

Héctor M. Varela Rios

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Education

- 2021 Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, The Divinity School of the University of Chicago
Title: 'Take care and venerate': *Morenita*, excessive personhood, and devotedness in a Puerto Rican family
- Committee members: Dwight Hopkins (advisor), University of Chicago
(proposal approved 10/2018) Angie Heo, University of Chicago
Mayra Rivera, Harvard University
- Exams/Examiners: TH2: Early Modern Christian Thought/Susan Schreiner
(completed 5/2018) TH3: Modern Religious Thought/Ryan Coyne
TH6: Theological Anthropology/Dwight Hopkins
ASR7 Special Topic: Materiality/Angie Heo
- 2015 Master of Divinity, The Divinity School of the University of Chicago
- 2004 Master of Arts in Religion, Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, *Magna Cum Laude*
- 1990 Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez

Teaching Interests (all of these in/from the 'West')

Constructive Theologies, especially contextual and ordinary (i.e. non-academic, popular)
Religion and materiality
Latinx religion among other cultural products
Theories of Religion

Teaching Experience

- 2021 Teaching Assistant for course *Star Wars and Religion* (3 credits) – with Dr. Russell Johnson at The Divinity School, University of Chicago (Spring Quarter)
- 2019 Visiting Lecturer for course *Theology and History II: The Reformation Era* (3 credits, in Spanish) at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico (January)
- 2018 Teaching Assistant for course *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (3 credits) – with Dr. Ryan Coyne at The Divinity School, University of Chicago (Fall quarter)
- 2018 Teaching Assistant for course *Being Human* (3 credits) – with Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins at The Divinity School, University of Chicago (Spring quarter)
- 2014 Co-teacher for course *Immigration from the theological and philosophical perspectives* (3 credits) – with Dr. Eliseo Pérez-Alvarez at S.C.U.P.E. (now OMNIA), Chicago (July and August)

Pedagogical Training

- 2020 MOOC – Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking (20 hrs of professional learning), offered by Harvard University’s HarvardX (March)
- 2019 Certificate – Craft of Teaching Program in the Academic Study of Religion from The University of Chicago Divinity School. More information here: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/craft-teaching>
- 2019 Certificate in Mental Health First Aid (8-hour course; geared toward the academic environment and instructors) by the National Council of Behavioral Health, offered by The University of Chicago (April)
- 2018 MOOC – The Science of Learning: What Every Teacher Should Know (20 hrs of professional learning), offered by Columbia University’s TeachersCollegeX (August)
- 2018 Training for Internship at the Writing Program of the University of Chicago. More information at <https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/jobs/lectors>

Research Interests

The intersection between material culture (objects, artifacts, things) and theology: the creation and management of theological meaning, knowledge, and understanding through human engagement with material culture, religious or not, especially as displayed in local religiosities and theologies and in Latinx contexts.

Publications

- 2022 (UPCOMING) Article: “Constellation: Seeing belief as faith objects”, *Journal for Religious and Theological Information*, Taylor & Francis (TBD)
- 2021 (APPROVED) Article: “Using Latinx theology’s *lo cotidiano* to decolonialize Oller’s ‘El Velorio’”, *Journal for Religion, Film, and Media*, Schüren Verlag (October)
- 2018 Article: “Sancochando theological anthropology: one Puerto Rican heavy soup as a heuristic”, *Perspectivas*, online journal for the Hispanic Theological Initiative Consortium (Summer). Available at: <http://perspectivasonline.com/downloads/sancochando-theological-anthropology-one-puerto-rican-heavy-soup-as-heuristic/>
- 2017 Book review on *Poetics of the Flesh* by Mayra Rivera, *Perspectivas*, online journal for the Hispanic Theological Initiative Consortium, Issue 14 (April). Available at: <http://perspectivasonline.com/books/poetics-of-the-flesh-by-mayra-rivera-duke-university-press-2015-216-pages-22-95/>
- 2015 Article: “On the Pope’s Glass as hermeneutical lens”, *Sightings*, online journal of the Martin E. Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion at the Divinity School University of Chicago (October)

Conference Presentations

- 2019 “Domestic sacramentality: Enrique and La Morenita” at the Notre Dame/CTU Perelmuter Conference at the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL (April)
- 2019 “Decolonizing theology: autochthonous warrants” at the University of Notre Dame/University of Chicago Graduate Student Conference, Chicago, IL (March)
- 2017 “Concrete Religion: church-to-home adaptive reuse from a theological perspective” at the Ecclesiology and Ethnography Conference at St. John’s College, Durham, UK (September)
- 2016 “Chupacabra and itinerant enchantment” at the Graduate Student Conference of the Department of Religious Studies at Northwestern University – Specters, Hauntings, Presences (October)
- 2016 “Bakiné as indigenous creativity: one performance of family in the chaotic Atlantic Modern” at the Religious Studies conference at Brown University – Family and Genealogy in the Study of Religion (March)
- 2016 “An Example of Atlantic Modern Natural/Artificial Mingling: Florida Water” at the Tenth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture at University of Florida Gainesville – Religion, Science, and the Future (January)
- 2015 “Agua Florida: Meaningful and Messy Hybridity in the Atlantic Modern” at the Fourth Annual Graduate Conference at Harvard Divinity School – Ways of Knowledge (October)

Fellowships/Awards

- 2019-2020 HTI/Lilly Dissertation Completion Fellowship. For more information, visit <http://hti.ptsem.edu/dissertation-fellowship/>
- 2019-2020 Martin Marty Center Junior Fellowship at The Divinity School of the University of Chicago. For more information, visit <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/fellowships-0> and <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/martin-marty-center>

Other Relevant Work Experience/Service/Training

- 2020-2021 Lead Mentor, BONDS Mentorship Program for incoming students, The Divinity School
- 2020 Certificate – Undocumented Student Ally Training at the Center for Identity + Inclusion of the University of Chicago. More information here: <https://diversityandinclusion.uchicago.edu/events/undocumented-student-ally-training/>
- 2019-2020 Student member, UChicagoGrad Diversity Advisory Board, University of Chicago
- 2018, 2019 Student facilitator at New Student Orientation Day, The Divinity School

- 2018-2021 Area Assistants office (15-20 hrs/week) at The Divinity School of the University of Chicago: coordinated pre-exam conferences, qualifying exams, and placement events for PhD students, and other duties as required by the Dean of Students office.
- 2015-2016 Co-organizer, 1st Graduate Student Conference at The Divinity School of the University of Chicago “Religion and Movement” (April 2016)
- 1990-2013 Senior Project Manager for privately-held construction small business in Puerto Rico: managed field and office operations as general contractor on both private and public, industrial and institutional, capital improvement projects (total revenue: \$160M).

Leadership/Memberships

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| Theology Club at University of Chicago (co-chair) | 2017-2019 |
| Alternative Epistemologies Club at University of Chicago (chair) | 2016-2019 |
| Hispanic Theological Initiative Consortium | Since 2015 |
| American Academy of Religion | Since 2014 |

Languages

- Native in Spanish
- Reading Proficiency in French
- Research Proficiency in German
- Elementary Reading Proficiency in Greek