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**EDITORIAL**

# Introduction to Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future

Allison Margaret Bigelow and Thomas Miller Klubock
University of Virginia, US
Corresponding author: Allison Margaret Bigelow (amb8fk@virginia.edu)

This essay outlines the three articles in this dossier, "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future." The authors, working in different disciplines, contribute to debates about how to reconceptualize area studies. Each article considers how area studies might be enriched by considering different spatial scales and incorporating methodologies drawn from ethnic studies disciplines. Our introduction explains how each essay contributes to our understanding of five key issues in Latin American studies: (1) the relationship between the field's regionally bound framework and emerging conceptual paradigms like the global South; (2) the potential for interdisciplinary, rather than multidisciplinary, research; (3) how to place Latin American studies in dialogue with ethnic studies; (4) how to rethink the origins of Latin American studies by tracing the long history of Latin America–generated knowledge about the region; and (5) how recent indigenous studies approaches might decolonize the field of Latin American studies.

El presente ensayo ofrece un resumen de los tres artículos, escritos por investigadores de diversas áreas académicas, incluidos en el dossier "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future" (Estudios latinoamericanos y las humanidades: Pasado, presente, futuro). En su conjunto y desde sus particulares perspectivas disciplinarias los ensayos contribuyen a notables debates actuales en los estudios latinoamericanos, planteando así cómo podemos enriquecer nuestras investigaciones a través de diferentes escalas espaciales-temporales y con diferentes métodos, incluyendo varias metodologías derivadas de los estudios étnicos. El presente ensayo introductorio explica cómo los tres ensayos contribuyen a nuestro conocimiento de cinco temas claves en los estudios latinoamericanos, incluyendo: (1) la relación entre las tradicionales demarcaciones geográficas de los estudios latinoamericanos y nuevos paradigmas conceptuales, entre ellos el Sur Global; (2) la posibilidad de mayores investigaciones interdisciplinarias en vez de trabajos multidisciplinarios; (3) los vínculos entre los estudios latinoamericanos y los estudios étnicos; (4) cómo una nueva historia de los saberes latinoamericanos, así generados en la región, nos ayudará repensar los orígenes de los estudios latinoamericanos; (5) cómo nuevos matices en los estudios indígenas podrán descolonizar los estudios latinoamericanos.

The three articles in this dossier were originally presented at a conference held at the University of Virginia in October 2016, "Rethinking Latin American Studies: Past, Present, and Future." The following year, four papers were presented on a *LARR*-sponsored panel in Lima, Peru, at the Latin American Studies Association conference. Our multiyear conversations aimed to generate new questions, frameworks, and collaborations among area, ethnic, and global studies scholars across the humanities. To that end we invited Latin Americanist and other scholars from a variety of disciplines including anthropology, history, literature, and media studies to consider a creative and critical "reimagining" of Latin American studies at a moment when area studies programs confront the challenge of new analytical approaches that shift spatial focus from the regional to the global and transnational. We also invited scholars engaged in ethnic studies—including African American, Asian American, indigenous, and Latinx studies—to explore how these fields might offer helpful approaches to reconceptualizing key problems that are often viewed as the domain of traditional area studies: the persistence of inequality; the enduring legacies of slavery in Africa and the

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Americas; shifting formations of race and racial inequality; the place of indigenous people and indigenous knowledge production in settler societies; tensions between citizenship and authoritarian forms of politics and governance throughout the Americas; and the often fragmentary and troubled project of nation building and nationalism in the postcolonial world (Shukla and Tinsman 2007; Miyoshi and Harootunian 2002). Below, we situate the three essays in this dossier, written by Karin Rosemblatt, Jafte Robles and Joanne Rappaport, and Arturo Arias, within the five key themes of the conference: the relationship between area, ethnic, and global studies; multidisciplinary versus interdisciplinary methodologies; comparative versus transnational and global scales of analysis; the origins of Latin American studies; and the place of subaltern and decolonial studies in area studies. We situate all of the conference papers within established scholarly paradigms and emerging areas of humanistic inquiry in Latin American studies to reflect on the state of the field and to gesture toward new research directions.

