

Focus on Our Faculty: Teaching Students to View Latin America Broadly

LLILAS students have the advantage of studying Latin America through the wide lens provided by our broadly interdisciplinary faculty, exemplified by the four scholars profiled here.



Lina del Castillo

Lina del Castillo is Assistant Professor of History and Latin American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. She first came to UT Austin from Iowa State University in 2009 through the Big XII Faculty Fellowship, which allowed her to conduct research at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection and participate in the Department of History's Institute for Historical Studies. A visiting scholar at LLILAS from 2011–2012, she subsequently began her

joint appointment between LLILAS and the History Department in fall of 2012.

Prior to coming to UT, Professor Del Castillo taught at Iowa State from 2007–2010. A PhD of the University of Miami, she won their Barrett Prize for the best dissertation on a Latin American topic. In the spring of 2010, she was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá and, later that year, was the Jeannette D. Black Memorial Fellow for the History of Cartography at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Dr. Del Castillo's research focuses on the intersections between cartography, contested claims to land and resources, and the transnational dimensions of the formation of the Colombian nation-state. She is working on a manuscript provisionally titled *Assembling Colombia: Transnational Visions and Regional Designs in the Making of a Republic*, which addresses a somewhat deceptive, and deceptively simple, question: Why, despite ample efforts to imagine a Gran Colombian national community (that at the time included what we now recognize as Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela), did this nation-state not cohere? The case of Gran Colombia is especially interesting because, among all the Spanish American states vying for independence, Colombia was the first to be imagined and depicted cartographically. *Assembling Colombia* demonstrates the importance of place, contingency, and geopolitics for the acquisition, assembly, production, negotiation, and diffusion of geographic knowledge in and about that early republic.

Dr. Del Castillo's research interests directly inform the courses she teaches. Her graduate seminar on Territorial Nation-State Formation in Latin America is designed to help students develop a firm historiographical grounding in key studies that help us better understand the spatial dimensions of state formation in the region. Along with the introductory undergraduate history survey on Modern Latin America, Dr. Del Castillo also teaches two upper-division



undergraduate courses: Mapping Latin America and Beyond Aid and Intervention. The first examines the ways in which cartography and related spatial practices, from the colonial period into the present day, have contributed to shaping ideas about the meaning of Latin American spaces and places. The second examines the historical, cultural, political, economic, and, of course, spatial linkages between the United States and Latin America.

Regarding her time at UT, Professor Del Castillo says, “I am continually energized by the enthusiasm of UT students, inspired by the intellectual accomplishments and support of my colleagues in History and Latin American Studies, and thankful for the extensive resources the university has to offer.”

Patience Epps

Patience (“Pattie”) Epps is Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics. She is also a codirector of the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) at UT Austin and a faculty affiliate of LLILAS and the Center for Indigenous Languages of Latin America (CILLA). Dr. Epps came to UT in 2006. She is a PhD of the University of Virginia, and held a predoctoral fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig from 2003–2005.

At UT Dr. Epps most recently has taught the courses Linguistic Typology, Language Change and Language Variation, Languages and Cultures of Amazonia, Language Contact, Complexity in Language, and Historical Linguistics. In addition to the 2007 Panini Award from the Association for Linguistic Typology (for her dissertation), she has been the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships for linguistic research from the Mellon Foundation, National Science Foundation, and the Endangered Languages Documentation Project, to name just a few.

PHD CANDIDATE GABRIELA GARCÍA SALIDO SAYS, “WORKING WITH DR. EPPS HAS BEEN THE BEST THING THAT HAPPENED TO ME AS A STUDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN.”

Among her students, Dr. Epps has a reputation for dedication and availability. PhD candidate Gabriela García Salido says, “Working with Dr. Epps has been the best thing that happened to me as a student of The University of Texas at Austin. She is the best combination of how to be yourself, succeed in academia, and be a great human being. Her attitude about working with students is ‘let’s do it’ rather than ‘you do it.’”

Colleagues are equally laudatory. AILLA manager Susan Kung comments, “I couldn’t ask for a better colleague than Pattie. She always makes herself available to me and to AILLA, and her advice is not only helpful, but specific and relevant. She seems to enjoy new challenges, and she faces them with a positive and encouraging attitude.”

