



# SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

36th Annual Faculty Lecture



Selected by her peers,

## Dr. Sonia Zúñiga-Lomelí

presents

# From Rabbits to Spanglish: Journey of a Language



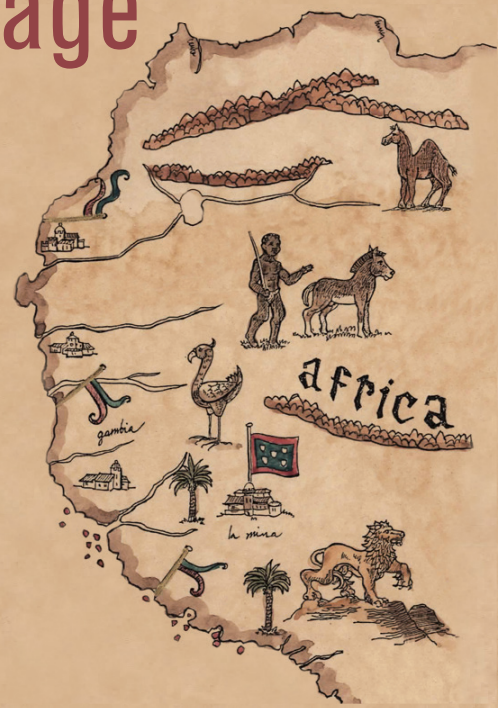
# SB CC

SANTA BARBARA  
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Garvin Theatre (Reception)

## April 15, 2015 at 2:31

Mapa del Tratado de Tordesillas by artist Carlos Adeva





# SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

## ANNUAL FACULTY LECTURES

This is the 36th in a series of lectures wherein a distinguished Santa Barbara City College faculty member is chosen by colleagues to deliver an address on a scholarly subject of general interest. Outstanding classroom teaching, counseling or librarianship; unselfish, dedicated faculty service to Santa Barbara City College, is the criteria for selection.

## ABOUT THE LECTURE

Language is a unique tool that allows people to achieve efficient communication. It helps to establish greater common ground for understanding and interpreting ideas, emotions and thoughts. As civilizations have evolved, so have their linguistic habitats, thus creating a variegated map of language pockets. In the case of Spanish, its birth and development took place in the Iberian Peninsula, the region called *I-shepan-ha* or the Land of the Hyrax (rabbits) by the Phoenicians.

Spanish is a fascinating language with a long illustrious history. From its origins in the Iberian Peninsula as a derivative of Latin, it grew to become the preferred language for the expansion and unification of the Spanish Empire, which took a dramatic step in 1492 with the expulsion from Spain of the Arabs and Jews, the publication of the first Spanish Grammar, and the auspicious arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean, greatly expanding the Spanish Empire.

With the arrival of the Spaniards to the Americas came Spanish, the *lingua franca* that was to be used as the galvanizing element in the exploration, invasion, conquest, colonization and evangelization of the newly acquired territories. The encounter between the Spanish language and the languages spoken by different groups gave birth to Latin American Spanish, a vibrant version of the Peninsular Spanish, with the same grammatical structure but with acquired Indigenous and African lexica. After the Independence movement took place in the early part of the 19th century, Spanish continued as the official language of the newly formed countries reflecting the national identities of its speakers.

As Spanish speakers have come to the United States, the coexistence of English and Spanish over the centuries has created generations of bilingual and bicultural Americans, especially what has been termed Generation Ñ, with an ever-evolving intermingling of Spanish and English called Spanglish. With the presence of some 55 million Spanish speakers, and bilingualism becoming more prevalent in the United States, what was once Spanish *in* the United States is now Spanish *of* the United States.

At a time when some languages are literally dying, it is remarkable to witness the development of Spanglish, a unique linguistic phenomenon with a distinctive blend of lexicon and syntax, cultures and worldviews.

*“Everything is language.”*

— Octavio Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre: The Poem, the Poetic Revelation, Poetry and History*

## DEDICATION

To my past, present and future family. You are the light of my life.

