Program

8:00-8:45am: Register, materials, and breakfast
8:45-9:00am: Opening Remarks by Raymond Craib, Director Latin American Studies

Presentation sessions

9:00-10:00am
I. Nature and Management I

Jaime D. Ortiz. The knowing-doing gap in the Galapagos Islands: Introduced species research and management

It is important to go beyond anecdotal description to give grounded evidence for the influence of ecological research on environmental management. The concept of invasive species is both highly influential—it is a common language amongst the many players of political ecology—and radically under-theorized. Thus, the aim is to empirically assess the communication and institutional mismatch in the “research-implementation” gap in the relationship found between the language used in the scientific literature and that used in management plans for the Galapagos Islands; synthesizing and analyzing over 50 years of scientific history in the Galapagos archipelago. I use tools from digital humanities to show the changes in the usage of terms to describe invasive species and the effect of these changes on policy, and scientific research.

Using specialized text analysis packages in R, I have applied topic modeling to more than three thousand documents, which include full scientific articles, grey literature and management plans (1960-2015). By comparing these datasets we quantitatively test the hypothesis that science is driving the management intention of non-native introduced species in the Galapagos protected areas.

Samuel Bosco. Low-cost soil and crop quality testing of organic and conventional coffee farming systems in Cauca, Colombia

The growing demand for specialty coffee offers small-scale farmers in Latin America an opportunity to increase their standard of living by enhancing the quality rather than the quantity of their crop. Transitioning to organic coffee farming does not only have economic benefits but also improves the environmental and social aspects of the household’s living environment. However, there is little information about the management challenges coffee farmers have to deal with in the process of transitioning to organic certification. Moreover, there are few resources available for frequent evaluation of crop and soil status, which could help small-scale coffee producers make more informed soil management decisions. Here we present a case study about a coffee cooperative called Federación Campesina de Cauca (FCC) in Popayán, Colombia. We
interviewed both organic and conventional coffee producers about their experiences, took soil samples for soil health analysis and evaluated the efficacy of low-cost soil tests in measuring different soil characteristics. Our findings will provide information about the soil health status of organic and conventional coffee farms, describe the challenges associated with conversion to organic food production systems and share low-cost methods for measuring soil quality.

Sidney Madsen. Comparative study of food security and nutrition of Q’eqchi’ and Ladino smallholder farmers in Alta Verapaz and El Progreso, Guatemala.

Examinar el contexto de la sequía y los impactos directos e indirectos en la población de 12 comunidades de los municipios de Sansare y Sanarate, así como conocer los mecanismos que utilizan las personas para afrontar los impactos de la sequía y su adaptación al cambio climático.
Los pequeños productores de El Progreso, por depender de agricultura de secano y trabajo de jornalero se encuentran muy vulnerables a la sequía. Esta situación requiere acción inmediata para prevenir el aumento de inseguridad alimentaria y desnutrición en la región.
Con el uso de indicadores establecidos de seguridad alimentaria y nutrición, se evalúa la gravedad actual de los impactos de la sequía en comunidades agrícolas del corredor seco, se estableció una línea de base valiosa con la que se puede monitorear cambios en el futuro. Además, el estudio expone los mecanismos para afrontar con la sequía que utiliza la población, y las, y las implicaciones que tienen para la resiliencia. Estos resultados pueden ser usados para establecer advertencias en avance de crisis alimentaria.

Alexander Flecker. Understanding the impacts of dam proliferation on ecosystem services in the Andean Amazon

The rapid proliferation of new hydropower projects is a critical emerging issue threatening many of the world’s river systems. For example, in the Andean Amazon region of South America, more than 200 dams have been proposed with some high profile projects currently under construction. While environmental assessments consider individual dams, remarkably little attention has been paid to the cumulative effects of networks of dams with respect to river structure, function, and ecosystem services. Assessing cumulative effects in rapidly developing regions possessing some of the world’s most biodiverse river systems is especially challenged by limited data on hydrology, ecology, and biodiversity. Moreover, cumulative effects may be manifested hundreds of kilometers downstream of hydropower projects, and such spatially distant impacts are rarely considered. We are in the initial stages of a project evaluating thresholds and tradeoffs between ecosystem services and different scenarios of dam proliferation in the Andean Amazon, specifically the Marañon, Ucayali, and Napo Basins. This region is a biodiversity hotspot where high densities of dams are planned for rivers that contribute large portions of the sediment, nutrient, and organic matter sources of the main-stem Amazon. These materials are critical for the formation and maintenance of the highly productive floodplain ecosystems that many people in the Amazon depend on for their livelihoods and culture. We will outline major questions and our initial approach for establishing whether there are generalizable “rules” in designing dam network configurations that minimize functional impairment to ecosystem services yet meet acceptable hydropower targets for the Andean Amazon.
10:00-11:00am
II. Nature and Management II

