Field Notes

Mount Vesuvius and Pompeii

(Pompeii, Italy)
Table of Contents

Faculty Highlight
Dr. Hugo Benavides, Department Chair. 3-4

Cubaan Art Today
Cuban artist, Rafael Villares. 7-8

Cura Personalis and the Rights and Dignity of Pregnant People
5-6

Adjunct Faculty News
Dr. Reiko Matsuda Goodwin’s work with the Primate Conservation Training Program in the Republic of Benin. 9

New Summer Course Offerings
New and exciting courses being offered for the Summer semester. 10-12
Dr. Benavides is Professor of Anthropology, Latin American and Latino studies, and, International Political Economy and Development, at Fordham University, as well as, Chair of the Sociology & Anthropology Department. He also was the founding director of the Liberal Arts Program at Fordham’s London Center at Kensington. His research has been supported by grants from the Woodrow Wilson National Foundation, National Science Foundation, Wenner-Gren Foundation, Social Science Research Council and the Andrew R. Mellon Foundation. His initial interest in the past provided him an extensive archaeological practice excavating both Inca sites in the Andes and the Roman site of Pompeii in Italy. This initial interest in the politics of the past is present in his first book, Making Ecuadorian Histories: Four Centuries of Defining the Past, (University of Texas Press, 2004), which is a study of the role of history in legitimizing the transnational concerns of Latin American social movements, including the state. His second book, The Politics of Sentiment: Remembering and Imagining Guayaquil, is a case-study of Raymond William’s hypothesis of structures of feeling as a tool of internal domination (UT Press, 2006). His third book, Drugs, Thugs and Divas: Latin American Telenovelas and Narco-Dramas, (UT Press, 2008) investigates the cultural dynamics of melodrama as it is used to re-signify the changing legacy of Latin American identity in a transnational context. He has written over 40 articles which have appeared in edited volumes and scholarly journals.

As Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology department, Dr. Benavides has been keen on inviting guest speakers to share their knowledge with Fordham students. In February (2016), Rafael Villares, Cuban artist, came to visit, taught a class and offered a lecture on his work and the state of art in Cuba today. Villares has produced art work and exhibitions that have appeared at the well-known Havana Biennial Exhibition. This guest visit was also made possible by the generous support of Profs. Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé (Director of LALSI) and Barbara Mundy and Joanna Isaak (both from the Art History Department).
He will be on a faculty fellowship next Fall semester, which will allow him to carry out several projects, including start working on a project on the politics of hybridity in London. As part of this work he has been invited to spend several weeks at Wiser (Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research) at the University of the Witswatersrand in Johannesburg. Prof. Benavides interest in South Africa is part of his long term commitment to expanding South-South comparisons which has led him to work with the Mellon Mays Program and SSRC (Social Science Research Council) in supporting South African students in their graduate school endeavors, and also spend a couple of Summers working with the Spanish Program at the University of Pretoria. During his multiple visits, Dr. Benavides has had the opportunity to gain knowledge of the national academic structure and a sense of the daily reality of life in South Africa. All of this has contributed to Dr. Benavides’s continuing research, to understand the politics of history, popular culture and globalization, particularly as it stems out of the re-articulation of postcolonial identity dynamics. Throughout his upcoming sabbatical, he will spend time understanding and studying how post-colonial studies have contributed to our understanding of how difference was an essential component of colonial governance and continues to be central in hegemonic powers confronting us today. After his stay in South Africa, Dr. Benavides will travel to London to continue his work.

In addition to his upcoming sabbatical, Dr. Benavides has been organizing a panel abroad and collaborating with various universities and schools. Currently, he is organizing a panel for the conference, Teoria arqueologica de America del Sur (TAAS VIII), “El rol del otro en la constitución del sujeto histórico latinoamericano: La pluralista y subversiva producción de identidades y discursos,” in La Paz, Bolivia in May 2016. He was previously a panelist at TAAS VII conference in San Felipe, Chile in October 2014. In October 2015, Dr. Benavides led a week-long seminar, “Género y Teoría Queer,” for faculty in Ecuador’s Jesuit University, Universidad Católica. Dr. Benavides is also working on a project to explore and compare the Irish and the Mexican experience in New York City. This is a tri-national project with faculty and undergraduate students from Fordham University, Maynooth University in Ireland (Profs. Lawrence Taylor and Mark Maguire) and Puebla Iberoamericana University in Mexico (Profs. Marcela Ibarra and Olivia Quiroz). The research project focuses on exploring and comparing the respective immigrant experience of recent (late 20th-early 21st century) Irish and Puebla Mexicans in NYC. The hope is to launch this project by Spring 2017.

