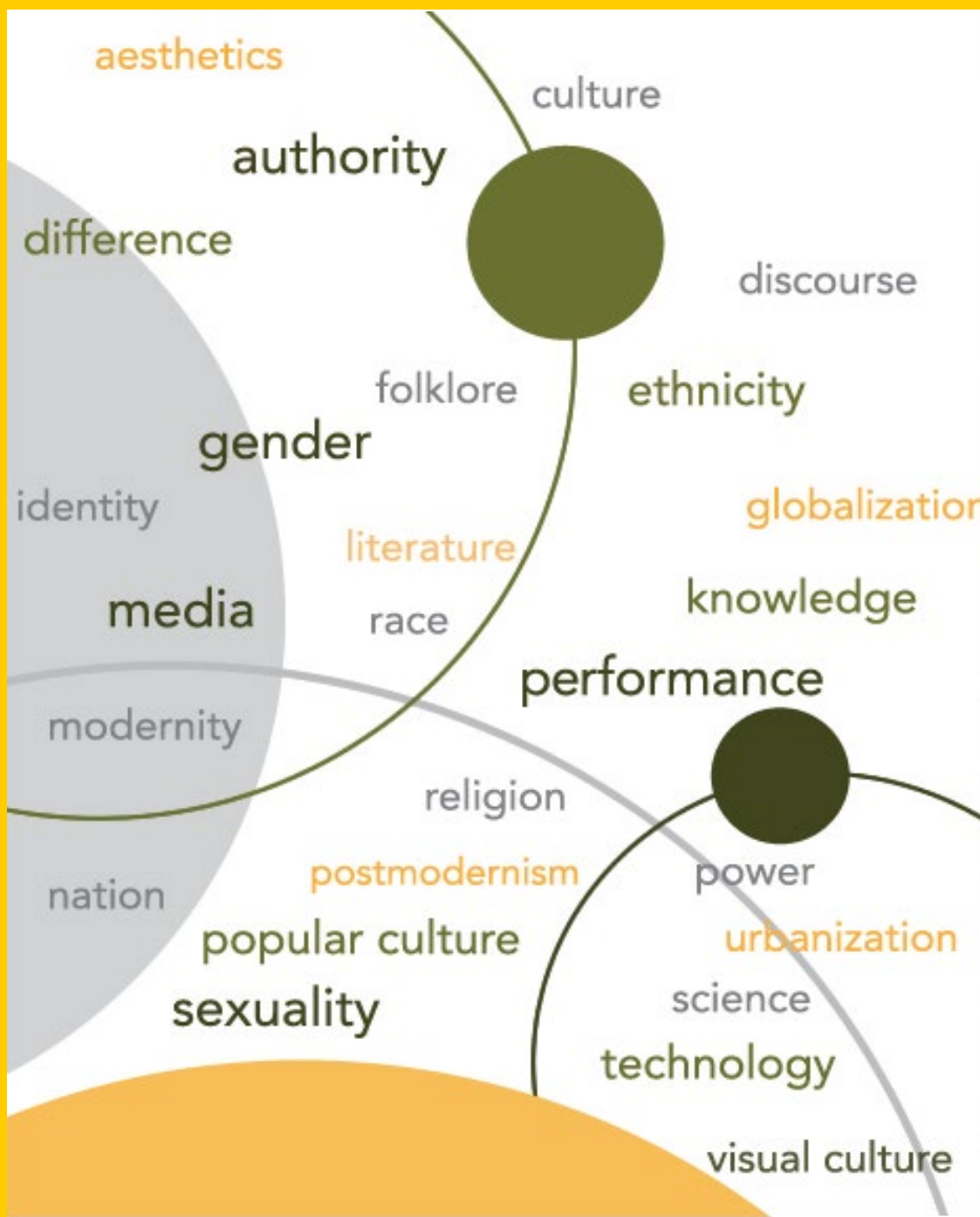


DEPARTMENT OF
COMPARATIVE STUDIES



**Graduate Studies
Newsletter
Autumn 2019**



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



Parisa Ahmadi

Parisa is a second-year MA-PhD student whose work is rooted in diasporic and transnational experience. Her undergraduate degree was in Anthropology, but she decided to pursue her graduate work in Comparative Studies because of its investment in examining intersections of power and constructions of difference. Her most recent work is interested in investigating notions of “enchantment”: the way in which material, sensual, and affective realities interact to create spaces of magic and possibility, particularly for marginalized groups. She plans to investigate “enchantment” as an ethical intervention in social justice work, and will explore this through interdisciplinary practice in art, design, and technology.

