

CLAS Open Seminars - Lent Term 2025

Mondays 5:15pm

SG1 Ground Floor, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DT

Monday 10 March - 5:15pm

Sonic extractivism in the Caribbean in the early Twentieth Century

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Chair: [Peter McMurray](#) (University of Cambridge)

Abstract:

In the early Twentieth-Century, the United Fruit Company became the largest food corporation of its time, operating in nine countries in Central America and the Caribbean. While its corporate culture has been written about extensively little is known about its musical and radio activities. This talk builds on the work of Alejandra Bronfman and Christina Drale who have researched the Caribbean as an innovative site of radio invention and transmission, by exploring in larger detail the multiple media activities of the United Fruit Company. This includes not only the radio stations on land but also the ones on the more than 100 ships owned by them. I also explore the transportation of both musical researchers and musicians to the company towns in which the company operated. In this talk I will contextualize what Jason Colby has called a corporate colonialism as enacted by the United States and its implications for understanding sonic extractivism as a facet of a broader aural industrial extractivist complex. I will link this to histories and anthropologies of food, music and sound in the Caribbean.



Ana María Ochoa Gautier is a professor in the Newcomb Department of Music, the Department of Communication and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Her work is on histories of listening and the decolonial, on sound studies and climate change, and on the relationship between the creative industries, the literary and the sonic in Latin America and the Caribbean. Her current projects explore the bioacoustics of life and death in colonial histories of the Americas and the relationship between sound, climate change

and the colonial. She has been a Distinguished Greenleaf Scholar in Residence at Tulane University (2016) and a Guggenheim Fellow (2007-2008). She has served on the advisory boards of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and

Cultural Heritage. Her book, *Aurality, Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Duke University Press, 2014) was awarded the Alan Merriam Prize by the Society for Ethnomusicology. She is also the author of *Músicas locales en tiempos de globalización* (Buenos Aires: Norma 2003) and *Entre los Deseos y los Derechos: Un Ensayo Crítico sobre Políticas Culturales* (Bogotá: Ministerio de cultura, 2003) and numerous articles in Spanish and English. Her book *La Vida de los Sonidos* is currently in print in Chile with Mimesis Ediciones.