## Area, Ethnic, and Global Studies: Overlaps and Divergences

One of the conference's goals was to bring Latin American studies into conversation with other area studies fields in order to overcome the geographically defined boundaries that have limited intellectual exchange between scholars of different regions of the former Third World: Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. The end of the Cold War has brought both institutional and intellectual challenges to this geographical configuration of the globe, pushing scholars to examine a variety of transnational spaces in diverse world regions. A number of important scholars have urged us to rethink the Atlantic and Pacific worlds in such terms, variously centering Africa in the Atlantic world (Gilroy 1993), or Asian diasporic communities in Latin America (Schiavone Camacho 2012; Seijas 2014), and problematizing the kinds of definitions that link diverse cultural regions, like Hawai'i, Singapore, and Japan, into a common category of "Asian Pacific" (Wesley-Smith and Goss 2010). Other scholars and theorists have developed entirely new critical frameworks, such as the global South, that allow us to understand overlaps and divergences in regions shaped by histories of the appropriation, colonization, and extraction of their knowledges, resources, and ways of life (Mahler 2018). Conference participants addressed the question of how we might interrogate critically the geographic boundaries of area studies disciplines and imagine different, historically produced spaces at a variety of scales from the local to the regional and transnational—including, and especially, the global South.

Colleagues in other area studies fields have developed innovative responses to the challenges of area studies' entrenched regional boundaries. Scholars who work on the interconnected regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have offered insightful reflections on Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff's (2016) provocative *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa*. These global South theorists map "the conditions under which Africa (the South) and China (the East) are trying to weave the paths that tie both regions in the present and in the future" (Mbembe 2012) and analyze a truly "a global order that is a multiple-entry scheme, a variegated, textured canvass, where 'global,' 'regional' and 'local' are not scales but rather various interrelated entangled dimensions and folds" (Obarrio 2012). We asked conference participants to consider how global South approaches revise, build on, and supplant Latin American studies' long history of building regionally specific scholarship. Can newer models like the global South retain Latin American studies' specialized knowledge rooted in local culture, language, and history, while always extending beyond Latin America to the postcolonial Third World? Do global South approaches provide new and fruitful ways of considering the linkages produced by commodity exchange, trade, and migration that can build on these previous Latin American/Latin American studies intellectual movements, bringing Latin American studies scholars into useful conversation with scholars located in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern studies?[1]

It is hard to dispute that area studies disciplines constituted political projects shaped by Cold War imperatives. However, we asked conference participants to consider how Latin American studies also contained counterhegemonic political possibilities often rooted in scholarship, methodologies, and artistic works produced in Latin America. Latin American studies became a disciplinary and institutional space for scholarship that was often leftist and anti-imperialist or identified with subaltern movements within Latin America, what Eduardo Mendieta (2005, 181) has referred to as "critical Latinamericanism." In addition, while it is certainly true that area studies programs have operated in their distinct silos with diverse and often unarticulated intellectual projects, Latin American studies has not historically been regionally confined in its intellectual reach. From 1960s liberation theology and dependency theory to contemporary "decolonial"

[1] See a discussion of these issues in Gupta et al. (2018); similar questions are historicized in Mahler (2018).

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critical theory, Latin America and Latin American studies have generated radical alternatives to and critiques of the imperial and Cold War models of area studies. Although regionally rooted, this intellectual trajectory was articulated to the anticolonial and anti-imperialist projects of an emerging revolutionary "Third World," in what today some scholars might describe as an iteration of the linkages and solidarities binding together the global South. For example, dependency theory and liberation theology shaped scholarship throughout the decolonizing world, focusing on Latin America's place in the global capitalist order or "world system," while works of criticism by Aníbal Quijano (1992), Walter Mignolo (2003, 2005, 2012), Arturo Escobar (Mignolo and Escobar 2010), and Ramón Grosfoguel (2012) on "decolonial" thinking have influenced scholarship on indigeneity and indigenous knowledge not only in Latin America but transnationally, from the United States to South Asia and Australia, producing heuristic conversations among scholars writing from the standpoints of postcolonial criticism and subaltern studies. Latin American studies confronts the question of how to retain this long tradition of Latin America–generated multi- and interdisciplinary intellectual work, often produced as critique of North American and European social science and criticism, even as it expands in transnational directions.

