an ongoing ethnographic project.

Tuesday, Feb. 11th 2025 – 18:00 CET

Manuela Löwenthal Lopes

Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil

Politics and Religion in Brazil today

This text is part of an ongoing doctoral research in Brazil, investigating the presence and involvement of Pentecostal evangelical actors in Brazilian politics over the past decades. The study focuses on understanding the entry of these actors into the public sphere and analyzing their performance, aiming to identify whether this phenomenon reflects a movement aligned with the growth of the "new right" in Brazil and globally. Additionally, the study explores how political and everyday engagement processes occur, considering religion as a significant moral and political force for the population. In this context, the research seeks to understand how this process has been shaped and the role of the church in forming a political subject, considering that the rise of evangelicals in Brazilian politics raises crucial issues related to human rights, family configuration, and morality.

In the first semester of 2023 a monitoring of Bills of Law (PLs) was conducted, identifying a total of 3,256 PLs in circulation in Brazil. Among this large number, a significant portion—1,073 PLs—were authored by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, being particularly relevant for their potential to generate conflicts, disputes, and shape narratives around issues related to values, communities, or religious entities. Initially, fifteen analytical categories were established with the objective of classifying and examining the PLs passing through the Chamber, without excluding the possibility of new categories emerging during the legislative term, which could expand this number. The research also considers that this process may include the re-evaluation of older projects, which would then be categorized and included in the existing ones.

The 15 central categories, defined based on the initial data collected, are: 1) Women's Rights; 2) Crime and Public Security; 3) Animal Welfare; 4) Threat to the Democratic Rule of Law; 5) Immigration; 6) Education; 7) Drug Policy; 8) Child and Adolescent Rights; 9) Media Regulation; 10) Family; 11) Indigenous Peoples' Rights; 12) Human Rights; 13) Official Calendars, Heritage, and Honors; 14) Religion; 15) Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

The monitoring system recorded a total of 3,256 bills (PLs), marking a turning point that allows for the identification of crucial patterns in the legislative actions of the Federal Chamber. Notably, parties linked to the Evangelical Parliamentary Front proposed more bills related to the monitored topics compared to other parties.

Thursday, Feb. 27th 2025

Movie screening

Details to be announced

CLOSING CEREMONY

We cordially invite you to stay for a glass of wine, some chats and a relaxed get-together to bring the colloquium and the summer term to a close.

ENTRY FREE

20:00

FOYER IWALEWAHAUS

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