

## CLAS Open Seminars - Lent Term 2025

Mondays 5:15pm

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

**PLEASE NOTE:** The talk will be in person and in Spanish.

To access the English interpretation, you will need to bring a headset and a phone/laptop with the Zoom application.

**Monday 17 March - 5:15pm**

Simón Bolívar Seminar - Spanish

*Discursive, Organizational, and Mobilization Tactics of Black Middle Classes in the New Millennium: Challenging Power, Meritocracy, and Technocracy*

[Mara Viveros Vigoya](#) (CLAS Simón Bolívar Professor 2025)

Chair: [Mónica Moreno Figueroa](#) (University of Cambridge)

### **Abstract:**

This presentation explores the discursive, organizational, and mobilization tactics of Black middle classes at the turn of the millennium, questioning whether these groups have successfully challenged hegemonic power structures and claimed their right to govern. By questioning traditional narratives of meritocracy and technocracy that have upheld political power, it examines how racialized middle classes displace or contest power narratives historically dominated by white or mestizo middle classes. The presentation addresses how multiple layers of domination impact the ability of racialized middle classes to mobilize critical discourses and resist dominant narratives of power. Additionally, it investigates how discourses that politicize racialized identities within leftist projects offer new strategies for addressing the internal tensions faced by leftist governments that advocate for social justice and inclusion but struggle to effectively integrate all marginalized voices. Finally, it examines how racialized middle classes challenge traditional notions of meritocracy and technocracy in their strategies to gain political power, proposing alternative discourses and organizational methods that destabilize the status quo.

**Mara Viveros Vigoya** has a PhD in Anthropology from EHESS (Paris). She is tenured professor at the Faculty of Human Sciences at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, teaching in the Department of Anthropology (1998-2017) and the School of Gender Studies. She is co-founder of the School and has been its director three times.

She has been a visiting professor at the University of Paris' I' Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine (IHEAL) (Simón Bolívar Professorship 2000-2001), École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (2010), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México (2013), Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina (2016), and The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland (2017). Between September 2014 and July 2015 she completed a postdoctoral fellowship as member at the School of Social Science at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study. She was President of the Latin American Studies Association from 2019 to 2020.

Throughout her career as a researcher and lecturer, she has been guided by the theoretical, political, and ethical dimensions of critical feminism. Her research has focussed on the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and race and ethnicity in the social and cultural dynamics of Latin American societies. Her current interests include Black middle classes in Colombia; anti-racist ideologies, practices, and cultures in Latin America; and the study of men and masculinities from a feminist perspective. As translator into Spanish of Aimé Césaire's work, she has recently become interested in the unsung contributions of women to the *Négritude* movement.

She is the author of a number of academic books including *De quebradores y Cumplidores* (CES/UNAL/Fundación Ford/Profamilia, 2012), *Les Couleurs de la masculinité. Expériences intersectionnelles et pratiques de pouvoir en Amérique Latine* (La Découverte, 2018) and *Breaking the Boundaries of the Colombian Socio-Racial Order: Black Middle Classes through an Intersectional Lens* (Lexington, 2024). She is the editor of the book *Black Feminism: teoría crítica, violencias y racismo. Conversaciones entre Angela Davis y Gina Dent* (UNAL, 2019).