## Multidisciplinary Methodologies

Another goal of the conference was to place Latin American studies, and area studies programs more generally, which often practice multidisciplinary methods, in conversation with interdisciplinary programs like American, African American, Asian American, indigenous, and Latinx studies, or ethnic studies more broadly. These programs have much to offer area studies in terms of methodology and thematic frames, especially on matters of migration (forced and otherwise) and diaspora. In addition, while Latin American studies approaches have often been bound by a focus on the modern nation-state, frequently placed in comparative perspective, ethnic studies approaches offer ways of thinking about region and nation-statehood in terms that resist traditional categories of nation, language, and periodization. Like subaltern studies, these ethnic studies approaches follow the circuits of migration from Africa or Asia to Latin America, or within Latin America and the Caribbean, and unpack national identities and histories by emphasizing the intersection of various forms of difference and social hierarchy, from gender and sexuality to class and race, that fractured postcolonial nation building (Shukla and Tinsman 2007, 11–13; Mallon 1994).

Ethnic studies approaches, with their interdisciplinary and cultural studies approaches, much like the turn to subaltern studies during the 1990s, have often been received with suspicion both by the Latin American academy, bound by national preoccupations and the methodologies and concerns of individual disciplinary domains, and area studies programs, which have traditionally been shaped by the questions about development and democracy generated by Cold War area studies (Shukla and Tinsman 2007, 13; Trigo 2004a, 1–14; Mallon 1994). Our conference asked participants to consider what different ethnic studies disciplines might offer Latin American studies, both in terms of a model of truly interdisciplinary methodology and in terms of rethinking our very understanding of region and nation. As Abril Trigo (2004a, 9) argues, following Walter Mignolo, Nelly Richards, and others, Latin America has its own rich history of interdisciplinarity in which historians, literary scholars, sociologists, and anthropologists have often incorporated elements of each other's methodologies and theoretical frameworks. (For a recent example of such interdisciplinary work, see del Valle 2017.) Latin American scholars, often working at the intersection of these fields, have pioneered interdisciplinary approaches predicated on a political commitment to an alliance of intellectuals and subaltern subjects from campesinos, women, and workers to indigenous and Africa-descended people. An example of this might be the boom in *testimonio*, which served as an important genre for literary critics like John Beverley (1993), and a mode of producing social scientific and historical knowledge for Latin Americanist anthropologists and historians like Florencia Mallon (2005), whose work was based on key forms of collaboration with intellectuals and "subaltern subjects." Indeed, we might read the embrace of the testimonio (and oral history) in different Latin American studies disciplines as one way that Latin Americanists have engaged with both South Asian subaltern studies and feminist theory, given the importance of women's testimonios from Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Rigoberta Menchú to Rosa Isolde Reuque Paillalef (Beverley 1993, 2004, 2011; Barrios de Chungara 1978; Menchú Tom 1985; James 2001; Paillalef Reuque 2002).[2]

[2] Important critiques of the embrace of the testimonio genre as an alternative to other forms of disciplinary knowledge, both literary and historical, can be found in Sarlo (2006) and Moreiras (2001).

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In this dossier, Jafte Robles and Joanne Rappaport uncover an earlier Latin American precursor to subaltern studies, the boom in testimonios, and interdisciplinary approaches to Latin American studies in the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda and La Rosca, a group of social scientists engaged in politically committed "participatory action research" during the early 1970s. Fals Borda and La Rosca collaborated with campesino organizations in workshops that produced popular education materials that unearthed the histories of local struggles over land and resources. Fals Borda published the results of his research in the *Historia doble de la Costa*, which Robles and Rappaport argue serves as a "radical alternative to mainstream social sciences," especially the positivist and functionalist Latin American area studies scholarship generated in North America. In this important new study, Robles and Rappaport describe a key piece of the radical Latin American studies practices that emerged out of Marxist traditions within Latin America itself, and which included Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's dependency theory, the pedagogical methods of Paulo Freire, and liberation theology thinkers like Gustavo Gutiérrez. Particularly significant in the work of La Rosca was its interdisciplinarity, activism, and commitment to horizontal relationships between researchers and campesinos in recording local histories of past struggles over land in order to create a foundation for community building on haciendas invaded and occupied during the early 1970s. Fals Borda engaged with many of the issues scholars influenced by subaltern studies would later raise by organizing *Historia doble* in two channels, one containing theory, analysis, and historical context and a second in which campesinos "speak" through oral narratives, anecdotes, and documents, effectively "submerging" the reader in the campesinos' "epistemology" and building a "*ciencia popular*."