Rachel Odhner. Perceptions of Nicaragua’s water crisis

Home to Lago Cocibolca, Central America’s largest lake, Nicaragua has historically been considered a country abundant in water. Since 2012, however, one of the worst droughts on record, concerns about climate change, and legal approval of a major canal project have resulted in growing concerns about actual and future water scarcity. Drawing on preliminary research, this paper analyzes diverse perceptions of Nicaragua’s so-called water crisis. State and development narratives attribute water scarcity to climate change, and propose climate change adaptation and improved water resource management interventions as the solution. Meanwhile, many environmentalists and scientists explain the drought as indicative of what they claim is an ongoing water crisis—due to unchecked deforestation, advance of the agricultural frontier, extensive cattle raising, and the government’s plans to build a transoceanic canal through Lake Cocibolca. This paper decenters dominant development narratives linking water scarcity to climate change, to examine competing explanations of water scarcity and bring into view the multiple historical, cultural, political and ecological processes that shape changing water politics in Nicaragua.

Amelia Weiss. Diversity in aquatic Neotropical caves

Contrary to the latitudinal diversity gradient observed in terrestrial and marine ecosystems, cave communities generally contain fewer species at low latitudes. In Europe and North America, spatial patterns in subterranean diversity are consistent with the hypothesis that paleoclimate fluctuations drove temperate cave invasion. However, in the Neotropics where climate has remained relatively stable, spatial patterns in diversity remain unresolved. Anecdotal evidence suggests that invertebrate communities are most diverse in anchialine ecosystems, which are aquatic caves that contain stratified layers of both brackish and marine water. Anchialine caves are restricted to tropical coastlines, indicating there may be a large-scale geographic trend of higher diversity near the coast. A coast-inland biodiversity gradient would suggest that marine resources might play an important role in these characteristically resource-limited communities. To test this hypothesis, we are combining a literature review with field surveys in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and the Turks and Caicos Islands to create a biodiversity map for aquatic subterranean invertebrates in caves throughout the Neotropics.

Brian Davis. Sao Paulo River City

As contemporary megacities face the twinned challenges of environmental justice and a rapidly changing climate, the cleanup and management of urban rivers stands as one of the great tasks currently facing societies around the globe. Urban rivers are the site of much historical industrial development, important and sensitive ecological zones, and a wide range of human settlements. Because of this they powerfully unite legacies of economic growth, social injustice, and environmental degradation. Concurrent with these issues, the water quality of the rivers and streams throughout the city is extremely
poor. The multi-billion dollar, multi-decade Projeto Tietê is underway to extend sanitary service throughout the metropolis and completion is expected by 2025.

In São Paulo this confluence of trajectories is giving form to a massive effort to construct what are called piscinões (“big pools”). These are very large detention basins – often the size of several soccer fields – situated in flood zones within dense parts of the city fabric. Currently designed by civil engineers and constructed by municipalities and the state-level Department of Water and Power, piscinões are proving successful in reducing local flooding. They also severe neighborhoods, concentrate pollutants, require large amounts of maintenance, and typically function only during the rainy season. The accidental confluence of public open space, flooding infrastructure, and improving water quality may provide a framework for rethinking spatial strategies and reclaiming urban rivers as a public good in the city of São Paulo.

