

Focus on the Faculty

From popular piety in Mexico to the poetics of culture in nineteenth-century Brazil to the role of images in shaping identity, the range of interests of the faculty profiled here continues to reflect the breadth of Latin American studies at the University of Texas.



Matthew Butler

The cristero war in 1920s Mexico divided the peasantry into opposing factions that were staunchly loyal to either the Catholic Church or the Revolution; it is a subject that continues to engage UT History Professor Matthew Butler. His book *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico's Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927–1929* (Oxford University Press, 2004) offers a new interpretation of this civil war by showing how peasant allegiances often resulted from genuinely religious antagonisms rather than simple class or political interests.

As Butler explains, “I was attracted to the cristero uprising by the passions it still provokes and by the apparently improbable fact of a war of religion breaking out in the

twentieth-century Americas, even in a country as ‘Catholic’ as Mexico. Cristero and revolutionary peasants often were understood and denounced in terms of their respective bad faith, and at least in that sense they were alike. But as I began to work in the archives and talk to veterans in villages in Michoacán, the rebellion began to reveal its own cultural logic. Instead, I began to see campesinos on both sides as bearers of distinctive religious traditions, some of them incredibly old, which were politicized in a divisive, tragic way by the Mexican Revolution. The rebellion was caused by a failure of religious as well as political pluralism, starting at the top but reaching all the way to the grassroots. The cristero war still has something to teach us, given that religious questions are still rarely far from the news in Mexico.”

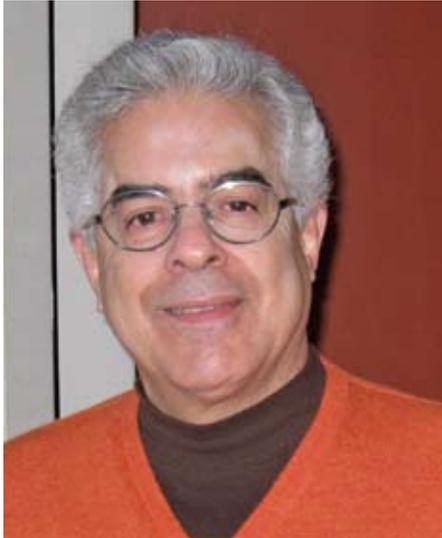
As Associate Professor of History at UT, Matthew teaches courses on the Mexican Revolution, on Church and State, and on peasant politics in Latin America. His research focuses on post-revolutionary Mexico, and he is currently writing a second manuscript on the “revolutionary” Church of Patriarch Pérez that is under pre-contract with the University of New Mexico Press. He came to the History Department from Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 2008. Prior to Queen’s, he was a Junior Research Fellow of Churchill College, University of Cambridge. Matthew earned his Ph.D. from the University of Bristol in 2000 and attended Cambridge on a postdoctoral award from the British Academy.

While at Queen’s University, he organized a 2005 conference that resulted in the volume *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), of which he is editor. When asked how he is adapting to life at the University of Texas, Matthew responds, “UT is a fabulous and enriching place to be a Mexicanist, given the treasures of the Benson Collection and the diversity of the faculty. That also means that very strong graduate students come here to do exciting research on Mexico, whether that means unearthing the roots of Mexican Protestantism or revising the legacies of Zapatismo. Our students do important, vital work that will make a real contribution to the field; and they want to engage with Mexico as both a country and an academic community—it’s a privilege to work with the inspiring students here at UT.”

Ivan Prado Teixeira

Lozano Long Professor in Latin American Literature and Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Ivan Teixeira is a well-known Latin American literary critic and public intellectual, with a specialty in Brazilian literature. Professor Teixeira came to the University of Texas in early 2008, where he earlier had been a Visiting Professor. He previously taught at the Universidade de São Paulo, where he earned his Ph.D., and at the Anglo Vestibulares in São Paulo.

Professor Teixeira’s research is focused on the rhetorical and historical study of literature, looking for the poetics of culture in different



periods, such as the Brazilian colonial era and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. He is a prolific writer, highly regarded for his many publications, and has written more than 130 articles, which include essays and reviews in refereed journals, newspapers, and magazines. Professor Teixeira also has edited eleven canonical books of Portuguese and Brazilian literature, with substantial introductions and critical notes. Among them are *Auto da Barca do Inferno* by Gil Vicente, *Música do Parnaso* by Botelho de Oliveira, *Obras Poéticas* by Basílio da Gama, and *Papéis Avulsos* by Machado de Assis. In addition, he has published three book chapters in Portugal, France, and Germany, and fourteen book chapters in Brazil. He also conceptualized and directs two series of classic texts on Brazilian and Portuguese literature, one for the University of São Paulo Press and the other for Ateliê Editorial.