## Rethinking the Origins of Latin American Studies

Conference participants also considered how we can trace the genealogy of US Latin American studies as a disciplinary formation back from the Cold War to the period of US imperial expansion in the western hemisphere during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They examined its ties to the conquest and closing of the United States' western frontier and analyzed new research on the development of American studies as a discipline focused on the United States' hemispheric exceptionalism. Such work includes Ricardo Salvatore's (2016) examination of US scholarship on South America between 1900 and 1945 as a "disciplinary conquest" of regional knowledge foundational to the United States' hemispheric imperial projects and the formation of later Cold War Latin American studies.

In her article for this dossier, "Mexican Anthropology and Inter-American Knowledge," Karin Rosemblatt demonstrates the vital links between Mexican and US anthropology during the 1920s–1940s, an experience not so much of disciplinary conquest but of mutual influence and "inter-American" collaboration. Rosemblatt shows how Manuel Gamio worked to develop a local Mexican approach to anthropology and culture shaped by the concerns of early twentieth-century *indigenismo*. Although Gamio had trained in the United States with Franz Boas, he departed from Boas's focus on cultural "diffusion" by emphasizing in his research on Mexico's indigenous peoples that their evolution responded to particular histories and geographies. In addition, Gamio used both his and his colleagues' ethnographies and work for the state to build policies toward indigenous peoples that he viewed as a model for the United States and the Americas more generally. Even as he identified with the universalizing pretensions of North American and European social science, Gamio became increasingly dedicated to practicing ethnography at the local level. In so doing, his research methods recognized the diversity of indigenous society and even the diversity of possible paths to modernity. Gamio sought to produce research that would provide the foundation for a specific form of Mexican modernity rooted in its indigenous past. Among Gamio's collaborators was John Collier, a US anthropologist who looked to Mexico and Mexican ethnography to understand and build policy toward indigenous communities in the United States. Collier traveled to Mexico to work with indigenistas and adapt their practices, especially their work with local communities, to North American institutional and research frameworks. But Colliers's anthropological project became shaped by the imperatives of US military expansion during World War II. As a result, Collier's collaborations with Mexican anthropologists led to the design of policies to regulate Japanese internees in detention camps and, later, to the territories that were occupied by the United States after 1945. Rosemblatt thus illuminates the tensions in Gamio's ethnographic project of producing universally applicable, neutral social science and his embrace of the diversity of indigenous cultures in Mexico, as well as the ways in which Collier's use of Mexico and Mexican ethnography became subordinated to the agendas of United States foreign policy during World War II.

The work of historians like Rosemblatt and Salvatore (2016) pushes the origins of Latin American studies back to early twentieth-century social scientific projects that were tied to crucial moments of nation-state formation and imperial expansion. (For a recent review of some of the literature in this area, see

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Dosman 2017.) But literary scholars, influenced by postcolonial theory, have traced the genealogy of Latin American studies even further back. Influenced by the work of scholars such as Edward Said on the discursive project accompanying European imperial expansion, literary and cultural critics have sought to trace the development of "the idea of Latin America" to 1492 (Mignolo 2005). In so doing they have linked Renaissance/early modern conquests of indigenous spaces and Afro-Latin communities to the hegemonic rise of written knowledge and alphabetized literacy, accompanied by the expanding importance of the book in a post-Gutenberg world (Mignolo 2003). Other scholars, such as Alberto Moreiras (2001) and Román de la Campa (1999), have written critical accounts of "Latin Americanism," a Latin American variant of Said's Orientalism. This approach has provided a helpful, critical unpacking of the very notion that there is a Latin America that can be studied by tracing the epistemic constructions of Latin America, and their operation in the institutions of colonial and imperial expansion.[3]