Aside from collaborating with universities, Dr. Benavides has been working with Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship, a junior high school in the Bronx. Up to now this has included mentoring students, having them attend athletic games and plays at Fordham University, as well as, taking the students to visit New York City’s Metropolitan museum and Brooklyn museums (with Dr. Benavides as their guide).
On Tuesday, February 2nd, a panel of experts gathered at Fordham to speak about "cura personalis" (concern for the rights and dignity of the whole person) as it applies to the rights and dignity of pregnant persons, most of whom are women. More than 100 people, mostly Fordham students, attended the event.

The event, "Cura Personalis and the Rights and Dignity of Pregnant People," was organized by our very own Dr. Jeanne Flavin, Professor of Sociology, and Hailey Flynn of the Fordham Chapter of Law Students for Reproductive Justice. The panel was made up of Julie Burkhart (Trust Women), Soffiyah Elijah (Correctional Association of New York) and Lynn Paltrow (National Advocates for Pregnant Women). American Studies and Women's Studies also co-sponsored the event.

Ms. Burkhart described opening clinics that provide abortion, prenatal care, and other reproductive health services in the Midwest. State policies requiring dual parental consent, mandatory ultrasounds, waiting periods, and expensive and unnecessary facility modifications often make it difficult to provide and meet the needs of the person coming in for health care. Doctors also face harassment and marginalization that can pose a barrier to providing continuity of care to patients. Burkhart described a need for broad access to contraception as well as repeal of laws and policies that create barriers for the pregnant women seeking services.
Ms. Elijah described some of Correctional Association of New York's work monitoring conditions in prisons. "Nothing in prison vaguely resembles cura personalis," she observed. Shackling of pregnant women is a dangerous practice. There is a high risk of falling or tripping and the worry and stressors may lead to anxiety which may in turn affect the health of the woman and her fetus. As the result of the advocacy of Correctional Association of New York and other organizations, the New York State Department of Corrections now prohibits shackling of incarcerated pregnant women. Elijah states that while progress has been made in terms of anti-shackling legislation, incarcerated women continue to need better care, including access to medical care and contraception, greater respect for their right to privacy and attention to the needs of older women, including those in menopause.

Ms. Paltrow shared her knowledge on fundamental laws and policies that are negatively affecting pregnant women every day noting that “More than 39 states [have] gender discriminatory advanced directive laws” and that the United States is one of two countries that does not have paid maternity leave. Due to these set policies, many women are unable to make their own decisions regarding their pregnancy. Paltrow also remarked upon the comparisons of abortions to slavery and genocide. Such rhetoric defames pregnant women at the same time as it distorts and erases the reality of what slavery and genocide actually are. Paltrow encourages people to defend the rights and dignity of pregnant women, whether they plan to go to term, seek to have an abortion, or experience a pregnancy loss.
Rafael Villares, a visiting visual artist from Cuba, spent the week of February 8th at Fordham. He spoke with students about his work at Professor JoAnna Isaak’s Art and Ecology class on Tuesday, and capped off the week with a well-attended presentation at Flom Auditorium in Walsh Library on Friday, February 12th.

Villares, born 1989 in Havana, is a graduate of Cuba’s oldest and most prestigious art school, Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes “San Alejandro” and completed his graduate work at the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana. His main body of work includes site-specific installations that invite viewers to participate in the artwork, and often concern the relationship of human beings to their environment. For many city dwellers, the plants they tend in clay pots on a windowsill provide their closest contact with nature. To take this quotidian and intimate experience and move it into the public urban sphere, he created “Moving Landscape,” in 2012. He planted a giant pot with a ficus tree and set a bench at the tree's base, and then suspended the pot from a crane. People walking along Havana’s famous seawall, the Malecón, could climb up to sit on the bench, and from there, experience the city from a new place. The pot was moved to two other sites in the city, offering different perspectives on the urban sphere. About the work, Villares said, “art can change your reality.”

