

Oct 5

Five Questions with First- (and Second-) Years: Amanda Tovar

We're excited to kick off another year of our "Five Questions" series. This year, we'll be featuring both first- and second-year students here at UT AMS. We look forward to sharing our amazing graduate students with you. Read on to learn more about Amanda!

Q: What is your background, academic or otherwise, and how does it motivate your research?

A: My academic background is in Mexican American & Gender Studies. Truthfully being a Xicana is what informs my academic career. Gloria Anzaldúa writes "I am trying to make peace between what has happened to me, what the world is and what it should be" and I truly feel that nothing is more useful in my life than understanding myself in relation to the rest of the world—that alone motivates me to unpack the historical nuances of the Rio Grande Valley to better understand my lived experiences which is the bulk of my research.

Q: Why did you decide to come to AMS at UT for your graduate work?

A: While researching PhD programs I paid specific attention to programs who seemed proud of their students as well as diverse and interdisciplinary dissertations. Aside from that location was a huge factor. I applied to ten programs throughout the country and got into 5—but I wanted to stay as close to the Rio Grande Valley (and the Texas heat) as possible. UT AMS fit the ENTIRE profile!

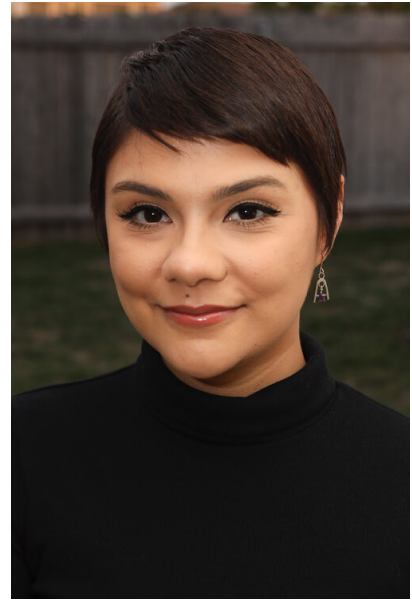
Q: What projects or people have inspired your work?

A: This might sound completely self-absorbed, but my life experience is what has largely influenced my work. The second I mustered up the courage to tell my experience regarding sexual assault, many of my friends and family shared their experiences with me. I began to view sexual assault as endemic to my community and I wanted to expose the crux of it to first understand but also to find a way to combat it.

Q: What projects do you see yourself working on at UT?

A: To be honest, I don't know what I am going to do tomorrow so I cannot earnestly answer what I see myself doing here project-wise. HOWEVER, I have many ideas. I recently started to let loose and explore my other interests academically—like Sci-Fi movies! But my time in AMS inspired me to launch Escuelín which is a social media platform to emphasize knowledge that my community already holds outside of academia and traditional K-12 schooling.

Q: What are your goals for graduate school? What do you see yourself doing after you graduate?



Meet Amanda Tovar, a second-year doctoral student in the UT American Studies department.

A: My goals for graduate school are first and foremost to get through it! Just kidding! My after-graduation goals are to either be a professor in my hometown or to own a bookshop/coffee shop. I have always envisioned myself making artisanal sandwiches and selling revolutionary books while hosting a free Saturday school.

Bonus Q: In your own words, what is American Studies?

A: To me, American Studies is my home. It's where I can study all of my interests at once—from critical race theory, to sexual violence, to the Borderlands and beyond.

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