Rob Barry

Rob Barry is a first-year doctoral student in the Department of Comparative Studies with a strong interest in Black popular culture and masculinities. Rob earned his undergraduate degree in Black Studies and Education from Denison University and his MA in Critical Ethnic Studies from DePaul University. Before traveling back to the buckeye state, Rob worked as an Educational Counselor for the Schuler Scholar Program, a college access program that equips first-generation students of color with the support they need to gain access to and succeed at highly selective colleges. Throughout his doctoral journey, Rob plans to build on his masters thesis that examined Black masculinities, temporal and spatial diasporic spaces, and the ways in which masculinities materialize through kinship. Furthermore, he hopes to further his interest in Black popular culture to modernize how folks acquire knowledge surrounding Blackness.





Emma Cobb

Emma Cobb is a second-year graduate student in Comparative Studies with a focus in folklore studies. Her research focuses on the ways in which people engage with their pasts through acts of creative (re)interpretation. Following this line of inquiry, she has worked on far ranging projects. She has been part of communities collectively engaging their pasts through community-based theater with Cornerstone Theater Company in Venice, CA and with Be The Street in Columbus's Hilltop Neighborhood, presenting this work both at the American Folklore Society and at the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore. She has looked at how people share experiences about sexual harassment in the #MeToo era in her paper "Whispering Networks/What Gossip Tells Us," for which she was awarded the 2019 Patrick B. Mullen Award for best graduate student paper in folklore studies. Through the Ohio Field School, she worked in Southern Ohio documenting African American

family history and family archives, and has done further work on family history with her own archive of sorts. Finally, she has started looking at the legacy of Huey Long in Louisiana and populist politics. Her dedication to community-based practices has extended to her community here at OSU, and she was awarded the 2019 Graduate Student Departmental Service Award. She is excited about continuing this service as the president of the Folklore Student Association as they plan the 13th Annual Joint IU/OSU Graduate Student Conference in Folklore & Ethnomusicology titled "20/20 (Re)Vision: Looking Back, Thinking Forward."



Sarah Craycraft

Sarah Craycraft is a PhD candidate with a focus in folklore studies. Her dissertation research investigates young people in Bulgaria who are involved in rural revitalization projects, particularly those drawing on traditional practices and heritage as forward-facing tactics and responses to urbanization, emigration, and rural depopulation. Currently, Sarah is conducting fieldwork in Bulgaria, moving back and forth between urban centers and village-based projects as she follows the routes and networks of young activists engaging with creative practices in rural spaces. Sarah's work employs comparison as both practical method and a reflexive thinking exercise—her work is deeply shaped and complicated by conversations concerning community and youth practices in different spaces, particularly the Appalachian region of the U.S. Sarah served as the graduate administrative assistant and student archivist in the Center for Folklore Studies from Autumn 2016 to Spring 2018, where she assisted with the planning and execution of the Ohio Field Schools in Scioto County and currently serves on the field school advisory council. Sarah's essay "The Mule as Motif in the Ohio Valley



Research Project" was the 2019 recipient of the Comparative Studies department's Richard Bjornson Prize. Sarah has presented her work at the American Folklore Society annual meeting, the Appalachian Studies Association annual conference, and the Appalachian-Carpathian International Conference.



