GUEST SPEAKER OF THE WEEK: PROF. DOLORES TREVIZO

SOCIOMETRY DEPARTMENT

Weak States and Inequality in Mexico’s Armed Vigilante Movements, 2012-2015

Dolores Trevizo is a political sociologist and teaches courses in political sociology, social movements and revolutions, theory, immigration to the U.S. and quantitative research methods. Her research and writing focus on the relations between states (democratic and authoritarian) and civil societies. Recently, her work has focused on the causes and political consequences of peasant movements in Mexico. She returned to Oxy in 1997 as a minority dissertation fellow and has been teaching as a professor since 2010.

“With a unique dataset, I dispute recent studies that do not find a relationship between homicides and vigilantism. I show that this relationship exists, but at the state level. My evidence is consistent with the weak state thesis, because higher than average murder rates per state indicate criminal enclaves or local criminal governance. The territorial gaps in the state’s presence that Guillermo O’Donnell once called “brown areas” cost people their lives. Vigilantes react through defensive movements in which ordinary people substitute themselves for the police to fill a security gap created by the state’s inability to provide this basic good. My study also finds that wealth inequality matters because business people finance the vigilante organizations, which helps them to sustain collective action over time. Organized vigilantism, thus, arises in highly unequal societies and their emergence both reflects and further undermines the legitimacy deficits of weak states.”

Video available for viewing on 2020 SRP Website

Don’t forget, the 2020SRP Conference Presentations Google form is due Monday, July 13th. Make sure to confirm with your mentor before submitting the form. Visit the SRP2020 website for detailed info on each form of presentation, useful tips, samples and how-to videos for each option.

dep. of critical theory & social justice - Summer Series - The Matrix

GENDER INJUSTICE & the COVID PANDEMIC

Wednesday, July 15th @ 12pm

Soraya Chemaly co-founder and director of the Women’s Media Center Speech Project

Register in advance for the seminar here.
Working collaboratively with a project mentor and another student at Occidental College for the Undergraduate Research Center's summer program, I am researching the social and demographic histories of two states which share a border with Mexico: California and Arizona. I seek to understand the construction of their cultural identity and more markedly how this has shaped the differing attitudes they hold towards Mexican migrants. I am responsible for researching California and Arizona, while my partner will be researching New Mexico and Texas. By the time of the summer conference, we plan to compile our research to present a developed analysis on how cultural and historical identities have specifically shaped the political attitudes of each of the populations of the border states towards Mexican migrants. The current political attitudes and climate in California and Arizona demonstrate that California is more tolerant and progressive towards Mexican migrants while Arizona is more intolerant and conservative. I believe that researching the histories of these states as well as analyzing demographic patterns and U.S. Census data will help illuminate what shaped these attitudes and reveal why they are so different.

What is the importance of this project?

This project is important because Mexican migrants' human rights are being violated. Many people want to act in opposition to the discriminatory, harsh, and unfair laws in place which impact migrants in the United States. In order to do this however, social and political attitudes must first be changed. This can only be done successfully if these attitudes are properly understood, and the complex histories of each state are recognized in their role in shaping the cultural and social ideas held towards Mexican migrants over many decades.

How is the Summer Research Program furthering your academic and career goals?

Sociology has always been my academic passion. Since studying it full time at Occidental College for three years now, it has become a passion I wish to pursue as a career. I know the Undergraduate Research Center's summer program is the perfect opportunity for me to begin my sociological career, challenging myself both independently and collaboratively, outside of the classroom but with the support of my school. This project is instrumental in my preparation for graduate school, which I plan to attend in sociology after graduating.

Trivia Question! Based on Prof. Stierwalt's URC Talk

What did Professor Stierwalt look for instead of looking for stars to identify dwarf galaxies?

e-mail Emma at eharwood@oxy.edu with your answer to be entered into the raffle for a prize!
The purpose of this research is to investigate why the political attitudes are so different among the people of New Mexico and Texas, as these attitudes shape and reinforce influential immigration policy. The methods I utilize in this investigation are a primary and secondary source analysis as well as a quantitative analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Specifically, I will conduct a content analysis of Texas and New Mexico state education textbooks in order to come to a better understanding of the differing political attitudes of the people residing in both states. I hypothesize that the divergent political attitudes of Texans and New Mexicans will be explained by demographic trends in both states, as will be revealed by Census data. These states, while sharing similar historical beginnings rooted in colonization and occupation by Spanish, and later Mexican forces, hold completely different attitudes towards immigration. New Mexico holds liberal-leaning attitudes towards immigrants, while Texas is extremely conservative. This is in spite of all of which they share in common, such as their shared geographical proximity to one another and to the Mexico border. It is clear that the attitudes of Texans and New Mexicans in regards to immigration are vastly different given the current laws and policies in place. This has led me to hypothesize that the differing political attitudes of Texans and New Mexicans are informed by their cultural identities, which have been influenced by their education, and potentially other factors such as demographic patterns.

Why is this research important?

This research is important to conduct because people's lives are at stake as a result of untenable and punitive U.S. immigration policies which violate people's human rights. These policies have been created and encouraged by prejudiced attitudes held towards immigrants, which have been exacerbated with the help of U.S. President Trump's continuous dehumanizing and inflammatory rhetoric of immigrants ever since the beginning of his 2016 presidential campaign. Hundreds of children have been negatively impacted by the Trump administration's family separation policy, forced apart from their relatives for months. While some were eventually reunited, many families remain separated, only worsening the emotional and psychological impacts that the policy is enacting on people. Ultimately, investigating why the people of New Mexico and Texas have such distinct political attitudes will help us to better understand how to address and counteract prejudice fueled immigration policies enacted towards migrants.

How is the Summer Research Program furthering your academic and career goals?

Participating in the SRP has enabled me to expand my knowledge base of an issue I am deeply passionate about, develop skill-sets which will prepare me to take on advanced coursework, and enable me to challenge myself by conducting official research, which is a unique opportunity I have never had the ability to take advantage of before. In addition, I will have the ability to work collaboratively with another student who shares goals similar to mine. This fellowship will provide me with the foundational skills I need to apply to and attend graduate school. Furthermore, the methodology by which I will conduct my project will prepare me to take on graduate-level research in the future.