

# MACLAS

## Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

### Message from the President

Recent political events in Latin America showcase the power of social transformations, the theme of our upcoming conference. Social instability and political violence drove record number of people to emigrate from Venezuela, Haiti, and other countries. Voters in Guatemala chose as President Bernardo Arévalo, the son of Guatemala's first elected president whose social reforms motivated the U.S-led coup in 1964 and ensuing state terror. Other politicians supporting social justice have been assassinated (Villavicencio in Ecuador) or frustrated (Boric in Chile or Petro in Colombia). The Green Wave movement helped decriminalize abortion in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico. Mexico seems destined to have its first female president ever with next year's elections.

While these events are recent, scholars can trace how they result from past challenges and attempted change in Latin America. I look forward to hearing about your projects as a poster or presentation during the March 2024 conference. Page 2 has more details. Proposals are due October 20.

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# Call for Proposals.

## MACLAS 2024,

### Colgate University March 15 and 15 2024

## **Hemispheric Horizons: Publics, Power, and Place in the Americas.**

Significant challenges confront Latin American countries as the world emerges from the pandemic fog and into an era of substantial transformation. Political institutions at times fail to broker compromise, instead leading to coups, attempted insurrections, and election of authoritarian leaders from the Right or Left. Yet the broad contours of such challenges are not unknown to countries in the Americas. The region's authors and artists have long interpreted the impact of such challenges. How can Latin American societies draw on extant knowledge and past experiences to best meet challenges appearing on the horizon?

While MACLAS encourages papers and posters that engage with the conference themes, all submissions are encouraged. Proposals for virtual or in-person presentations are welcome. MACLAS seeks scholarship from a wide array of disciplines, perspectives, and topic areas in Latin American studies, including pedagogy. Undergraduate and graduate students are welcome to participate.



SCAN ME

Proposals are due by Friday, October 20, 2023.

Scan the QR code to or visit: <https://maclas2024.exordo.com>

## Research for Resistance:

### Patricia Rodriguez's Environmental Advocacy at Earthworks.

A year ago, former MACLAS President Patricia Rodriguez (2019-2020) accepted a job at Earthworks documenting pollution from oil and gas firms in the Global South. Your current leader spoke with Patricia about her new role.

1) How do you document oil and gas pollution and in which countries?

Soon after I started at Earthworks, I became a certified optical gas imaging thermographer. I got trained in operating cooled OGI infrared cameras which are designed to visualize methane, toluene, butane, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which cannot be seen with the naked eye. I learned about the operations of the oil and gas industry with co-workers in places like the Texas and New Mexico Permian regions and in Colorado, where fracking and conventional oil drilling is intense.

I then started doing research on which organizations and communities in the Global South could utilize this evidence in their own resistance to the socio-environmental and health impacts and began a pilot project in three countries: Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina. These are countries currently at different stages in the extractive process, but also in the process of establishing regulations that could diminish the intensity of methane pollution from oil and gas. Throughout the next years, there will be further fieldwork in Mexico, and other countries where grassroots organizing is calling out the industry.

2) What are some of the most important impacts oil and gas pollution has on local communities?

Air, water and soil contamination is pervasive, and often the most affected communities are in territories where Indigenous, Black, and people of color live. In Argentina, one of the most eye-opening findings is that exploitation of gas and oil is so intense in the Vaca Muerta region, but its scale is really grasped when we understand how many oil and gas pipelines are being built from Vaca Muerta to so many places throughout the country, and how connected it all is with the petrochemical industry. Impoverished communities and residents in these places are incredibly affected in their health (suffering from diseases such as cancer and many respiratory problems)

## Research for Resistance (continued).

and in their ability to access clean water. Environmental defenders are also being attacked, threatened, killed due to greed, corruption and political violence, and there needs to be much more attention to the root causes of these problems.

3) Which multinationals or state firms are the biggest polluters?

Majority state owned companies like Petrobras, Ecopetrol and YPF are definitely big polluters. Multinationals like Total Energies, Shell, Tecpetrol and so many others as well also emit methane and VOCs without much public knowledge that it is happening. More attention to the details of what energy production means and what alternatives there are to corporate dominance is important.