Moving Landscape, 2012.
Villares connects his work to a long tradition of art about the landscape, a constant theme in Cuban painting. But instead of beginning with a canvas, he begins, he said, with the question, “how do we redefine the notion of landscape?” He described a recent work, “Chromatic Storm,” as beginning with his desire to capture the experience of a tropical storm. Installed in the poor community of Casa Blanca, across the harbor from Havana, the work is a small open room outdoors. Viewers are invited to enter as colored water rains down from the ceiling, and every five days the water is replaced with new water of a different color. In another work just exhibited in Portland, Oregon, he installed the root system of an uprooted tree from local woods to make a base. Into the tree base, he installed a photographic image of a night landscape of Havana where a fork of lightning strikes a building. But the shape of the lightning was manipulated to create the shape of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. In making this work, Villares wanted to underscore the parallels seen in nature, as the forks of lightning resonate with the root system of the tree, and on a metaphoric level, to connect Cuban culture, symbolized by the uprooted tree, to the diasporic flows of its peoples.

Some of the students in the audience had already met Villares during visits to his studio in Havana, either during the 2015 study tour on Contemporary Cuban Culture led by Professor Cruz-Malavé (Modern Languages and Literature) in March of 2015, or in the March, 2013 study tour on Art and Architecture of Havana, led by Professors Mundy (Art History) and Benavides (Sociology and Anthropology). The studio visit was one of the highlights of these Havana courses. Villares' visit to Fordham was made possible by support from LALS, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Department of Art History and Music.
During the winter break Dr. Reiko Matsuda Goodwin, Adjunct Professor of Anthropology, along with Dr. Célestin Kouakou of Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS) were invited as instructors of the week-long Primate Conservation Training Program in the Republic of Benin. 15 practitioners (students and researchers belonging to local conservation organizations) participated as trainees. The lectures were held at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture at Abomey-Calavi and field-work training was done at the Drabo Forest and Lama Forest that harbor some endangered primate species. Dr. Matsuda Goodwin taught various issues related to the conservation and research of West African primates.
New Summer Course Offerings

CROSSING BORDERS:
Migrations, sexuality and gender (LALS 3602)

PLACE & DATE
Lincoln Center (LC)
July 5 - August 4
Session 1, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

PROFESSOR:
Maria Amelia Viteri, Ph.D.
(Professor/Researcher at University of San Francisco,
Quito and Visiting Scholar, Fordham University)

This course uses an anthropological and border analytical framework to address the construction of meanings around home, identities and bodies, considering how borders have served many purposes in defining citizenship, belonging and space, and in delimiting sexual and gender discourses transnationally. It reviews contemporary theories and methodologies, and examines changing concepts around gender and sexual identities within a cultural and social perspective. Together we will identify in the city itself through community engagement how gender, sexuality and migration is produced as it help us re-think our own understandings and practices.
New Summer Course Offerings

GOD IN A BOX:
The Quest for Religious Meaning Through Film

Summer Session II -- Rose Hill Campus

GOD IN A BOX is an introduction to the basic concepts of the sociology of religion using a wide range of films, from early silent classics to documentaries to foreign films to today's reality TV series. Combining rigorous analysis of selected films as well as supplementary readings, we gain a better understanding of the nature of religious belief and nonbelief, of community and family, of ritual, of conversion, and of the relationship between religion and politics. Our focus is on the Judeo-Christian tradition and our approach is interdisciplinary, centered on sociological thought but also drawing on film theory, history, philosophy, and psychology. No prerequisites are required, but the course is demanding in terms of reading, writing, and class participation.

Prof. Alan Edelstein

African Christianity Rising

African Christianity by sociologist James Ault

The Jazz Singer, the landmark Hollywood film about the rebellious cantor's son (1927)
## Summer Course Offerings

### Summer Session I

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
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