



WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

DECOLONIALITY WORKSHOP SERIES: “KUSCH EN EL TRÓPICO: PHAGOCYTOSIS AND TRANSCULTURATION IN THE WORK OF IRKA MATEO”

AUGUST 28, 2018 | YEUNG PENNY PUI CHEE | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

By **F. Joseph Sepúlveda** with editorial input by **Rafael Vizcaíno**

Before the end of the Spring 2018 semester, the Decoloniality Workshop held its fourth meeting of the year, where Professor Carlos Decena (Latino and Caribbean Studies, Women and Gender Studies) gave a talk titled “Kusch en el trópico: Phagocytosis and Transculturation in the Work of Irka Mateo.”

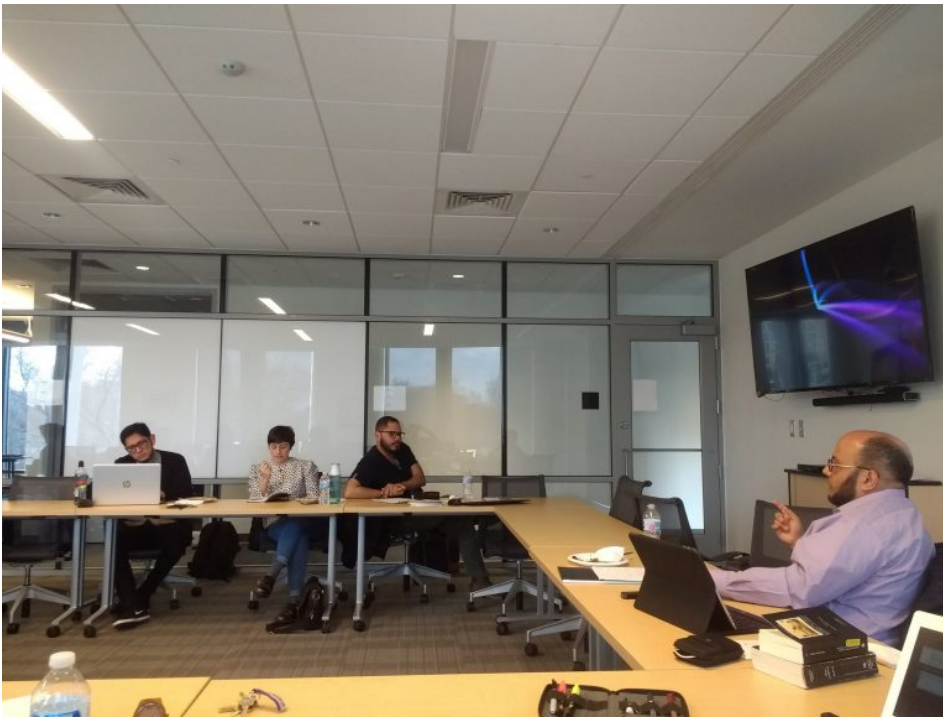
Professor Decena started his discussion by contextualizing how his current research project, which seeks to attend to “needs that are not scholarly,” follows up on his previous work *Tacit Subjects* (Duke University Press, 2011). An intervention within Latinx and sexuality studies, the *tacit subject* resists the

dominant paradigm of "coming out" and visibility within North American queer theorizing. In Professor Decena's work in progress, this framework is deployed to understand how Dominicans experience the sphere of the sacred/divine, beyond a Judeo-Christian understanding.



Grounded on ethnographic experiences in rural Dominican communities, Professor Decena spoke of how some people retain the memory of indigenous Taino figures (e.g. Anacaona) through a relationship with the land which could be understood as tacitly sacred. Professor Decena presented imagery showcasing elaborate religious shrines inside Dominican homes, which include a ritual practice of the "feeding of stones" that is often associated with Afro-Caribbean Santería. These practices, however, also point out the persistence of indigenous Taino beliefs within Dominican culture, against the dominant historiography within the island.

Professor Decena specifically addressed the musical/visual production of Irka Mateo, a Dominican folk musician whose work seeks to retrieve the importance of indigenous symbols and practices. Mateo's work illuminates and strives to remedy a long-standing belief in the total annihilation and disappearance of the indigenous population within the Dominican Republic. Professor Decena's focus on figures like Mateo points to the multiplicity of Dominican racial identity and permits rethinking Dominican racial and cultural heritage as more complex than previously imagined. This has the potential to challenge some of the island's most repressive national mythologies, including what Dominican historian April Mayes calls the Hispanist nationalism of the Dominican elites.



The Decoloniality Workshop is a space for junior scholars to present work in progress and receive constructive feedback in a relaxed and committed community setting. In the Fall of 2018, Haruki Eda (Sociology) will open the 2018-2019 line-up. Please visit <https://decolonialityworkshop.wordpress.com/> for more information about past and future events.

◆ DECOLONIALITY

◆ FACULTY RESEARCH

◆ FEATURED

◆ WORKSHOP