To Dr. Peter MacDougall for his leadership, vision and support.

To Don (Mr.) Isidor Elias, who professed the value of learning languages to achieve peace.



# SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE

## ABOUT THE LECTURER

Sonia María Zúñiga-Lomelí was born in the seaport city of La Ceiba, Honduras. In 1967, when she was 15 years old, she migrated to the United States and settled in Brooklyn, N.Y., where she attended Prospect Heights, an all-girls high school. She attended Queens College of the City University of New York and received a B.A. in Applied Linguistics (1976). She went to the University of New Mexico (UNM) and started her M.A. work in Spanish Linguistics, but changed to Hispanic Literature when she took a Spanish literature class, taught by the great Chicano writer Dr. Sabine Ulibarrí. At UNM, she met her husband, Francisco A. Lomelí, while he completed his doctorate in Latin American Literature. In August of 1978, in a span of 3 days, Francisco defended his dissertation; Sonia and Francisco got married, and drove back to California, where Francisco started a joint appointment in the Spanish and Portuguese, and the Chicana/o Studies Departments at UCSB. Sonia and Francisco have three children: Natasha, a 5th grade teacher at Notre Dame Elementary School; Carlos, co-owner of Nite Bite, a late night food delivery service; Yasmín (currently at Humboldt State). All of her children graduated from Notre Dame Elementary School, Santa Barbara High School, and attended Santa Barbara City College.

Sonia's childhood was spent in La Ceiba, where she was exposed to Spanish, English (Jamaican and U. S.), Garífuna and Latin (the language of prayer and Mass). But since this was a seaport, sailors who spoke a myriad of other languages visited the city. It was this exposure to the many samplings of people's expressions that made her curious about language. This seaport was also where she learned how important it was for people to have a voice and to be heard.

Sonia's journey as a teacher started at Queens College where, as an undergraduate student, she worked in a summer program aimed at inspiring and empowering Puerto Rican high school students to continue with their education and to see college as a viable option. This was truly a pivotal experience for her, because in the process of working with these students she discovered and fell in love with the idea of becoming an educator. At UCSB, she studied Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Literatures, became actively involved in the graduate student group on campus, and was instrumental in the creation of *Tinta*, a literary magazine by and for graduate students. Under the tutelage of Professor Sara Poot-Herrera, she wrote her dissertation on “¿Quién se tragó la selva? Cuatro novelas ecológicas costarricenses / “Who Swallowed the Jungle? Four Ecological Costa Rican Novels”, and earned her Ph.D. degree in 2003.

Sonia has been a full-time faculty member in the School of Modern Languages (SoML) and an active member of SBCC since 1990. She has led many initiatives and, together with her colleagues, she has worked continuously to make the School of Modern Languages an integral part of our students' well-rounded and global preparation. A strong supporter of students experiencing language and culture through Study Abroad, she has participated as Director of programs in Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, and Spain. She also helped design and implement the first ASL and Japanese intensive summer programs to give students an immersion experience without leaving Santa Barbara.

To meet the needs of students' different learning styles, she developed self-paced language courses, has also been involved in the development of language placement tests and the testing of language proficiency, and the development and revision of the Spanish for Heritage Speakers curriculum. Most recently, Sonia has worked with the Bilingual GED faculty to develop curriculum for Spanish literacy as a foundation for students learning English as a Second Language.

Sonia has been passionate about recognizing students' dedication to the demands of learning another language, and to honor and recognize those students who rise to the occasion, she worked to establish a chapter of the Spanish Honor Society Sigma Delta Mu. She also worked to establish the yearly SoML Outstanding Students Awards Ceremony. She has been involved in college governance serving as department Chair, on the Academic Senate and on numerous committees: Curriculum Advisory, Instructional Technology, Planning and Resources, Academic Policies, Program Evaluation, as well as on evaluations and new hire committees. Her peers nominated her twice for the Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award. She has served as an adviser for the Spanish Club, MEChA, and the Esperanto Club.