Gerardo Soto. Starting 2017 with the Worst Wildfires in Recent Chilean History

11:00-11:15
Coffee break

11:15-12:45pm
III. Human Rights, Solidarity and Crisis

Matheus Depieri. The pioneering and influence of Latin America in Human Rights

In the current globalized world, international relations are based on the principle of inherent human rights. Amidst this context, the main multilateral institution aiming to safeguard this right is the United Nations, whose origin goes back to the 1945 Charter and, for one of its main cornerstones, to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Despite the general recognition of the Global North as being the main responsible for elaborating these conventions, the importance of Latin America in the UN Charter and the UDHR is often neglected. More than a simple contributor, the Latin American block was a protagonist for the inclusion of the Human Rights code in the UN Charter in 1945. Moreover, in 1948, eight months before the ratification of the UDHR by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the ‘American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man’ was approved and it anticipated the main ideas of the UDHR’s final text. That shows the pioneering of Latin America in Human Rights topic, once, according to Sikkink (2015), “the process of drafting the American Declaration was always a step ahead of the drafting of the UDHR”. Within the situation mentioned above, showing elements of the social and political culture of Latin America influencing the globe, this paper aims to provide evidence of the missing link in the academic field concerning the impact of Latin American countries in Human Rights creation and evolution.

Jesse Enrique Sanchez. Limits of Legality, A Comparison of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in the IACHR and ECHR

The uneven application of human rights law and humanitarian law in the Russian Federation and Latin America following their respective democratic transitions in the 1990's and 2000's has received relatively little attention in comparative legal studies. Despite similar political contexts in Latin America and the former USSR, the outcomes
of criminal prosecutions of former state military, and bureaucratic officials varies
significantly. This study will focus on the particular legal outcomes of cases brought to
the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human
Rights (IACHR) by Russian and Latin American human rights activists, respectively.
This research presentation will explore the legal mechanisms that compelled Chechens
to pursue the ECHR as a potential avenue of justice after the Chechen Wars of
Independence; furthermore, we will examine Mexico human rights activists' decision to
not pursue the IACHR after human rights investigations in 2006. We will additionally
challenge assumptions that claim hostile domestic political actors and/or sizeable
international pressure act as the primary determinant in the outcome of cases involving
crimes against humanity.

Vanessa Bauch and Richard Gaunt. Globalization, Migration, and Organizing for
Migrant Indigenous Solidarity in Los Angeles

Globalization has had profound consequences for the stability and livelihood of
communities in both Latin America and the United States. According to the UN, net
international migration has nearly tripled since 1980, meaning that each year millions of
people — workers, indigenous, and peasants — leave their communities for elsewhere,
often facing exploitative working conditions, hostility, and racism in the process. In this
presentation, two CUSLAR students will discuss research exploring some of the causes,
effects, and responses to these issues.

Richard’s work argues that the rise in migration and ensuing political conflicts
are symptomatic of the growing dominance of transnational capital in the global
economic and political spheres as exercised through policies like NAFTA. This
perspective indicates that global capital both requires and produces an uprooted and
unstable workforce. It is because of this role however, that immigrants are such a
powerful agent of resistance in our current political climate.

Vanessa will present on the importance of organizing among immigrant
indigenous communities who face the potential disappearance of language and culture,
presenting the work of Odilia Romero in Los Angeles, an activist in the Frente Indigena
de Organizaciones Binacionales, as an example of organizing along these lines.

Gustavo Quintero. The Frente Unido in “La hora cero de Colombia”: Camilo Torres’
calling for a future through collective action

Camilo Torres is widely known among Colombian left-wing political groups, student
circles, and is a necessary reference for any edited volume about Marxism in Latin
America; his image has become little more than a relic in the altar of the idealized Latin
American Revolutionary sixties. However, in a moment that the war between the
guerrillas and the State in Colombia has left a generalized bitter feeling of exhaustion,
the search for a change in Colombian society by means other than through violent
struggle seem more pressing than ever. In this paper, I will come back to the texts of
Camilo Torres to explore how he depicted a future for Colombia through a
revolutionary change that did not necessarily entail an armed path to take power. In
1964, Torres formed a political platform named “Frente Unido,” which intended to
boycott the presidential election through what he called an “active practice of
abstention.” This endeavor entailed a calling to the Colombian population to unite
against the political order. The means by which he attempted to disseminate his calling
was through a newspaper also named frente unido. In this text, I will explore Torres’
writings in the *frente unido* as well as the newspaper layout to see how his calling was an attempt to articulate an instance of convergence, where a multiplicity of groups could congregate to transform their myriad hopes of what the future could bring into a radical action of interruption of the *status quo*. I contend that the newspaper *frente unido* was an effort to reactivate a political arena, understood as a space for disagreement, antagonism and social organization against the constituted power.