Sophie Delacruz

Sophie Delacruz is a first year MA-PhD student in the Department of Comparative Studies. Originally from Grand Rapids, MI, Sophie completed her undergraduate degree in Communication Studies and Spanish, with a focus in Latinx studies. Sophie is interested in how Latinx individuals in the Midwest perform their identities and form community. Her research is motivated by the dearth of scholarship that focuses on Latinx identities in the Midwest, and the need to understand the unique placemaking practices within this geographic region. In her previous work, Sophie has collaborated with researchers across the Midwest exploring the method of ethnography at festivals and community events in Ohio in order to think about how Latinx community

members negotiate and articulate their identities and build sustainable communities. She also has approached these questions from a more literary and theoretical perspective in the past.



Sarah Dove

Sarah Dove is a PhD Candidate and Graduate Teaching Associate in the Department of Comparative Studies, and a Graduate Administrative Associate for the Center for the Study of Religion at the Ohio State University. As a part of her research, she uses dance studies—with specific attention to the theoretical potential of choreographic processes—as a lens through which to view cultural phenomena. As an emerging artist, teacher, and scholar, her primary research initiatives advocate for the fusion of theory and practice for the purpose of creating culturally and socially informed modes of investigation and creative output. Her commitment to interdisciplinarity has afforded her the opportunity to present papers at recent national conferences, such as the Popular Culture Association conference, and the American Academy of Religion Conference (both regionally and nationally), within the most recent academic year. Sarah has recently passed her candidacy examinations, and is excited to finally dive into her primary dissertation research. In addition to this project, Sarah is also excited to share forthcoming publications of her work "A Myth of Holism: In/Visible Fragmentations and Wounded Being" which will be featured as a chapter in *The Religious Body Imagined* to be released by Equinox Publishing, and "I'll Fly Away: Interstitial Performativity in Pentecostal Worship Practice" which will be featured in an upcoming edition of the *Body and Religion* journal.



Kati Fitzgerald

Kati Fitzgerald is a PhD candidate in Comparative Studies. She recently completed a year as a Buddhist Studies fellowship with The Robert H N Ho Foundation performing dissertation fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, India. She is currently a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellow performing her final year of dissertation fieldwork in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Region. Her work has recently appeared in *Asian Ethnology* (2019) and her translations and reviews are forthcoming this year in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* and *Buddhist Studies Review*. Her

dissertation investigates women's lay practice in contemporary Tibetan Buddhism. She presented material from her fieldwork at the Ghent University Doctoral School on Chinese Buddhist Nuns in Ghent, Belgium and at the 15th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in Paris, France.



Seth Gaiters

Seth Gaiters is a PhD candidate in the Department of Comparative Studies. His research is at the intersection of religious studies, critical-cultural theory, political theology, and black studies. In his research he is interested in examining and analytically disentangling the complex ways in which a certain religiosity continues to form and animate the movement for black lives. He thinks attending to this religiosity, by way of the manner in which activists speak of the sacredness of black life and the sacredness of their activist work in the movement, advances the project of



justice, and he finds his project somewhere at the center of this project of justice, where religion and politics intersect. His research points to openings of liberation and possibilities otherwise that are created where sacredness intersects with black political protest. He has recently passed his Candidacy Exams. Since his department encourages work that traffics in critical cultural theory, and is interdisciplinary and comparative, his exams gave him the room to stretch out into many fields that drive his research and interest him. He arranged his exams in three clusters. The first cluster: Critical Theory; Cultural Studies; Religious Studies; and Performance Studies. The second cluster: Political Theology; Secularism Studies; Afro-American Religious Thought. And the last cluster: Black Studies. Not too long after this experience he was also able to successfully pass his Prospectus. So at this point in his program he is officially ABD and diligently working on the dissertation. This academic year he was fortunate to receive an external dissertation fellowship with the Forum for Theological Exploration (fteleaders.org/grants-fellowships/c/doctoral-fellowships-for-studentsof-color). This is FTE's 50th anniversary in supporting scholars of color through fellowships. It is a legacy program and network founded by Benjamin E. Mays and C. Shelby Rooks. In addition to this, he is also working as the Coordinator of Pedagogical Research for the Political Theology Network (politicaltheology.com). This Network aims to be a hub for exploring the intersection of religious and political ideas and practices. The Network is interdisciplinary, publicly engaged, and committed to building links between theologians, practitioners/activists, and humanities scholars. These two networks have convinced him of the importance of networking and mentorship, and have been of inestimable value to his development. He is married to his best friend Candace Gaiters, and together they have one daughter, Carise Gaiters. He enjoys spending time with family, running outside, listening to music, being lost in a good film, and great food.





