

A Commitment to Excellence: Our Latin Americanist Faculty

Focusing on issues from vote-buying in elections to urban criminality, the social consequences of mass deportation of immigrants to cultural identity of Asians in the Americas, the faculty profiled below are recognized for their excellence in teaching, to the benefit of Latin American Studies at UT.



Kenneth F. Greene

In a year when both Mexico and the U.S. are preparing for the 2012 presidential elections, Prof. Ken Greene's background in democratization, political parties, elections, and voting behavior is especially relevant. The UC Berkeley PhD has been on the faculty of the University of Texas Department of Government since 2003. Greene is author of the prize-winning *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2007; new in paper, 2009), which examines why dominant parties around the globe, including Mexico's PRI, remained in power for so many decades and why nearly all of them were voted out by century's end.

His current work on Mexico investigates a key issue in the dynamic of vote-buying. Most payoffs to voters occur before elections, so why would voters follow through on their part of the bargain once in the voting booth?

Do they fear that politicians know how they vote and will sanction them for going back on the clientelist deal, reminiscent of the bad old days under authoritarian rule? Or do voters comply because they feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate favors? Greene says that the answer has deep implications for how clientelism works and how public policies can combat its incidence. To research these themes, he put together a binational team and is principal investigator on the Mexico 2012 Panel Study that has applied for major funding from the National Science Foundation. He also has benefited from three Mellon Summer Research Grants from LLILAS that permitted important pilot fieldwork for the project.

Dr. Greene has been a visiting faculty fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Kellogg Institute of International Studies and at Georgetown University's Center for Democracy and the Civil Society as well as the Department of Political Science. He has been acknowledged with a Liberal Arts Council Teaching Award for "an outstanding commitment to students both within and beyond the classroom" and by the American Political Science Association and Pi Sigma Alpha "for outstanding teaching in political science," both in 2009. This year, he was awarded the Raymond Dickson Centennial Endowed Teaching Fellowship in "recognition of exemplary performance and commitment to teaching" by the College of Liberal Arts.

Regarding his role as a professor at UT, his obsession with cycling, and his life in Austin, Dr. Greene says, "Good students, good colleagues, the Benson Library, and an avid road-racing community—what could be better?"

Lorraine Leu

Lorraine Leu is Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Texas with a longtime interest in cultural studies. Her current research project is a social and cultural history of urban criminality and its cinematic representation in Rio de Janeiro, which she plans to publish as the book *Cinema, Crime and the City: Banditry in Rio de Janeiro*. It explores the interrelationships between urban spaces, their social meanings, and their cultural production in the context of criminal behavior, and will critique forms of spatial and representational politics that relate to subaltern groups such as Rio's Afro-descendant underclass.

A PhD of King's College, University of London, Dr. Leu previously taught at the University of Bristol, where she was chair of Hispanic, Portuguese, and Latin American Studies. Prior to that, she taught at Middlesex University, where she was Coordinator of the Centre for Brazilian Studies. A dual citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and Great Britain, Dr. Leu draws



from multiple cultural history disciplines, including music and film history, cultural anthropology, geohistory, and urban studies. Her first book, *Brazilian Popular Music: Caetano Veloso and the Regeneration of Tradition* (Ashgate, 2006), was selected by The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory as one of the most important books in the field in 2008.

Since 2000 she has been an editor of the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*. A faculty member at UT since January 2011, she teaches courses in Brazilian studies and cinema and cultural identity of urban Brazil. Regarding her time here, she says, "I've already benefitted from considerable support provided by LLILAS and my department for research and teaching initiatives. I think that UT offers one of the most dynamic environments in the country, and even internationally, for the study of Latin America."

Néstor Rodríguez

In 1996, with the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the U.S. government implemented a policy of massive deportations, which rose from 50,000 in 1995 to 393,000 in 2009. More than two-thirds are Mexicans, with Central Americans next.

Néstor Rodríguez, Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas, is the faculty coordinator of the LLILAS Faculty-Led Research Initiative on Social Consequences of the U.S. Policy of Massive Deportations, an issue he has long been passionate about. LLILAS faculty associates and students, in collaboration with Mexican and Central American researchers, are undertaking a pilot study that will examine the effects of these deportations on migrants, their families, and their communities.

Dr. Rodríguez wrote about migration issues in a previous issue of *Portal* (see "Latin American Developments in the 'Age of Migration,'" issue no. 4, 2008–2009, pp. 8–11). A UT Austin PhD, he joined the faculty here in 2008 after more than 20 years at the University of Houston, where he was chair of the Department of Sociology and co-director of the Center for Immigration Research.

In 2007, Dr. Rodríguez testified before a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee on the consequences of U.S. deportations of immigrants to Latin American countries. In recognition of his work, he has received a human rights award from Coordinator 96 and the Houston Immigration and Refugee Coalition, as well as the Joseph Werlin Award for Latin American



Research at the University of Houston for a series of papers about immigrant relations.

Dr. Rodríguez was one of the organizers of the 2009 Lozano Long Conference, *Migration during an Era of Restriction*, a highly successful colloquium that brought together scholars from around the world to address international immigration policy issues and migration trends.

Regarding his experience with migrant populations, Dr. Rodríguez says, "It is clear that Congress is in no rush to pass a new immigration law suitable for the present-day realities of migration, and this is hugely unfortunate because the grave and severe social costs of the absence of such a law are paid by migrant populations, including the deaths of several hundred migrants each year who attempt to cross the border to look for work without visas."

Lok Siu

Do people of Asian descent dispersed throughout the Americas share a common cultural identity? To what extent do they feel a sense of affinity and connection with one another, and how does locality shape their ideas of ethnic, racial, and cultural belonging? These are some of the many research questions explored by Associate Professor of Anthropology Lok Siu, who came to the University of Texas in 2009. A PhD of Stanford University, she had previously been on the faculty at New York University, where she was director of Asian/Pacific/American Studies. In addition to her affiliation with LLILAS at UT, she also works with the Center for Asian American Studies.

Professor Siu's wide range of interests includes diaspora, transnationalism, migration, cultural citizenship and belonging, and race, ethnic, and gender formation. She was the recipient in 2009 of the Social Sciences Book

Award from the Association for Asian American Studies for *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions*, coedited with Rhacel Parreñas (Stanford University Press, 2007), and in 2007 of the Social Sciences Book Award from the Association for Asian American Studies for *Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama* (Stanford University Press, 2005). The latter book explores how the Chinese construct a home in diaspora amid the cultural and political crosscurrents of Panama, China/Taiwan, and the United States. Dr. Siu is currently working on *Transnational Asian America: New Theories and Approaches in Asian American Studies*, which examines how the shifting relationship between Asia—China, in particular—and the United States is transforming the cultural, social, and economic practices of Asian Americans.

The role played by food in cultural experience is yet another avenue of exploration for Dr. Siu, who has studied how Chino Latino restaurants in New York City provide points of cultural contact and exchange. Established in the 1960s by Chinese Cubans, these restaurants are frequented by a diverse population, including Latinos, Asians, blacks, and whites. As such, they offer a unique site where people of different backgrounds gather, interact, and form unexpected ties and community.

Regarding her work, Dr. Siu says, "My family's roots in Asia and Central America have inspired my interest in studying Asians in Latin America and Asian Latinos in the United States. Understanding how they got here and how they have become an integral part of society helps enrich our understanding of the complexities of global migration, transnational community formation, and—quite simply—the making of the Americas." 🌟

