Pliny In Tlatelolco: Natural History Between Two Worlds

Seminar presented by Dr. Iris Montero, Brown University.

In the fall of 1576, an unlikely group of indigenous and European collaborators undertook a prolonged writing retreat in the Franciscan College of Tlatelolco, in today's Mexico City. The task at hand was the production of a natural history of New Spain, as Mexico was called then, based on the model of Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* (77-79 AD). This talk explores the motives and implications of writing a natural history between two worlds. Through my analysis of the case of the hummingbird, the Tlatelolco natural history reveals the coexistence of both the classical understanding of nature as a hierarchical order with humans at the top and the indigenous view of the natural world as related to and aspirational for humans.

**Bio:** Iris Montero is Visiting Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies and Science and Technology Studies at Brown University. She works on European, Latin American and Mesoamerican traditions of natural knowledge production, and is interested in how asymmetries of power come together with asymmetries of knowledge. She received her Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Science from the University of Cambridge and was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cogut Institute for the
Humanities at Brown. Her first book project *What the Hummingbird Knows* centers the elasticity of the early modern genre of natural history to make visible how native Mexican, Creole and European intellectuals coproduced knowledge about the natural world.

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Seminar

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