*Darin Self and Jess Zarkin*. Identifying Conditional Support for Illiberalism: A Survey Experiment in Mexico

During democracy's third wave, many scholars were optimistic about the future prospects of democratic consolidation through the world. Twenty-five years later, however, the outlook is far bleaker as many countries have experienced either democratic collapse or creeping illiberalism via core democratic institutions such as elections. We analyze sources of popular support for illiberalism using three experiments embedded in a survey fielded in Mexico. Specifically, we test how support for illiberalism is conditional upon the Mexican government's performance regarding the economy and security.

*Cristina Castro-Lucas*. Innovation: what is the missing link?

Innovation is one of the main practices fostered by countries to leverage and enhance their development. In many countries, the link between knowledge and country’s development and, therefore, their innovation capacity, can be measured by national R&D expenditures. In Brazil, however, the trajectory of science, technology and innovation cannot assemble a coherent model of how this link worked along the time. According to this research, over the last five years, Brazil showed a downward trajectory regarding some international innovation metrics, even increasing the national investments on a yearly-basis analysis in the same period. Furthermore, Brazil does not use the common models of measurement and evaluation of innovation used in other countries, and thus, faces difficulties in guiding and managing future actions comparing to its competitors. Considering some factors in the national scenario - such as the low government stimulus for R&D spending by private companies, the gap between innovation inputs and outputs and the ineffective regulation for the development of innovation – it is possible to observe a negative tendency, which brought down Brazilian economy. Based on this, the present paper is going to discuss some cornerstone questions, such as: Is there a relationship between R&D and innovation in Brazil? For the Brazilian case, how can someone evaluate the public and private sectors roles regarding the innovation inputs and outputs?

12:45-2:00pm
Lunch

2:00-3:00pm

**IV. Transnational Media**

*Ernesto Bassi*. José María Heredia’s New York: Poetry, Exile, Walking, and Digital Humanities
In this paper I follow Cuban poet José María Heredia’s New York steps as a first attempt to reconstruct the small but growing communities of Spanish-speakers that were beginning to emerge in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and New Orleans during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike the growing literary and historical corpus that focuses on the literary production and diplomatic deeds of key members of the U.S. Spanish-speaking community, my approach seeks to emphasize the everyday experiences of Spanish-speakers in U.S. cities and the ways in which they adapted to, appropriated, and interpreted the cities that offered them temporal or permanent abode. For Heredia, experiencing, adapting to, appropriating, and interpreting New York happened by walking. Using digital humanities tools, I am working on reconstructing the urban geography of Heredia and other Spanish speakers who lived in Anglophone cities in the Americas. At this point, based mostly on Heredia’s published correspondence, I offer a map and a guided tour through New York as José María Heredia experienced it.

Sam Carter. Funes and the Phonographic Voice in Borges

Jorge Luis Borges’ “Funes el memorioso,” the memorable story of a Uruguayan in possession of a remarkable eidetic faculty, is also one of the Argentine writer’s most sustained engagements with the voice. Working from a close reading of this canonical text and drawing together ideas from voice studies, media studies, and literary studies, I ask what conclusions we should draw from the prominence of the voice in a story that also addresses the possibility of nearly perfect recall. Whereas the Italian philosopher Adriana Cavarero points to this same story simply for its critique of metaphysics in her study of the uniqueness of voice, I instead read “Funes el memorioso” with respect to what I call a phonographic voice that emerges in the works of Borges. Neither strictly mechanical nor purely metaphorical, this phonographic voice was also Borges’ own when reading aloud either the poetry his father once shared with him or the work of his friends. A consummate stylist, Borges nevertheless understood the voice as something like a phonographic stylus that makes audible what past authorities have said as it retraces their words or that amplifies an essence to be found only in the proper places, and these views ultimately capture some of his ideas about the possibilities for a voice of the people.