Dr. Epps’s publications include the monograph *A Grammar of Hup* (Mouton Grammar Library 43, 2008); *New Challenges in Typology: Transcending the Borders and Refining the Distinctions*, coedited with Alexandre Arkipov (Mouton, 2009); and the forthcoming *Upper Rio Negro: Cultural and Linguistic Interaction in Northwestern Amazonia*, coedited with Kristine Stenzel (Museu do Índio, Rio de Janeiro), as well as papers in *Diachronica*, *International Journal of American Linguistics*, *Linguistic Typology*, and *Studies in Language*. Her research interests involve descriptive and documentary work on indigenous Amazonian languages, typology, language contact and language change, and the implications of the latter for studying Amazonian prehistory.

Regarding her work, Dr. Epps says, “Amazonian languages have a lot to tell us—about language in general, and about the lives and histories of South American peoples. I appreciate the wonderful resources at LLILAS and UT that help me to pursue this research, and encourage students to explore and carry it further.”



Edgardo Latrubesse

Rivers have engaged Edgardo Latrubesse for most of his professional career. Professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment, through his research program Large Rivers: Long Term Basin Evolution, Morphodynamics, and Global Change he studies the hydrogeomorphology of large rivers, the impacts of human activities on large fluvial systems and tropical biomes, and the paleogeography, paleohydrology, and paleoecology of tropical South America. He has worked extensively on some of the largest rivers of the continent, including the Amazon, Negro, Madeira, Purús, Juruá, Araguaia, Paraná, and São Francisco, and has conducted fieldwork in the Amazon basin, the Pampean region, the Bolivian Altiplano, the Brazilian savannas (Cerrado), the Chaco, and the Llanos del Orinoco.

A PhD of the Universidad Nacional de San Luis, Argentina, Dr. Latrubesse came to UT Austin in 2009. Prior to that he was a professor at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentina) and the Federal University of Goiás (Brazil), where he also was head and founder of the Laboratory of Geology and Physical Geography. During 2008–2009 Dr. Latrubesse was Thomas W. Rivers Distinguished Visiting Professor in International Affairs in the Department of Geological Sciences at East Carolina University in Greenville.

Dr. Latrubesse is leader of the working group Tropical Rivers of the International Association of Geomorphologists, leader of the IGCP 582 UNESCO project Tropical Rivers, and chair of the GLO-COPH working group on Large Rivers, all of which allowed him to organize field conferences in several of the largest fluvial basins of the world. He also has been a member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Geomorphologists-IAG. Dr. Latrubesse is a member of the editorial board of *Geomorphology* and *Paleoecology of Africa*, among others, and has been a guest editor of several special issues of international journals and books.

Sergio Romero

Sergio Romero, a specialist in the languages of Mesoamerica, is both a sociolinguist and an anthropologist. Assistant Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, he holds a joint appointment with LLILAS and is director of the institute's Indigenous Languages Initiative. Before coming to UT in 2012, Dr. Romero was on the faculty of Vanderbilt University, and also taught at the University of Chicago as well as a Tulane University summer field course in Guatemala. He earned a PhD in linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania.

A native of Guatemala, he says, "My fluency in highland Maya languages has allowed me to help Maya migrant communities in the USA with legal translation services ... My research explores the mutual determination between social and linguistic change in indigenous languages of the Americas, especially of the Mayan and Uto-Aztecan families. I am particularly interested in dialectal variation, social deixis, new dialect formation, the genealogy of pastoral language, and language contact." He speaks fluent K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Q'eqchi' (all Mayan languages), as well as Nahuatl.

Professor Romero was one of the keynote speakers at the *SALSA XXI* conference (*Symposium About Language and Society*) at UT this past April. He is currently finishing up a book project that explores the social meaning of dialectal variation in K'iche' and Q'eqchi', two Mayan languages spoken in the highlands of Guatemala. He also is working on the uses of variation in honorific marking in Pipil and Central Nahuatl in texts produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Guatemala.

Dr. Romero heads the new indigenous language instruction program, which will offer a class in K'iche' Maya this fall for the first time in the history of UT. ✨