Umut Gürses

Umut is a PhD student with a strong interest in film studies and popular culture. Before starting his graduate studies at the Department of Comparative Studies, he received his MA degree in Media and Visual Studies at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey and his BS degree in Political Science and Public Administration at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey. In an effort to understand the interplay between politics and entertainment, he is particularly interested in the construction of financial images in films and capitalist realist narratives. His MA thesis,

"'Currency, carry me, everyone is held hostage:' An Analysis of Post-2008 Recessionary Films," argued that there are peculiar features of post-2008 films revolving around the financial crisis that can be identified as capitalist realism. At OSU, he plans to further investigate the financialization process and its reflection on popular culture to see possible applications of capitalist realism in understanding and explaining the impact of late capitalism.

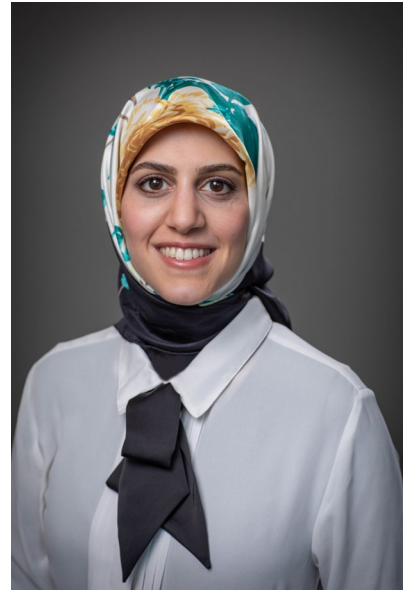
Rhiar Kanouse

Rhiar Kanouse is a first-year MA/PhD student with a strong interest in Literature of the Americas. She earned her BA in English Literature with a minor in Spanish at Central Michigan University in 2018. After a year filled with teaching and international travel, she decided to pursue her next degree in Comparative Studies at the Ohio State University due to the program's emphasis on a strong interdisciplinary approach and its dedication to unearthing conversations between seemingly disparate cultural texts and productions. Her undergraduate thesis focused on Gabriel García Márquez's *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* and argued that, in the context of García Márquez's *El amor*, the desire that diseases society can be located and diagnosed in the bodily borders and the margins of society. More recently, she is interested in the work of Spanish American women writers who have experienced exile in the 20th century, such as Luisa Valenzuela and Cristina Peri Rossi. In particular, she is interested in reading the political dimension that can be found in the representations of womanhood and sexual desire produced by these authors.



Leighla Khansari

Leighla is a PhD candidate and a GTA in Comparative Studies. Her dissertation investigates the intersection of race, gender, constancy, and religion in the portrayal of Muslim women in the English drama of early modern period. Leighla has presented her work at the Shakespeare Association of America and Sixteenth Century Society and Conference and will present another paper both for a panel and a roundtable at MLA 2020 in Seattle. Leighla was awarded the Folger Fellowship to attend the "Gender, Race, and Early Modern Studies" colloquium in 2018. She also received a Folger Shakespeare Library Institute Grant-in-Aid to attend the 2019 "Race Before Race" Symposium, in collaboration with the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Leighla's short article, "'Letter Boxes:' On Muslim Women and Inconstancy in the Early Modern Period," was published by *The Rambling*, on January 2019. Leighla is also writing a book review, forthcoming Fall 2019, on *Travel and Travail: Early Modern Women, English Drama, and the Wider World*, for the journal of *Early Modern Literary Studies*.