4) In what ways can scholars contribute to the analysis of and action against pollution by the oil industry?

I think doing interesting research on the political and socioenvironmental and human rights issues related to corporate abuses is important, but we are at a point in the climate crisis where the debate needs to go beyond the green growth vs. degrowth or post-growth theorizing for instance. Having direct experience with, listening to, and prioritizing policy and advocacy analyses where decision-making by frontline and most-vulnerable community voices and ideas are central is even more important.

5) What advice would you offer to scholars thinking about increasing their political activism or making a career switch to an activist position?

It might initially be scary to make the move out of academia, but there are skills learned and people met through the process that can make it incredibly rewarding. It gives you some freedom and real opportunities to work on systemic change in ways that academia does not so much allow. The advice would be: don't dismiss grassroots or non-governmental work as idealistic or such. Collaborative work is pretty inspiring, often, and research and writing is part of it too.

## Tips for Travel to the 2024 Conference at Colgate University: Transportation, hotels, and local attractions .



Our host for the 2024 conference, Colgate University, is one of the world's leading Liberal Arts institutions, located in the village of Hamilton, NY. See <https://www.colgate.edu/>

Travel options include driving (roughly four hours from Philadelphia), riding Amtrack to the Utica station, or flying into the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. Colgate University offers a free shuttle open to the public around campus and Hamilton, but it does not reach the airport or train station. An Uber ride from the airport to Colgate or Hamilton might cost \$50.

MACLAS has secured a block of 80 rooms at HotelOne75, which is roughly one mile from campus (see <https://www.hotelone75.com/>) . Rooms are \$169/night and must be reserved at least one month prior to the conference. More lodging options can be found at <https://www.colgate.edu/about/about-hamilton-ny/hotels-accommodations>.

## Encourage your colleagues to join MACLAS.

Joining MACLAS means joining a relatively small, regional, cross-disciplinary, and eminently collegial network of engaged researchers in your own backyard. It means becoming part of a larger community of scholars connected by their shared interest in things Latin American. It also means:

- Publication possibilities in the peer-reviewed *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies*
- Awards for the publication of articles and books
- Professional leadership opportunities on the elected Executive Committee
- Sponsorship of outstanding graduate and undergraduate student researchers
- Research funding

## MACLAS Prize committee positions are available.

It feels great to give someone a prize! Please consider volunteering to serve on one of the MACLAS prize committees. These are unelected positions that are available now.

We have openings for:

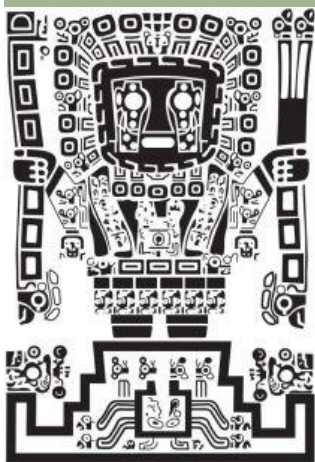
- The Harold Eugene Davis Prize: The Davis Prize is awarded each year for best book chapter or article published in the previous two years by a member in good standing for the past two years.
- The Arthur P. Whitaker Prize: The Arthur P. Whitaker Prize is awarded each year for the best book published in the previous two years by a MACLAS member in good standing for the past two years.

Contact Amanda Frantz-Mamani ([frantzmamani@pennwest.edu](mailto:frantzmamani@pennwest.edu)) if you are interested.



# MACLAS Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies

[www.maclas.org](http://www.maclas.org)



The **Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies** is comprised of scholars, researchers, teachers, students, and interested professionals in all disciplines and pursuits from the region comprised of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. MACLAS has as its objectives promoting and developing interest in Latin American Studies and affairs. The organization was founded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1979.

## MACLAS Executive Council

### OFFICERS

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**VICE PRESIDENT:** Amanda Frantz-Mamani, Penn West University (2023-2024).

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Meghan McInnis-Dominguez, University of Delaware (2023-2026)

Your name here, Home Institution (2024-2027).  
Contact Brian Potter ([potter@tcnj.edu](mailto:potter@tcnj.edu)) for information.

### WEBMASTER

Gloria Clark, Penn State University