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## UC San Diego Professor Natalia Molina Wins 2018 China Residency Exchange Fellowship

### History professor will teach 10-day seminar in China on US racial politics, using unique research method

University of California San Diego professor Natalia Molina has been awarded the 2018 China Residency Exchange Fellowship at Wuhan University by the Organization of American Historians. Given in partnership with the American History Research Association of China, the residency will see Molina present a summer seminar on race and politics in the context of the United States.



*UC San Diego Department of History professor Natalia Molina (Courtesy Natalia Molina)*

Molina is a leading expert on the intersections of race, culture, immigration and citizenship whose research on Mexican American history, Chinese immigrants and Japanese immigrants explores the racial politics of U.S. history.

“Natalia’s research offers insight into how people in society interact with each other today, deeply rooted in a long history of race and cultural identity,” said [Department of History](#) chair Pamela Radcliff. “Her lessons and methods are applicable across all borders, and the summer seminar participants will benefit greatly from her participation.”

The award-winning author of “How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts” (2014) and “Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1940” (2006), Molina will call on her previous international research experience in Japan, Mexico City and Europe to fully participate in the teaching exchange.

“In addition to broadening my experience and understanding of how scholars approach questions of race, the China Residencies Program will provide me with the opportunity to engage in invaluable intellectual exchanges with scholars outside the United States,” Molina said. “I find the conversations I have with these scholars invaluable.”

The fellowship will help further Molina's research that studies race through a relational lens, not a comparative one. A comparative treatment of race both compares and contrasts groups, she explained, treating them and their experiences as independent of one another.

In contrast, Molina's use of a relational treatment of race views race as socially constructed, moving beyond traditional notions to expose connections, not separations, between racial groups. Molina coined the term "racial scripts" to highlight the ways in which the lives of racial groups are linked across time and space.

The fellowship, she said, will advance this work and help society to think through these issues outside of a U.S.-centered framework.

"Because of my commitment to understanding race within a relational framework, it is imperative to have these conversations with others interested in cultures, movements, interactions and outcomes, which this fellowship will provide," Molina said.

Now in its fifth year, the Organization of American Historians and American History Research Association of China offer the exchange program through a grant from the Ford Foundation. The annual program brings three U.S. historians to teach a seminar at three different Chinese universities. In exchange, three Chinese historians of the U.S. attend the organization's annual meeting and a weeklong residency at a U.S. university.

For her seminar at Wuhan University — located in Hubei Province in central China, with a population of more than 10 million people — Molina said she intends to use primary documents like the Declaration of Independence, landmark court cases regarding citizenship and cultural attitudes, and immigration-specific legislation, including the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, to make visible the connections among subordinated groups as they encounter the rhetoric of U.S. democracy. The seminar will also address the Civil Rights Movement and legacies of racial politics.

Among many honors, Molina received a Distinguished Teaching Award from UC San Diego in 2014 and is the 2017 – 2018 Public Scholar Award winner from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"I am eager to travel to Wuhan University and collaborate with scholars of American culture, politics and immigration who look at issues of racial politics through very different lenses," Molina said. "Exchanges like these reinforce my desire not just for intellectual exchange, but exchange that decenters and destabilizes many of the ideas and frameworks we take for granted in the U.S."

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## MEDIA CONTACT

**Anthony King**, 858-822-7824, [anthonyking@ucsd.edu](mailto:anthonyking@ucsd.edu)

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