Luther Nolan

Luther's educational background is in Latin American history, Greek history, Spanish, and Anthropology. He has also been involved in cancer research, working two and a half years as a Student Research assistant in a molecular biology lab at The James. Luther is also on the Diversity and Inclusion council for Administration and Planning here at OSU. His research interests lie in cultural and critical theory, indigeneity, ritual, Afropessimism, border narratives and emerging lore, Afro-Latinx people of the Andes (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador), and Folklore among Quechua and Aymara speakers. Luther is also interested in the roles that literature and the arts (Dance, Music, and painting) take as tools of empowerment, nation building, and identity. He has a particular interest in folk music and protest songs (current and historic).



Ryann Patrus

Ryann Patrus is a fourth-year graduate student in the Department of Comparative Studies with a focus in Disability Studies. Her research centers on accessible pedagogy, representations of disability often labeled “inspiration porn,” and disability-specific abuse. Her dissertation research examines the weaponization of assistive technology. She served as president of the Disability Studies Graduate Student Association for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 and as secretary for the DISCO Graduate Student Caucus (now GrADE) for the 2018/2019 academic year. She currently serves as the Council of Graduate Students representative for the 2019/2020 academic year. Ryann has presented on topics related to pop cultural representations of disability and the pedagogical tools they provide, access pedagogy in the college classroom, and accessible methodologies in fieldwork.



Eleanor Paynter

Eleanor Paynter is in her final year of the PhD program and is a 2019-20 OSU Presidential Fellow. She studies migration, asylum, borders, and their representation in life narrative, focusing on Mediterranean migration to Europe. Her dissertation investigates discourses and experiences of emergency in the context of contemporary migration to Italy, analyzing oral history interviews and published testimonial narratives. In an article forthcoming in *The Minnesota Review*, she writes about postcolonial migrations and the notion of migritude. In other recent work, Eleanor has translated the work of Italian journalist Annalisa Camilli and has written on precarious mobilities for news and popular media outlets, including *The Conversation* and *the LA Review of Books*.

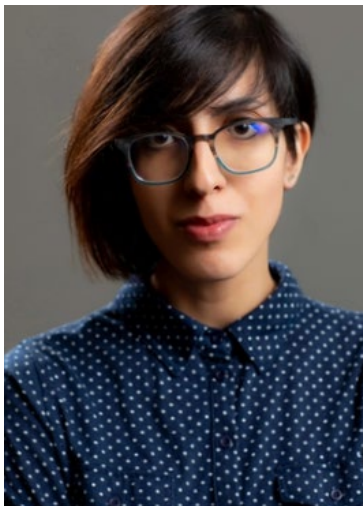




Kevin Pementel

After receiving his BA in Cinema Art + Science from Columbia College Chicago in 2015, Kevin Pementel came to the Department of Comparative Studies to further explore the cultural and media theories he encountered as an undergraduate in film school. With a broader study of media theory that incorporates science and technology studies as well as feminist theories of affect, Kevin has written about and presented on problems of the body and biometrics in the legal system and film-philosophy in the Anthropocene. In 2018, Kevin presented his paper “Atopias of Annihilation: In the Zone at the End of the Anthropocene” at Spiral Film-Philosophy Conference “Thinking Space” in Toronto, ON, as well as his paper “Biometrics and Beyond: Ruling on ‘Data Bodies’ and ‘Bodies of Data’” at “Reformatting the World: An Interdisciplinary Conference of Technology and Humanities” at York University, also in Toronto. To assist in presenting his work, Kevin was awarded an Arts and Humanities

Graduate Research Small Grant from the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to these academic papers, Kevin has written about contemporary art in a number of venues, including: the 2018 Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art catalog, exhibitions at Urban Art Space and Angela Meleca Gallery, and a foreword to an art book. As he prepares for candidacy, Kevin is currently considering the convergence of visual culture and scientific practices of bodily metrification and abstraction on the screen.



