

## Bio

Sophie Esch is Associate Professor of Latin American Literature and Culture at Rice University in Houston. She writes and researches at the intersection of literature, politics, war, and the environment in Latin America. Esch is the author of the award-winning book *Modernity at Gunpoint. Firearms, Politics, and Culture in Mexico and Central America* (2018, University of Pittsburgh Press, published in Spanish in 2022 as *Letra y metralla* published by Bonilla Artiga Editores). The book traces the politico-cultural meaning of firearms in the Mexican and Nicaraguan revolutions and the drug war in Mexico and Central America. She is currently completing her second book, *Creaturely Cold War. More-Than-Human Narratives of War and Revolution in Africa and Latin America*, which is under contract with Columbia University Press. The book analyzes a wide range of prose fiction from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Mozambique, and Angola and brings together animal studies, environmental humanities, and peace and conflict studies. It shows how nonhuman entities such as forests and animals become crucial for exploring ecological, political, and affective dimensions of war and describes a move away from a Cold War world understood in anthropocentric or bipolar terms towards entanglement, ecology, and multispecies conviviality. For her research, she has received multiple LASA awards: the Premio Iberoamericano for *Letra y metralla* in 2023, the Mexico section's best book in the humanities prize for *Modernity at Gunpoint* in 2019, best senior paper for her work on the animal turn from the Culture, Power & Politics section in 2023, and a honorable mention from the Mexico section for her work on hippos in drug war narratives in 2022.

Esch is an internationally active and interdisciplinarily trained Latin Americanist. She received her Ph.D. with distinction in Spanish & Portuguese from Tulane University and her Magister in Latin American literature and political science from the Free University of Berlin with research and study stays, at the Colegio de México, the UNAM, and the UCA in Managua. She has been a short-term senior visiting scholar at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (Mecila), São Paulo, at the University of Cologne, and at the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin. Her research has been supported by the Alexander von Humboldt foundation, the National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH), the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). She has served in multiple roles for LASA: program chair "literature track," secretary-treasurer of the Central America section, and prize and executive committees of the Mexico section.

At her institution, she is the director of Latin American and Latinx Studies and is at the forefront of re-envisioning Latin American studies for the twenty-first century, with a transnational and pluricultural vision (including U.S. Latino/x/e studies and underscoring the heterogeneity of "América Ladina") and building bridges between area studies and STEM fields. She has been organizing a lecture series on "New Directions in Latin American and Latinx Studies" and is the founder of the Third Coast Central America Collaborative, a regional network of Central Americanists in the U.S. South. She teaches in both Spanish and English, including courses on Latin American political thought, biodiversity and conflict, and Mexican and Central American cultural studies.