



EL CENTRO

NEWSLETTER

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Cover artwork for our forthcoming issue of *Diálogo*, "Gun & Pan Dulce." by Salomón Huerta

INSIDE:

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant.....	6
<i>Diálogo</i>	8
Alumna Spotlight: Maria Pesqueira.....	10
2021-22 CLR Faculty Fellows.....	11
CLR Fellow Profile: Rafael Vizcaíno.....	12
Upcoming Events.....	14
Editor Bio.....	25

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR
4	ANNOUNCEMENTS
6	MELLON FOUNDATION GRANT
8	DIÁLOGO
9	LATINX GRADUATION
10	ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT
11	FACULTY FELLOWSHIP
12	FELLOW PROFILE
14	UPCOMING EVENTS
18	PAST EVENTS
25	GRAD ASSISTANT BIO
26	CONTACT US



The Center for Latino Research (CLR) strives to open and sustain dialogues which foster the empowerment and advancement of Latinx communities. To that end, the CLR creates learning opportunities for students and supports scholars in their research, while forging collaborative relationships with local, national, and international research partners. We also publish an award-winning scholarly journal, *Diálogo*, and sponsor many activities on campus, including film series and speaker series.

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Cover art by Salomon Huerta, "Gun with
Pan Dulce," 2016.

IUPLR
INTER-UNIVERSITY PROGRAM
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Fellow Profile



Rafael Vizcaíno, Ph.D

PHILOSOPHY |
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
AND SCIENCES

By Amanda Matthews

Q: What has it been like to start your career at DePaul during the pandemic?

A: Well, I don't know what it would have been otherwise! But overall, it has been great. All my courses went well last year, even though I had never taught online before, and I was also able to get a lot of writing done and even put out some publications. The one thing that obviously has not been ideal is the sense of community and belonging that you get from being on campus surrounded by students and colleagues. That was largely missing last year, and now I am barely beginning to get to know people on a one-on-one basis. That part I don't think will be fully there until we overcome the crisis mode of the pandemic at the societal level, which I hope is soon!

Q: I was told that you are a Chicago native. What does it feel like to come back "home" to the city and teach? What influenced you to teach here, in Chicago?

A: I always say Chicago is my second home – first being Mexico, of course. I came to the area for high school and then did my undergraduate at Northwestern, so I associate Chicago with my most important years of personal and intellectual growth. Being back means a lot, because back then I used to dream of being a scholar and professor, and now I am living that dream.

Q: What are you currently working on in terms of research projects?

A: I am revising my first book project, which brings debates on epistemic decolonization in the Americas to bear on theories of secularization and postsecularity as mainly developed by European philosophers. That's what is consuming most of my bandwidth at the time. I am also working on several related side projects, such as essays on decolonizing political theology, Caribbean philosophy, and critical theory, some of which might be the foundation for a future project.

Q: Some commentators have pointed out how difficult it is to be a person of color working in philosophy. What kinds of contributions are scholars of color making to transform contemporary philosophy?

A: This is a huge question that I am unable to answer with due diligence here. The short answer is that there are several initiatives taking place at many levels, from the international to those at the departmental levels, which at least seems to indicate that the issue is now being taken with more seriousness than in the past. My hope is that the field continues to open itself up to marginalized voices, to the point that it reflects the true diversity of the world, and not just a highly selective narrative of Western European thought.

Q: I saw that you recently won the American Philosophical Association's 2020 Essay Prize in Latin American Thought. Do you have any advice you'd like to give to those persons of color currently in the field of Philosophy, or thinking about pursuing it?

A: Make sure you know why you are interested in philosophy. Have clear commitments and be able to articulate the value of your work, especially in regards to the broader field and global societal problems. Also, make sure you have a community to support you. Without the labor of intergenerational mentoring, none of us would be here to begin with.

Q: Is there anything interesting you're currently reading?

A: I have started to read a book by the Mexican-American philosopher Carlos Alberto Sanchez called *A Sense of Brutality: Philosophy After Narco-Culture*. I am presenting a conference paper on this book at the American Philosophical Association Central Division annual meeting next year (in Chicago, actually). Since I have been meaning to bridge my philosophical work to my lived experience in Mexico, I figured this might be a good start.