Martina Broner. Rivers as Photographic Media: Sebastião Salgado’s Genesis in the New Climatic Regime

As Bruno Latour and others have suggested, a consequence of the planetary environmental crisis is a sensorial disorientation that seems to make it impossible to fully grasp both the scale of the crisis and the crucial role of human beings in its acceleration. Examining Sebastião Salgado’s landscapes of Amazonia, my presentation will posit photography as a medium that has the potential to intervene in this disorientation by exposing crucial entanglements between human beings and nature. I will discuss Salgado’s images of two rivers, the Churún in Venezuela and the Río Negro in Brazil, whose waters adopt a creative role. The dark, reflective surfaces of these rivers capture the landscape above and around the water, mirroring cloud formations and the forest canopy. In this manner, the Churún and the Río Negro are simultaneously subjects and photographers as they become the medium through which the Amazon rainforest is rendered. I argue that the resulting photographs-within-
photographs in Salgado’s images point to both the agency of the nonhuman world and
the possibility of creative collaboration between humans and nature.

Sergio Ospina-Romero. Making foreign and ethnic records: Victor’s 1913 expedition
through Peru and Colombia

Between September and November 1913, recording scouts of the Victor Talking
Machine Company established temporary recordings studios in Lima and Bogotá. After
setting up their equipment, they faced multiple challenges, including identifying local
talent, negotiating copyright deals, and wrangling tardy, drunken performers into the
studio. These scouts were attempting to follow Victor executives’ master plan to open
up new markets for the phonograph. Yet it was up to them and the people they worked
with to figure out how to put Victor’s plans into practice. Through their improvisatory
strategies and collaborations with local people, these scouts played a crucial role in the
configuration of a novel commercial category of “ethnic” records aimed at U.S.
immigrants and foreign customers. By focusing on Victor’s 1913 South American
expedition, I argue that engaging with the daily actions of recording scouts offers a
significant new approach towards examining the global expansion of the music
industry. Drawing from original archival material, including the daily ledgers of the
expeditions, I examine the interactions between scouts and locals to reveal the
improvisatory interactions at the center of the music industry’s global expansion. By
exploring how scouts negotiated with performers, middle-men, and translators through a
series of mundane and inefficient encounters, this paper challenges top-down stories of
popular music’s global dimension. Through this history, I contend, we can glimpse the
uneven nature of the industry’s expansion and find a far more complicated story of
popular music’s global spread.

3:00-4:15
V. Transnational Motion

Kyle Harvey. Work Spaces and the Emergence of the Transandean in Mendoza,
Argentina, 1830s-1870s

Between September and November 1913, recording scouts of the Victor Talking
Machine Company established temporary recordings studios in Lima and Bogotá. After
setting up their equipment, they faced multiple challenges, including identifying local
talent, negotiating copyright deals, and wrangling tardy, drunken performers into the
studio. These scouts were attempting to follow Victor executives’ master plan to open
up new markets for the phonograph. Yet it was up to them and the people they worked
with to figure out how to put Victor’s plans into practice. Through their improvisatory
strategies and collaborations with local people, these scouts played a crucial role in the
configuration of a novel commercial category of “ethnic” records aimed at U.S.
immigrants and foreign customers. By focusing on Victor’s 1913 South American
expedition, I argue that engaging with the daily actions of recording scouts offers a
significant new approach towards examining the global expansion of the music
industry. Drawing from original archival material, including the daily ledgers of the
expeditions, I examine the interactions between scouts and locals to reveal the
improvisatory interactions at the center of the music industry’s global expansion. By
exploring how scouts negotiated with performers, middle-men, and translators through a
series of mundane and inefficient encounters, this paper challenges top-down stories of
popular music’s global dimension. Through this history, I contend, we can glimpse the uneven nature of the industry’s expansion and find a far more complicated story of popular music’s global spread.