For Sonia it was—and still is—inspiring to experience humanity as one, with its different shades, sizes, and languages. One life lesson she has learned is that language should not be taken for granted and should be cultivated to achieve productive communication. “Hablando se entiende la gente” is one of her favorite sayings, which means, “By speaking to one another, people reach true understanding.”



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photo by Catalina Ávila, *The Channels*, May 2014

I learned at a young age that one of the most important things in life is to be grateful. And it is in the spirit of appreciation that I express my gratitude to Dr. John Kay and Michel Masson for having started this wonderful tradition. I also want to thank all who nominated me, and to the Faculty Lecturer committee members who selected me for this honor. To all the remarkable colleagues—faculty and staff alike—whose kindness inspire me daily to become a better person, teacher, and professional, MUCHAS GRACIAS. Through your example, inspiration and friendship I continue to reach for the stars. I also want to thank my past, present and future students, for you are the reason my job is not a chore. Your desire to learn and to be educated and cultured human beings keep me young and on my toes.

I am grateful for my colleagues, past and present, in the School of Modern Languages and ESL. Their dedication and commitment to inter-cultural communication and human understanding are exemplary. I especially thank the entire crew of the Day of the Dead Committee, which for the past 25 years have been instrumental in bringing to life such an exquisite cultural expression of a universal experience.

I am grateful for the gentle presence in my life of Daniel and June Sturt, whose desire to learn Spanish and interest in Latino students getting an education has been inspirational; and Dr. Bernard Spolsky, whose acceptance of my late request to be admitted as a graduate student at the University of New Mexico forever changed my life. And last, but certainly not least, my gratitude to my family, because without each one of you, my life would have no meaning. My love for you expands to the edges of the universe, and beyond.

## PREVIOUS FACULTY LECTURE HONOREES

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|                                   |         |                                       |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Dr. Robert Casier .....           | 1979-80 | Mr. Joseph P. White .....             | 1997-98 |
| Mr. Henry H. Bagish .....         | 1980-81 | Dr. Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar ..... | 1998-99 |
| Dr. Charles R. Courtney .....     | 1981-82 | Dr. Jeannette Webber .....            | 1999-00 |
| Dr. Harold M. Dunn .....          | 1982-83 | Dr. Peter Haslund .....               | 2000-01 |
| Dr. John Kay .....                | 1983-84 | Ms. Genevieve B. Anderson .....       | 2001-02 |
| Mr. Raymond O'Connor .....        | 1984-85 | Mr. Carl W. Sundbeck.....             | 2002-03 |
| Dr. Barbara S. Lindemann.....     | 1985-86 | Dr. Janet Shapiro.....                | 2003-04 |
| Dr. Elwood Schapansky.....        | 1986-87 | Dr. Peter Georgakis .....             | 2004-05 |
| Dr. George E. Frakes .....        | 1987-88 | Mr. James Chesher .....               | 2005-06 |
| Dr. Elizabeth Hodes .....         | 1988-89 | Dr. John Clark .....                  | 2006-07 |
| Dr. Jack R. Ullom .....           | 1989-90 | Mr. Don Barthelmess .....             | 2007-08 |
| Dr. Curtis B. Solberg.....        | 1990-91 | Dr. Karolyn R. Hanna.....             | 2008-09 |
| Ms. Diane Johnson Handloser ..... | 1991-92 | Dr. Robert Gray .....                 | 2009-10 |
| Dr. Robert J. Cummings .....      | 1992-93 | Dr. Michael Young .....               | 2010-11 |
| Mr. John C. Egger .....           | 1993-94 | Ms. Kathleen O'Connor .....           | 2011-12 |
| Mr. Michel Masson .....           | 1994-95 | Ms. Kathleen Molloy.....              | 2012-13 |
| Dr. Gary L. Carroll .....         | 1995-96 | Mr. Blakely Barron.....               | 2013-14 |
| Mr. David N. Lawyer, Jr.....      | 1996-97 |                                       |         |