A postcolonial critical focus on Latin Americanism or "Latin Americanisms" also permits an examination of ideas about Latin America built within the region itself, or what Moreiras (2001) refers to as "Latin American Latin Americanism" (Beverley 2011). We can trace genealogies of counternarratives of Latin America, its history, development, and modernity, produced within Latin America and often in opposition to the Latin Americanisms produced in the North American and European academies. This would be the case, for example, of José Martí's ([1891] 1973) "Nuestra América" and the tradition inaugurated by José Enrique Rodó's *arielista* writing directed explicitly at the idea of Latin America created during United States expansion in the western hemisphere during the late nineteenth century. Scholars like Alicia Ríos (2004, 15–34) argue that the Latin American *ensayista* (critical essay) genre, with notable nineteenth-century examples in the work of Andrés Bello, Rodó, and Martí, among others, represents an example of a particularly Latin American interdisciplinary intellectual tradition.

This approach does not reduce Latin American studies to a North American imperial and Cold War project but instead emphasizes the intellectual projects and methodologies that are produced by thinkers from Latin America. We can locate the work of Gilberto Freyre ([1936] 1986), José Vasconcelos ([1925] 1997), with their focus on *mestizaje* and racial mixture, or even Fernando Ortiz's (1940) invention of the category of "transculturation" in a similar interdisciplinary vein, articulated against North American conceptions of race and national culture; in turn, we see how thinkers like Vasconcelos erased evidence of indigenous knowledge production in the region, even as he sought to develop a framework that was indigenous to Latin America. As Ríos (2004, 15–34) argues, Ortiz's (1940) use of "transculturation" and his invocation of musical forms in "Cuban Counterpoint" provides a well-known example of a Latin America–generated project for studying culture and identity, as well as innovation in form. Here, we might place Fals Borda's radical sociological practice and innovations in form and methodology, described by Robles and Rappaport, or the anthropology of Manuel Gamio, described by Rosemblatt, in line with the long tradition of Latin American social scientific writing inaugurated by Ortiz (1940), Freyre ([1936] 1986), and others, noting the moments in which such frameworks change over time and in response to local and global movements.

## Subaltern Studies and Decolonial Scholarship

Finally, as scholars such as Mignolo (2003, 2005, 2012), Moreiras (2001), and Beverley (2011) have pointed out, lettered Latin Americanisms or ideas of Latin America produced by urban intellectuals, including those writing in the nineteenth-century *ensayista* tradition, operated on a model of internal colonialism, silencing "subaltern" voices, especially indigenous people, campesinos, and migrants from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. These patterns are not limited to imaginative fiction, creative work, or aesthetic traditions. Mallon (1994, 1492) sees them echoed in the scholarly practices of Latin Americanists who were "often Eurocentric in our borrowing from other historical or theoretical traditions." An important exception is the work of La Rosca, as Robles and Rappaport argue in this dossier. In building from the work of scholars in subaltern studies, such as Partha Chatterjee and Gayatri Spivak, Mignolo's (2012) proposal to "decolonize" knowledge or write criticism from the perspective of "subalternized knowledges" constitutes one approach to locating forms of knowledge production rooted in non-occidental, indigenous intellectual and cultural production (see also Mendieta 2005 and Trigo 2004b, 347). As Mignolo argued in his keynote address at the University of Virginia conference, these decolonial practices can be traced to the moment of encounter between Africans, Amerindians, Asians, and Europeans in the colonial Americas. For example, in his study of New World writing systems and indigenous literacies in the sixteenth and seventeenth

[3] See Beverley (2011, 43–59) for a review of the origins of the category of "Latin Americanism." See also Mignolo (2003, 2005), Moreiras (2001), De la Campa (1999), and Mendieta (2005).