His widely acclaimed study of the art and culture during the government of the Marquis of Pombal, *Mecenato Pombalino e Poesia Neoclássica*, is a prize-winning book in Brazil and the U.S. Teixeira is also the author of one of the most popular books on Brazil's greatest writer: *Apresentação de Machado de Assis*, published by Martins Fontes Company.

Professor Teixeira's courses thus far cover a wide range: Modern Literature after Brazil's Independence; Studies in Brazilian Twentieth-Century Poetry; Luso-Brazilian Civilization and Culture: Classical Letters in Colonial Brazil; Two Significant Moments in Brazilian Letters: Machado de Assis and Carlos Drummond de Andrade; and The Brazilian Short Story: A Survey.

During his time at the University of Texas, Professor Teixeira has written another book (in press) on Machado de Assis, one of his deepest and most enduring interests. The author believes it presents some unexpected revelations and a new approach to the old, but always fresh, subject. In one chapter, he undertakes a comparison between Poe's short story "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether" and Assis's "O Alienista." In another, he studies the relationship of both authors to the literary magazines of their time.

Regarding his philosophy, Professor Teixeira says, "I strongly share the view that the ideal scholar should do his or her best to keep the balance between research and teaching. I also think that undergraduate courses should be given the same attention as those on the graduate level." He adds, "As in everything that really counts in life, I believe that good teaching derives from a balance between knowledge and commitment."



Roberto Tejada

In his comprehensive study of Mexican photography, *National Camera: Photography and Mexico's Image Environment*, art historian/poet/translator Roberto Tejada shows how images have shaped identities in Mexico, the U.S., and their shared borderlands, an intersection he refers to as the shared image environment. In exploring the works of such artists as Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Edward Weston, Tina Modotti, Marius de Zayas, and Julien Levy, among others, he shows how image making reflects and interprets issues of territory, sexuality, and social and ethnic relations.

A Ph.D. of the State University of New York

at Buffalo, Tejada is Associate Professor of Art and Art History at the University of Texas. He came to UT in fall 2008 from the University of California, San Diego. Tejada was born in Los Angeles and spent more than ten years living and working in Mexico City, where he founded the journal *Mandorla: New Writing from the Americas*, focusing on advanced poetry and translation. He now coedits the journal with his colleagues Kris Dykstra (Associate Professor, Illinois State University) and Gabriel Bernal Granados (author and independent scholar, Mexico City). A widely published poet and literary translator, Tejada is author of *Mirrors for Gold* (written during his stay in Mexico), *Luis Gispert/Loud Image*, and a study of artist Celia Álvarez Muñoz for the series *A Ver: Revisioning Art History*. He also is author of *Exposition Park*, forthcoming from Wesleyan University Press.

In 2008 Tejada was granted an Arts Writers Award by the Creative Capital Andy Warhol Foundation, which supports writers whose work addresses contemporary art, "in recognition of both the financially precarious situation of arts writers and their indispensable contribution to a vital artistic culture." He previously received a National Endowment for the Arts literature award in 2007 for translation of a selection of poems by mid-century modernist Cuban writer José Lezama Lima. Tejada is currently working on a translation of the poet's posthumous collection, *Los fragmentos a su imán*, which he has rendered as *The Fragments Drawn by Charm*.

Regarding his diverse interests in art history, photography, and visual culture analysis, Tejada says, "I regard my commitment to the visual as a series of questions whose answers can't be found alone within the disciplinary margins of art history, cultural studies, or critical theory on the one hand, nor by means of my practice as a poet on the other. By finding the permeable contact points between disciplinary limits, I examine not only visual culture's various media as technological effects formative of value and knowledge, and constitutive of the modern historical record itself; I rehearse the different identities and modes of representation that other modernisms made available by way of geographical location and the accounts those places contain—a modernism high and low insofar as the different kinds of discourses that form part of what I call the image environment are as important as those designated as art." ✨