Natalia Molina
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Her work lies at the intersections of race, gender, culture, and citizenship. Her first book, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, which garnered the Noris and Carol Hundley book prize of the PCB-American Historical Association, explored the ways in which race is constructed relationally and regionally. *Fit to Be Citizens?* demonstrates how both science and public health shaped the meaning of race in the early twentieth century. Her second book, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, examines Mexican immigration--from 1924, when immigration acts drastically reduced immigration to the U.S., to 1965, when many quotas were abolished--to understand how broad themes of race and citizenship are constructed. These years shaped the emergence of what she describes as an *immigration regime* that defined the racial categories that continue to influence perceptions in the U.S. about Mexican Americans, race, and ethnicity. Professor Molina serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Diversity and Equity. She previously served as the Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities and before that as the Director for University of California Education Abroad Program in Granada, Córdoba, and Cádiz, Spain.

**How Scientific Racialization Shapes Mexican Immigration Policies, 1848-present**

This presentation discusses how immigrants have long been characterized as disease carriers and how this characterization is used to justify not only their exclusion at the border, but in ways that may surprise us once they are settled in the United States.

I argue that these disease tropes are particularly pernicious when dealing with Mexicans and immigration because they are not new. Today's stigmatization of Mexicans as disease carriers in public debates about immigration can be traced back through a long history of scientific racialization of Mexicans, dating as far back to when Mexico was first incorporated into the United States in 1848. I demonstrate how cultural representations of Mexicans as disease carriers have been revived, resuscitated, and re-created from 1848 to the present.

I draw primarily on historical case studies from California because, from its earliest days as a U.S. territory, it was home to a large Mexican population and today is home to the largest population of Mexican immigrants in the country. Further, California was instrumental in shaping attitudes in the U.S. about Mexican immigrants. As a hotbed for scientific, medical, and public health standards, programs, and policies, California shaped the meaning of “Mexican” and Mexicans’ place in the U.S. racial hierarchy for generation after generation. Despite the passage of time and changes in social and cultural norms, the ways in which Mexicans are marginalized and disenfranchised have remained startlingly consistent and continue to shape policy and perspectives today.

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