Afsane Rezaei

Afsane Rezaei is a PhD candidate in her sixth year in Comparative Studies with a concentration in Folklore. Afsane specializes in Iranian contemporary culture and is interested in the intersection of folklife, gender, and vernacular religion. Her dissertation, based on one year of fieldwork with the Iranian-American communities in Southern California, focuses on the dynamics of agency in Iranian women’s shared religious performances and sociability practices. Her other interests include Digital Folklore, Feminist Anthropology, Postcolonial Studies, and Anthropology of the Middle East. Her work on online political humor has appeared in *New Directions in Folklore* (2017). She has also produced public-facing projects based on her dissertation research, including an ethnographic film (*The Taste of Samanu*, 2018) and a photo exhibit (*Irangelos Close-up*, 2019), exploring Iranian immigrants' re-negotiation of their cultural and

religious practices in the diasporic context. In the past, she has given presentations at the American Folklore Society (2013-2018), Middle East Studies Association (2016, 2018), Western States Folklore Society (2018), and IU/OSU Student Conference in Folklore and Ethnomusicology (2013-2016). Afsane has also been the recipient of several awards during her graduate studies at OSU, including a fellowship from the Center for Humanities in Practices (2019), Coca-Cola Critical Difference for Women Grant for her dissertation fieldwork (2017), and paper and travel awards from AFS New Directions in Folklore Section (2014) and Women’s Section (2016). Her dissertation fieldwork was funded by a one-year Fellowship from OSU Center for Folklore Studies, where she also worked for two years as the Graduate Administrative Associate and Archivist. Afsane has also served as the CS delegate at the Council for Graduate Students (2016-2017) and the advisory committee for the Ohio Field Schools (2018-19).



Jasmine Stork

Jasmine Stork is a PhD candidate in Comparative Studies, with a Master's in Public Health and an interest in qualitative research and applying anthropological principles to public health research. Her MPH thesis focused on the impacts of fat stigma on people's health and lived experience, and was an exploration of applied digital research methods to address a significant public health issue. Her dissertation focus is on the importance of digital research methods and studying the online engagement of emerging and marginalized communities to develop more effective research, rapport, and collaboration. For her dissertation she is looking specifically at representations of asexuality in fanfiction and using a range of qualitative methods to demonstrate how playful/casual online communities can inform the research and practice of applied professions like public health. Jasmine has presented at a number of Fan Studies and Popular Culture conferences, and was a guest speaker at the Ace & Aro Conference 2019 hosted by Aces NYC as part of WorldPride and the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising.



Keren Tanguay

Keren Tanguay is a second year PhD student in the Comparative Studies Department. Her background is in vocational ministry and hospital chaplaincy. Just prior to delving into her doctorate studies, Keren worked at a trauma hospital in Columbus, which exposed her to encounters that heightened her interest and awareness of Medical Ethics. Thus, with this new interest in mind, Keren now studies ethical issues in the treatment of substance users and the various enactments “addiction” takes on within the medical acute hospital. Today Keren is completing her first year of her Clinical Ethics Fellow at a local hospital while taking course work in Comparative Studies.



Caroline Toy

Caroline is a PhD candidate in Comparative Studies specializing in religion, folklore, and fan cultures. She is also an affiliate of the Center for Folklore Studies and serves on the Oversight Committee of the Center for the Study of Religion. She is completing a dissertation, tentatively titled “Wizards Shrines and Police Box Cathedrals: Re-envisioning Religiosity Through Fan Pilgrimages,” that probes the question of fan culture’s overlap with religion seen through an ethnographic study of pilgrimages to filming locations, shrines to fictional characters, and media attractions like the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. Her work on this subject has previously appeared in the *Journal of Fandom Studies* (2017). Caroline teaches courses in popular culture and American religion for the Department, and also serves as Graduate Project Manager for the American Religious Sounds Project, a multi-institutional digital humanities project that documents the diversity of American religious life through sound in space. Fieldwork for the ARSP has included working with Buddhist, Druid, and Christian communities in the Columbus area and Appalachian Ohio (where she has also conducted research with the Ohio Field Schools). Caroline has a background in experiential education and is especially interested in teaching and learning; with Elizabeth Marsch Vu, she recently designed Comparative Studies’ first online course. She is a regular presenter at the conferences of multiple societies, including the American Academy of Religion, the American Folklore Society, the Fan Studies Network, and the Popular Culture Association. Recent awards include Comparative Studies’ Margaret Lynd Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Graduate Teaching Associate and honorable mention recognition for Writing Across the Curriculum’s OSU-wide Outstanding Writing Instruction Award.





