



CATHERINE S.
RAMÍREZ

UC SANTA CRUZ

Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies

PUBLIC LECTURE
OFFERINGS

**VITALITY AND VULNERABILITY: THE MIGRANT IN THE
POSTMIGRANT MOMENT**

What does the migrant mean to the nation and society shaped by migration, but that reject migration? To address this question, this talk examines the figure of the child migrant. Focusing on the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and the “child migrant crisis” at the US-Mexico border, I explore the roles vitality and vulnerability play in the management of migration in the Global North in the twenty-first century. I close with a discussion of Little Amal, an eleven-foot-tall, partly animatronic puppet representing an unaccompanied Syrian refugee girl, and her tour of the US-Mexico border in 2023.

**THE FUTURE OF LABOR AND UNDOCUMENTEDNESS: LESSONS FROM
LATINXFUTURISM**

Populist politicians often warn that migrants will steal native workers’ jobs. Even though machines have long threatened to replace workers (and have done so in some industries), few, if any, populist politicians claim to be anti-automation. This talk explores this discrepancy by looking at labor and extraction in Latinx speculative fiction. Inspired by Afrofuturist visions of a more inclusive future, I examine the slow violence and permanent temporariness of undocumentedness and invite you to join me in imagining a future not without migrants, but without undocumentedness.

CATHERINE S. RAMÍREZ

ASSIMILATION: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY

A pillar of the US nation-making project, assimilation is widely regarded as an outcome of immigration: it is the process by which immigrants turn into Americans. In this talk, I decouple immigration and assimilation and scrutinize the gap between assimilation and citizenship to show how certain people who are not immigrants or who are not recognized as real or legitimate immigrants have been assimilated as outsiders on the inside. Using archival sources and textual and visual analysis, I study efforts to civilize Native Americans; African American racial passing narratives; the figure of the model minority; and the ways Indigenous Oaxacans are shaping and being shaped by Los Angeles. By looking at groups that are usually not included in conversations about assimilation, I show that assimilation is a process whereby the boundary between unequal groups and between inside and outside blurs, disappears, or, paradoxically, is reinforced.

THE WOMAN IN THE ZOOT SUIT: PACHUCAS, STYLE POLITICS, AND THE WRITING OF HISTORY

With their long coats, billowing trousers, short skirts, and high bouffants, Mexican American zoot suiters represented a new generation of youth in the early 1940s. Whereas Chicano writers and artists of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s upheld the male zooter (the pachuco) as an emblem of Chicano style, resistance, and masculinity, the female zooter (the pachuca) was widely ignored. This talk excavates the participation of Mexican American women in the World War II-era zoot subculture and looks at the significance of the figures of the pachuca and pachuco in Chicano art, literature, and film. Using archival sources, oral history, and textual and visual analysis, I show how pachucas challenged dominant notions of Mexican American and Chicano identity; how Chicana writers and artists ascribed new meaning to the figure of the pachuca; and how attention to this overlooked figure allows us to rethink nationalisms, agency, and the writing of history.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. **WHAT IS ETHNIC STUDIES AND WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM IT?**
2. **WHAT IS LATINXFUTURISM, WHY STUDY IT, AND WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH “THE REAL WORLD”?**

DO YOU HAVE A STORY YOU WANT TO TELL?

3. How do writers (in particular, scholars) connect our personal experiences to history, culture, and society so that one sheds light on the other? How do we transform a personal story into something (for example, an op-ed or a personal essay) that others should read and will want to read?