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centuries, Mignolo (2003) contends that by combining visual and alphabetic writing in his *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, writer-artist Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (1615–1616) provides an alternative definition of aesthetic, cartographic, and spiritual knowledges.

Writers such as Guaman Poma de Ayala, and their decolonial work, invite us to reconsider the relationship between Latin American studies and Spanish departments, which have often focused on literature written in Spanish, following Castilian conventions. Some sixty years ago, Enrique Anderson Imbert (1954, 8) defined the field of Latin American literature in these terms: "We will not even concern ourselves with cultural phenomena that are adjacent to literature: folklore, oratory, journalism, philosophy, criticism. . . . Literature, only literature. And the literature that we are going to study is the literature that which in America was written in Spanish." ("Ni siquiera nos ocuparemos de los fenómenos culturales próximos a la literatura: folklore, oratoria, periodismo, filosofía, crítica. . . . Literatura, solo literatura. Y la literatura que vamos a estudiar es la que, en América, se escribió en español.") In recent years, critical work on Latin America, based on texts written in indigenous languages such as Nahuatl, Huastec, Mixtec, Zapotec, Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní, and the thirty Mayan languages that form a single language family, despite varying degrees of mutual intelligibility, has challenged the field in needed ways. By focusing on creative and intellectual work produced in languages other than Spanish or Portuguese, indigenous artists, activists, and intellectuals have led colleagues across the disciplines to reconsider some of the foundational terms in Latin American studies, including the definition of Latin America itself. If scholars now more or less agree that language cannot define literary and cultural studies in the Americas, even though academic departments retain language-specific titles like the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, what might take its place?

Arturo Arias offers one such response in his essay "From Indigenous Literatures to Native American and Indigenous Theorists: The Makings of a Grassroots Decoloniality." In the essay, published in this dossier, Arias analyzes the publication history of creative work in indigenous languages from 1992 to the present, showing how Native American decolonialists have developed theoretical concepts, political movements, and aesthetic traditions that go largely unacknowledged in decolonial scholarship produced in North American academies. Using Central American novels, short stories, and poetry as his starting point, Arias considers overlaps and divergences in artistic practices and theoretical frameworks in indigenous traditions around the world, including the works of Māori thinkers like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Qhiswa philosophers like Fausto Reinaga, and Aymara scholars like Esteban Ticona Alejo. The research paradigms and practices advanced by Tuhiwai Smith (2012) in *Decolonizing Methodologies* are different from the creative work of individual writers and collective authorial bodies, such as Kaqla, a collective of feminist Maya writers working from Iximuleu, Guatemala. And yet, while accounting for these differences, Arias shows a consistent through-line of decolonial aesthetics and philosophies that are rooted in local forms of advocacy and activism. In ways that recall the activist research methods of Fals Borda and La Rosca, the artists and intellectuals who Arias studies insist on a model of knowledge production that is grounded in indigenous cosmovisions, languages, and ways of being in the world. These decolonial movements raise an important question for the future of Latin American studies. If traditional categories like aesthetics, culture, geography, and language cannot define the field, what and where is Latin America? And how will we study it?

## Author Information

Allison Bigelow is assistant professor of colonial Latin American literature in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Virginia. With fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and Huntington Library in 2017–2018, she has recently completed her book manuscript, *Cultural Touchstones: Mining, Refining, and the Languages of Empire in the Early Americas* (committed to the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture for the University of North Carolina Press). Her 2012–2014 postdoctoral fellowship at the Omohundro Institute was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Thomas Klubock is professor of history and director of the Latin American Studies Program at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *La Frontera: Forests and Ecological Conflict in Chile's Frontier Territory* (Duke University Press, 2014), winner of the Bolton-Johnson Book Prize from the Conference on Latin American History, the Bryce Wood Book Award from the Latin American Studies Association (corecipient), and the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Award, presented by the Forest History Society to the Best Book on forest and conservation history. He is also the author of *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904–1951* (Duke University Press, 1998) and coeditor of *The Chile Reader: History, Culture, and Politics* (Duke University Press, 2013).

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