

Frazier Rogers Hall, Room 122
10:00am, Feb 27, 2017

Community science for environmental justice in Colombia

Irene Velez-Torres, School of Natural Resources and Environmental Engineering, Universidad del Valle, Colombia

Dr. Velez-Torres' research focuses on environmental conflicts on the access and control over natural resources in Colombia. Currently, Dr. Velez-Torres is interested in the analysis of the social, political and environmental transitions in the context of the Peace Agreement between FARC guerrilla and the Colombian government. She aims to contribute to transformative processes by engaging in academic projects that can add to the mobilization agendas of local communities who aspire social and environmental sustainability and justice. Dr. Velez-Torres is currently collaborating with Dr. Eric S. McLamore (Ag & Bio Engineering at UF) to use nano-biosensors for creating "environmental maps" of mercury contamination. The project aims to develop a strategy platform for participatory mercury monitoring and community protection from pollution generated by illegal gold mining in the Pacific Region of Colombia. The seminar will kick off a two day workshop related to mercury contamination, also including seminars by UF faculty and a workshop (detailed agenda below). The event is hosted by the UF Water Institute (Frazier Rogers Hall, Room 122) and is open to UF faculty and students (no charge).

Speaker Bio: Dr. Irene Vélez-Torres received a Ph.D. in Human and Political Geography from the University of Copenhagen. She is Associate Professor in EIDENAR, Universidad del Valle (Colombia), where she works on the critical analysis of socio-environmental conflicts, ethnic inequality, and community assessment of environmental contamination in Colombia. She has explored participatory and interdisciplinary methodologies in order to create knowledge that is valuable for the communities as well as for the academia.
List of publications available in google scholar



Young boy at his elementary school in La Toma, Alto Cauca during a two-way community information exchange related to mercury toxicity from mining. Ionic mercury in contact water and drinking water can be as high as 1000µg/L in the waterbodies near the school (

<http://lasillavacia.com/historia/la-toma-con-mercurio-hasta-el-cuello-59032>

Detailed description of speaker's visit:

The UF Water Institute will host a one day seminar series on Feb 27th for faculty, students and staff centered around the theme of environmental/public health issues related to mercury (see detailed agenda below). In addition, Dr. McLamore will host a workshop on preparation of sensors for measuring mercury, which will be open to all faculty/staff/students in addition to community members who contact Dr. McLamore prior to Feb 20th. UF students will be recruited through SHEP, ABEGSO, and LAS email brochures.

Draft agenda

Feb 27th

- 9:00 am: Introduction and welcome, Coffee and continental breakfast
- 10:00 am: Keynote speaker presentation (Dr. Velez-Torres)
- 10:30 am: question/answer session with keynote
- 11:00 am: Refreshment break
- 11:30 am: Seminar: Low cost nanosensors for measuring mercury (Dr. McLamore)
- 12:00 am: Seminar: Agent based modeling and complex systems (Dr. Kiker)
- 12:30 am: Seminar: Effects of mercury on ecology/wildlife (Dr. Frederick)
- 1:00 pm: Lunch on your own
- 3:00 pm: Grant planning and future research strategic meeting
- 5:00 pm: Dinner and discussion (Tops restaurant, all are welcome to attend)

Feb 28th

- 9:00 am: Meeting with ABE faculty
- 10:00 am: Meeting with faculty from Dep of Env. And Global Health
- 11:00 am: Meeting with faculty from LAS
- 12:00 pm: Lunch with visitor
- 1:00 pm: Nanosensor workshop: water quality and food safety
- 5:00 pm: wrap up and closing remarks