

# Spotlight on Our Faculty:

## A Fellowship of Collaboration

Recognized for the quality of their teaching and their scholarship, the faculty profiled here share a dedication to their students and their research, continuing to shape Latin American Studies at UT as a dynamic, collaborative area studies program.



### Eugenio Arima

For Eugenio Arima, summer is a time he looks forward to for conducting fieldwork and interviewing colonists, farmers, loggers, and politicians in the Amazon basin. Regional climate change models predict that if deforestation in the Amazon continues to expand, the climate regime could reach a tipping point, shifting to a new, drier state. Consequently, large portions of the evergreen tropical forest could become permanent savannah.

Arima, who came to UT in 2011, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment. His research focuses on modeling how land use cover and land use change manifest spatially, using a combination of quantitative tools such as econometrics, geographic information systems, computer simulations, and remote sensing. His field-

work and the interviews he conducts during his summer visits provide him with insights into the influence of political economy on environmental change processes as well as the role of human behavior in climate change. Professor Arima is currently working on two collaborative projects: one, supported by NASA, investigates the role of climate change, land use, and mitigation efforts in shifting fire regimes in the United States, Australia, and the Brazilian Amazon; the other, supported by NSF, examines forest fragmentation processes resulting from roads built by private agents such as loggers, colonists, and miners.

A PhD of Michigan State University, Professor Arima wrote his dissertation on the forest fragmentation patterns that emerge as a result of roads built by loggers in the Brazilian Amazon. In addition to his current research there, he reports that one of his most satisfying work experiences was codirecting a study abroad program in Peru and Ecuador.

Regarding his teaching and fieldwork, Professor Arima says: “My research is computationally intensive and I spend a lot of time in my office, but I really enjoy conducting fieldwork. Teaching and fieldwork actually have many similarities: both are difficult, require a lot of preparation and planning, but the rewards are immense. It’s gratifying when you see how much students have learned by the end of a semester. Likewise, I am always excited about new questions and research possibilities that we inevitably come up with by the end of a field campaign.”

### Luis E. Cárcamo-Huechante

A scholar of Mapuche origin and Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante grew up in Tralcao in Valdivia, southern Chile. It wasn’t until the age of six that he first heard the Mapuche language on a radio broadcast from Argentina, a moment that was to change his life and shape the direction of his future research. The Mapuche are an indigenous group of 1.2 million residing in Chile and southern Argentina who are struggling to regain their lost lands and identity. Luis has focused his current research on how this culture is being revitalized by Mapuche radio programs, poetry, and music. In 2010 he was recipient of a \$15,000 Humanities Research Award from the College of Liberal Arts, which has provided vital travel support to continue his research.



Professor Cárcamo-Huechante is a PhD of Cornell University. He taught at Harvard from 2001–2009 before coming to the University of Texas, where he teaches courses focused on Latin American and indigenous literatures and cultures. He is author of *Tramas del mercado: Imaginación económica, cultura pública y literatura en el Chile de fines del siglo veinte* and coeditor of *El valor de la cultura: Arte, literatura y mercado en América Latina* (with Alvaro Fernández-Bravo and Alejandra Laera). In 2011 he was an invited speaker at the LLILAS-sponsored *Foro Urgente—La democracia en juicio: Derechos Mapuche y gobernabilidad democrática en Chile y Argentina*. Also in 2011, Professor Cárcamo-Huechante was elected a member of UT's Society for Teaching Excellence, and in 2012 was a recipient of the prestigious Raymond Dickson Centennial Teaching Fellowship.

Commenting on the value of research support in an earlier interview, he said, "It is very important to feel that the university stimulates research in the humanities. Support for research is a way to support me not only as a scholar but as a teacher. When I travel, I get new readings and experiences that come back with me to the classroom."

### George Flaherty

George Flaherty is Assistant Professor of Art and Art History at the University of Texas. He joined the department in 2011 and specializes in Latin American and Latino visual and spatial cultures in the post–World War II era. He received his PhD in the history of art and architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In May 2012, he presented at the annual congress of the Latin American Studies Association in San Francisco, giving a paper on how images of victims of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City have been used to commemorate and even reimagine the historic event for political and commercial purposes.

Professor Flaherty is currently working on a book manuscript that explores the spatial dimensions of the 1968 student movement in Mexico and its popular representation, including photography, film, and literature. He has held fellowships from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the Social Science Research Council, the Society of Architectural Historians, and the Mexico-U.S. Fulbright Commission. In collaboration with colleague



Prof. Andrea Giunta, and with the support of the Getty Foundation, he will be organizing a series of research seminars over the course of the next three years on neo-avant-garde art in the 1960s and 1970s throughout the Americas.

Along with Giunta, Flaherty is part of the CLAVIS (Center for Latin American Visual Studies) community at UT, which has contributed to formalizing and coordinating, in conjunction with the Blanton, the university's decades-long commitment to Latin American art, not only as object but also as object of historical study and academic field. CLAVIS is literally and figuratively a space that brings together leading art historians from around the world and the UT community, especially graduate students, who have benefited tremendously from this interaction.

Commenting on his time at UT, Professor Flaherty says, "The resources available to scholars of Latin America at UT present an embarrassment of riches, but it has been the tremendous sense of intellectual community here that I've come to very quickly relish."

### Christen Smith

Christen Smith is Assistant Professor in the Departments of Anthropology and African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas. She is also an affiliate of LLILAS and the Warfield Center for African and African American Studies. Her research takes a critical look at the politics of performance, race, violence, and the body in Brazil and the Americas. A PhD of Stanford University, she was the recipient of the Robert Bayard Textor Award for Outstanding Creativity in Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford and has

been a Ford Foundation Diversity Dissertation and Postdoctoral Fellow for Excellence in College and University Teaching and a Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation award recipient.

Since 2001 Professor Smith has conducted ethnographic field research with black activists in Salvador, Bahia, focusing on issues of racism and violence that plague the community. This work has led to her ongoing collaborations with activists and investigation of the global politics of racialized state violence. Her interest in the role of performance led to her participation in March 2012 in the LLILAS cosponsored *Brazilian Frevo Music: From Carnival to the Concert Hall* on the panel "Brazilian Music and Culture on the Streets." Her current book project, *Tearing Down the Big House: Violence, Performance and the Embodiment of Blackness in Brazil*, investigates the politics of performance, racial formation, violence, and racism in contemporary Brazil through an ethnographic look at the multiple registers of racial violence that frame everyday social interactions in Bahia. Dr. Smith teaches the undergraduate courses *Politics of Race and Violence in Brazil* and *Image, Race, and Latin America*, and the graduate courses *Race, Violence, and Brazil* and *Performance, Race, Violence, and the Body*.

Regarding her teaching and research, she says, "One of my passions has always been redressing the injustices of the world one mind at a time. If I can do anything to positively impact the lives of those who suffer at the hands of inequality through my research and my teaching, and be true to the legacy of those torch bearers who have come before me, then I have done what I came here to do." 🌟

