

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies**Dr. Yanilda Gonzalez**

Democracy Fellow
Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation
Harvard University

***Authoritarian Coercion by Democratic Means:
The Paradox of Police Reform in Latin America***

TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2015

3:00-5:00 PM

Jackman Humanities Building, Room 100A
170 St. George Street

Why do democratic states often exhibit distinctly authoritarian modes of coercion? Dr. Gonzalez demonstrates that authoritarian coercive institutions persist under democracy, not because politicians are unresponsive to societal demands, but rather because fragmentation among different societal groups may render reforming defective police institutions electorally disadvantageous. She challenges the conventional notion of security as a public good, and instead show that it is quite often dependent upon distributive contestation and electoral competition. Comparing police institutions in Buenos Aires Province, São Paulo State, and Colombia, she shows that coercive institutions in the context of Latin American democracies pose a paradox. While building state capacity in the provision of security has been an important challenge for new democracies, democracy, too, may pose an important challenge for reforming coercive institutions. The project is based on twenty-two months of immersive qualitative field research in Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, during which she conducted nearly 200 in-depth interviews, participant observation, and archival research.

Yanilda González is a Democracy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. She received her Ph.D. in Politics and Social Policy from Princeton University and her B.A. in Politics and Latin American Studies from New York University. Yanilda's research interests are broadly focused on questions of state capacity and citizenship, and her current book manuscript examines the politics of coercive institutions in democracies. Prior to starting her Ph.D., Yanilda worked in human rights organizations in the United States and Argentina on issues relating to security, policing, and democracy.

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