**Joshua Savala.** Anarchy in the Pacific: Peruvian and Chilean Maritime and Port Workers, 1910s-1920s

This paper narrates and analyzes port and maritime worker strikes in Valparaiso, Chile and Mollendo, Peru. Rather than focusing only on transnational aspects, I argue that organizing in both locations was intensely transnational and local—or trans-local as Matt Matsuda has suggested. In other words, local, national, and transnational elements all combined to create the specific routes of the protest and the state’s reaction to them. With connections to Australia and the southern Andes, these movements took local concerns to the transnational and back, changing the shape of politics across the South American Pacific littoral. Moreover, I show that despite heightened state conflict between Peru and Chile due to negotiations over a land dispute from the aftermath of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), maritime and port workers, primarily anarchist in practice, sought to forge connections across the maritime border. For many of these anarchists, the national conflict was nothing more than a nationalist distraction; instead, they articulated and enacted a common identity of maritime worker. As a result of these connections, police in both countries stepped up their spying and surveillance of these movements, detaining, arresting, and sending them to other locations. The paper is based on archival research and periodicals in Peru (Callao and Arequipa) and Chile (Santiago).

**Daniella Hobbs.** Understanding Christian Missionary Work’s Role in Colonial and Neocolonial History

The research presentation will analyze the relationships between Christian mission work and colonialism, and Christian mission work and neocolonialism. In order to do so, it will use work from a variety of different disciplines to look at the ways the church and mission work may have been connected to oppression, colonialism and neocolonialism throughout history, specifically in Latin America. The conclusion drawn is that Christian missionary work has a very strong connection to oppression and other negative practices, both historically and contemporarily. However, while the Bible has been used as a tool for oppression, it can also be used as a vehicle for liberation, which is specifically seen through the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America. The presentation argues that, by acknowledging the church’s past history with oppression, changing how the Bible is contextualized and interpreted, and recognizing current unjust systems and their involvement in them, missionaries specifically, and Christianity in general, can cut ties with negative systems and processes, and move forward in a more positive way.

**Nicholas Myers.** Recalcitrance, Militarization, and Borderlands

It is easy, and not all together inaccurate, to think of borders and borderlands as places where one state meets another. By the state’s own logic – its monopoly on violence, its position both subsuming politics and simultaneously at the apex of political hierarchies – only another state, an apex political entity in its own image, could exercise the kind of power and legitimate authority necessary to curb its territorial ambitions. While such may be the case for some borders, a broad historical view of many borderland regions
paints a fundamentally different picture. This is particularly true of today’s Mexico-U.S. border where territorial ambitions (the expansion and expression of what Thongchai Winichakul has called a “geo-body”) of multiple state-level actors have, historically, run up against both material and cultural-epistemic obstacles. I propose that a unique combination of topography, aridity, and a cross-cultural embrace of political autonomy rendered this region a recalcitrant periphery – both actively and passively resistant to external authority – long before it became today’s borderlands. Following this logic, I propose that we might think of some borderland regions as places where state territory, rather than simply encountering that of another state, has itself run up against localized factors limiting domination and expansion.

Nicole Mance and Meredith Rector. The Control Of Commodities: Drug Trade and Extractivism in Mexico

Growing mangoes in Oaxaca, Mexico has racked up a socio-political expense far greater than the price tag on the fruit in the supermarket. For a Mexican drug cartel, hiding illicit drugs in mango shipments is a risky but viable cover for getting them to the U.S. market. For the people of Oaxaca, however, the infiltration of one of the region’s most important industries indicates the threat of a life controlled by drug violence and its wide-ranging effects on society. This convergence of the illegal drug trade with Mexican export-based agriculture has created a new challenge: impeding the effects of drug cartels while allowing one of the bright spots of the struggling Mexican economy to flourish.

In the same way that cartel control over goods is a threat to the social, political and economic state of Mexico, natural resource exploitation has a long history that is protected by governments aiming to attract investment to their countries. This permits the exploitation of resources by companies that contribute little to the development of the host country but rather create and perpetuate social, economic and environmental backlash and consequence. National development is torn between private interests and the survival of diverse rural and indigenous cultures living in zones that are of interest to extractivist activities. Mining extractivism has been a major draw for foreign investment in recent years and the state sees much more profit than mining companies. Both of these lucrative commodities face a crossroads of aiding the Mexican economy without compromising the integrity of its most vulnerable people. The understanding of the conflict existing between the government and the people marginalized through economic policies will help propel the modern world towards admirable solutions.

