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Nicole Iturriaga (MPI-MMG)

“At the foot of the grave: Challenging collective memories of violence in post-Franco Spain”

This lecture explores the tactics that social movement actors use to introduce long silenced counter-memories of violence to supplant the ‘official’ memory. To examine this, this paper examines the Spanish Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH) and the forensic classes given at mass grave exhumations. I argue that during these classes activists use multiple tactics (de-politicized science framing, action-oriented objects, and embodiment) to deliver a counter-memory of the Spanish Civil War and Franco regime, and to make moral claims and the transitional justice claims. This research also shows how victims’ remains and the personal objects, found in the graves also provoke the desired meaning that emotionally connects those listening to the classes to the victims and the ARMH’s counter-memory.

NICOLE ITURRIAGA is a sociologist with research interests in social movements, collective memory, human rights, culture, necropolitics, and the politics of reproduction. Her research examines how human rights activists are using forensic science to reframe histories of violence among other mechanisms (transnational advocacy networks, pedagogy, performativity) that further their goals of restoring identity, memory, and justice within a globalized context. Since July 2018 she is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at MPI-MMG, where she will continue her research on the impact of scientific exhumations on post-conflict states, specifically Spain and Argentina.