



amame

Archivo de la Memoria Audiovisual de la Migración Ecuatoriana

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The Chicano Studies Research Center and Department of Spanish and Portuguese invite you to:

Beyond the Dream: Undocumented Experiences and the Longing for the "Good Life"

Talk Presented by Professor María José Gutiérrez Jiménez
(Oxford College of Emory University)

TUESDAY, MARCH 4 2025

4:00 PM

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ZOOM LINK:

[HTTPS://UCLA.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTER/T47CBDAGQSUAMAKXJUYQPO](https://ucla.zoom.us/meeting/register/t47cbdagqsuamakxjuyqpo)

Beyond the Dream: Undocumented Experiences and the Longing for the “Good Life”

The American Dream or the promise of “the good life” has long been portrayed as the driving force behind Latin American migration to the United States—a promise of upward mobility, economic stability, and a better future. However, the hopes for individual and social upward mobility, along with the prospects of a better future for immigrants pursuing their dreams, have been overshadowed by criminalizing immigration policies transforming the dream into what Lauren Berlant describes as “cruel optimism”—a hope that remains unattainable and ultimately harms those who pursue it. This presentation examines the affective work immigrants do to sustain livable lives beyond and within the fantasies of the American Dream by engaging with two distinct yet complementary works: AMAME (Archive of Audiovisual Migrant Memory), a transnational video-letter archive curated by the Ecuadorian artistic collective Ñukanchik People, and non-fiction piece *The Undocumented Americans* (2020) by Ecuadorian American writer Karla Cornejo Villavicencio. AMAME consists of homemade video recordings created by Ecuadorian migrants and their families between the 1970s and early 2000s as forms of intimate correspondence across borders. In contrast, *The Undocumented Americans*, an award-winning literary work disrupts dominant discourses that typically depict undocumented immigrants either as deserving citizens or as criminals to focus instead on the ambivalent nature of longing for “a good life”. This presentation will explore how both works shed light on how undocumented migrants navigate the expectations of migration as a path to the “good life” through the personal, the ordinary, and the everyday.



María José Gutiérrez is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Latin American and Latinx Literature and Culture at Oxford College of Emory University. She earned her doctoral degree from the University of California, Davis, in 2024, where she began collaborating with Humanizing Deportation, a public humanities project and digital archive of self-authored stories by Latin American migrants. Since 2018, she has contributed to the project by facilitating the production of several digital narratives—testimonial audiovisual shorts—created with deported migrants in Mexico City and Ecuador. Her research explores the emotional dimensions of migration from Ecuador and South America to the United States from a humanistic perspective, centering migrants’ voices through community-based literary and artistic practices