Ana Velasco

Ana was born in La Paz, Bolivia and is now a MA-PhD student in the department of Comparative Studies. She has a B.A. in Political Science from Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo" at La Paz, Bolivia and a M.A. in Intercultural Conflict Management from the Alice Salomon Hochschule at Berlin, Germany. She has worked as a researcher in Bolivia in private think tanks as well as in public research institutions, devoting her research mainly to the areas of race relations and nation imaginaries. In this sense, she has explored the way social and cultural context shape national identities by studying the concept of mestizaje in Bolivia. In addition, she has observed the way politics and the State shape racial identities by building official categories at the census. She has also studied the way economics shape social identities through the study of consumption habits in Bolivia and fieldwork in street commerce in La Paz. Finally, she has examined how the way people imagine their political past shapes their national identities: she has called this "political folklore." Her latest work is about the sexual division of work, care work, its distribution between men and women, and its impact on children's lives. She was also project manager for Biblioteca del Bicentenario de Bolivia (BBB), a public funded project aimed at selecting and publishing a collection of the 200 most important books for Bolivia's bicentenary. For the past years she has worked as part time teacher in the Political Sciences Department at Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo" and as a columnist writer in Bolivia. In 2019 she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship from the Fulbright Faculty Development Program, which took her to OSU. Currently she is interested in Childhood Studies, Political Psychology and Cultural and Social Neuroscience. On her research in the Comparative Studies Department, she would like to explore the relationship between power and mental health; specifically, she intends to study how our current notions of democracy and capitalism has affected and changed our brains, while at the same time, understanding the psychological conditions needed to build power systems that can offer social justice. In order to understand these conditions, she argues that it is important to research childhood and how our notions of power have shaped children's – today's adults – mental health and its capacities for engaging with pluralism and democracy.



Bennett Paul Whitaker

Bennett earned his M.A. in Speech Communication with emphases in performance studies, rhetoric, and philosophy of communication: his thesis offered a queer critique of actors' bodies in an ensemble performance he produced. As a Ph.D. student in Comparative Studies, his research areas additionally include performativity and performance (as method, as epistemology); play and games; and critical and queer inquiry. Recent conference presentations have investigated strategic inaccessibility as an anti-orientalist and anti-ableist intervention in *Madama Butterfly* and the history and far future of the universe, presented through historical materialist critique of progress and play as rendered by a 17th-century fop alter persona. His current interest is in connecting the excess performative stylishness of Restoration foppery with the extravagant expenditure entailed in Georges Bataille's notion of general economy. Bennett is also a full-time (ASL – English) interpreter and transcriber working for Student Life Disability Services.



Enrico Zammarchi

In November 2019, Enrico will defend his dissertation, titled “My style is strictly Italo”: A History of Italian Hip-Hop. The dissertation is the first project to look at Italy's recent history through the lens of music and, more specifically, through the lens of hip-hop culture. Last June, thanks to the support of a series of grants, he presented his research at the second meeting of the European Hip-Hop Studies Network, held at the University of Bristol, UK. Subsequently, he became one of the network's regional representatives for Southern Europe, with a special focus on Italy. Together with Professor Clarissa Clò (San Diego State University), Enrico has written an article on Afro-Italian rappers, identity politics, and questions of nationhood; the article is currently under review and should be published in 2020. In the Spring, Enrico will enroll in the M.A. in Italian program in the Department of French and Italian at The Ohio State University.

