

SPRING 2023 CHARLAS CON CAFÉ

ETHNOGRAPHY AT THE EDGES OF A CONCEPT: FROM GROUNDWATER TO AQUIFERS IN COSTA RICA

with Andrea Ballestero

Groundwater efficiently conveys a sense of water as a fungible unit that can be exchanged, banked, or spent. In contrast, the figure of the aquifer activates a grounded concept whereby land, liquid, and history are inseparable. This talk queries the techno-scientific tools people use to move from groundwater to aquifers, and back. These oscillations happen at the level of political jurisdictions and data bases, and have less to do with definitional struggles and more with political tactics. In this context, I ask what are the stakes of oscillating between concepts, and what kind of responsibilities for subterranean water worlds are possible along that movement?



Dr. Andrea Ballestero is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern California. She is also Director of the Ethnography Studio. Her book *A Future History of Water* (Duke University Press, 2019) examines how government officials and NGOs in Costa Rica and Northeast Brazil differentiate between water as a human right and water as a commodity. She is also co-editor of *Experimenting with Ethnography: A Companion to Analysis* (Duke University Press 2021). Dr. Ballestero is currently writing a book that explores cultural imaginaries of the underground in Costa Rica, focusing on how the emergence of aquifers into the public sphere is expanding the social world downwards into subterranean space.

Friday, February 10, 1 - 2pm
Coffee and Snacks at 12:30 pm
Marshall Building, Suite 280

Register to join via Zoom



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

**Center for Latin
American Studies**