4:15-4:30pm
Coffee break

4:30-5:15pm
VI. Paleontology and Archaeology in the histories of the Americas

Nathan A Jud. South American Paleobotany: plant fossils from the early Paleocene

Plant fossils from the Salamanca Formation, Patagonia, Argentina include fossil flowers, fruits, and leaves from plants that were growing in South America ~65 Million years ago. At that time, the biota was recovering from the end-Cretaceous mass extinction event that wiped out the non-avian dinosaurs and many another animal groups. The fossil flowers and fruits offer precise, reliable opportunities to identify the
plant groups that survived this extinction event. So far, we have identified relatives of the buckthorns, Christmas bush, and moonseed vine. Ultimately, the flora can be compared with similar-aged assemblages elsewhere in the world to better understand how distance from the impact site influenced plant diversity.

*Camila Martínez*. New fossil flora from Colombia, a window to the Eocene climate and biogeography in the Neotropics

The plant fossil record from the Tropical America is still scarce and temporarily discontinuous. Efforts to find and describe new fossil material are fundamental to understand evolutionary and biogeographic patterns of plant lineages, and paleoclimatic conditions. In this study, a new fossil flora from the late Eocene (~40 million years ago) of Colombia is described. The new fossil flora has been collected from two localities in Santander, Colombia, and has more than six hundred specimens that include compressions and impressions of leaves mostly, but also seeds, fruits and seldom flowers. Detailed stratigraphic data shows that the Flora was deposited in floodplains of braided and meandering rivers. Here, we present results of paleoclimatic analyses based on leaf fossil material from the Esmeraldas Formation. The obtained data are suggesting drier conditions during deposition compared to those from the present. We also propose taxonomic affinities of some fossil leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds, that suggest the presence of families like Fabaceae, Malvaceae, Menispermaceae, Myrtaceae, Passifloraceae, Rhamnaceae and Solanaceae. Our preliminary results are showing that the Esmeraldas Flora exhibited a great diversity, a predominance of microphyll leaf sizes and a great preservation of cuticles, which in general are suggesting that the new flora could have represented a dry tropical ecosystem.

*Anastasia Kotsoglou*, The Place(s) of Politics at Tzak Naab: Human-Landscape

Interactions in the Maya Hinterlands During the Late/terminal Classic

Recent scholarship in Maya archaeology has ardently examined the various political stratagems employed by rulers during parts of the Late/terminal Classic (750-900 AD). These attempts at political maintenance — during what was arguably one of the most socio-ecologically turbulent eras of the Maya world — are variably inscribed in the natural and built landscape. Research to date has explored the negotiation(s) of power almost exclusively in urban contexts, relegating hinterland sites to the periphery of analysis. Recent excavations at Tzak Naab, a rural site located 7km northwest of the urban polity of La Milpa (in modern day Belize), suggest that political maintenance and associated ritual practices, however, were not exclusively urban affairs. This paper uses Tzak Naab to consider how, through the co-opting of ritual and political practices — and the built environments they were enacted in — new forms of power and control were systematically employed by elites in response to economic and environmental stressors. Through a thorough investigation of the site’s architectural features and associated artifact assemblages, and by comparing these findings to regional data, this paper highlights the shifting anxieties and priorities of these inhabitants at multiple scales. It explores how and why the examination of rural sites is requisite to holistic understandings of broader political rhythms and events.

This roundtable will feature four panelists, one of which (Shawn McDaniel) will moderate the discussion. Each presenter to speak briefly about their research on Cuban Studies, and subsequently engage in a critical discussion about the state and possibilities of the field in light of recent and unfolding events. The first two panelists, Ernesto Bassi and Shawn McDaniel, will speak about cultural and geographical itineraries between New York and Cuba in the 19th and 20th centuries. The last two panelists, Tom McEnaney and Cecelia Lawless, will discuss the changing landscapes of sound and film in contemporary Cuba. Questions that the roundtable will collectively address include: What new modes of inquiry do emerging transnational avenues facilitate or obfuscate? What challenges does the transition from Obama to Trump—as well as the impending retirement of Raúl Castro—pose for Cuban Studies?

6:00 pm
Closing remarks by Ray Craib and Reception