



Mikael Wolfe

Associate Professor of History

 Curriculum Vitae available Online

Bio

BIO

I am a historian of modern Latin America whose work centers on the intersection of social, political, environmental, and technological change. In particular, I explore questions of water control, agrarian reform, and the effects of climate and weather on the process of social revolution. I employ interdisciplinary historical methods in my scholarship and teaching that seek to transcend the imaginary boundary between the human and nonhuman environments.

I teach undergraduate and graduate courses in modern Latin American history, historiography and film, history of US-Latin American relations, comparative history of modern Latin America and East Asia, environmental history of Latin America and the United States, climate ethics, and water history (see teaching tab to the right. I am accepting graduate students to work under me, but before contacting me, please become familiar with my work. Specific questions engaging with my work and how it relates to your own research interests are more fruitful as a basis for conversation than generally asking to learn more about my work.)

My first book, *Watering the Revolution: An Environmental and Technological History of Agrarian Reform in Mexico* (Duke, 2017; winner, 2018 Elinor K. Melville Prize for Latin American Environmental History; short-listed, 2018 María Elena Martínez Prize for Mexican History), investigates how people managed their water—via dams, canals, and groundwater pumps—in a great crucible of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20, the arid north-central Laguna region. In so doing, it demonstrates how Mexican federal engineers were not merely passive implementers of large-scale state development schemes such as agrarian reform. Instead, to implement the latter, they actively mediated knowledge between state and society, identifying what they thought was technologically possible and predicting its environmental consequences.

The book also explains how engineers encountered an intrinsic tension between farmers' insatiable demand for water and the urgency to conserve it. By closely examining how the Mexican state watered one of the world's most extensive agrarian reforms, the book tackles an urgent question in the literature on postrevolutionary Mexican state formation, Latin American environmental history and history of technology, and global development studies: how and why do governments persistently deploy invasive technologies for development even when they know those technologies are ecologically unsustainable?

To answer this global question, my book integrates environmental and technological history along with social, economic, political, and legal analyses based on extensive research in archival sources, journals, newspapers, and government publications in Mexico and the United States. Using this

"envirotechnical" analytical framework, the book uncovers the varied motivations behind the Mexican government's decision to use invasive and damaging technologies despite knowing they were unsustainable.

My research on agrarian reform and water management in north central Mexico led me to investigate how weather shapes the process of social revolution across Cuba's varied climates and environments. In my new book project, *Rebellious Climates: How Extreme Weather Shaped the Cuban Revolutions*, I combine environmental history and historical climatology to argue that extreme weather events such as drought and hurricanes were not merely infrequent external shocks to Cuba, quickly entering and exiting the main anthropocentric stage of its theater of revolution. Instead, these events were long enmeshed in Cuban politics, economics, society, and culture, and thereby shaped the origins and progression of the 1959 revolution in ways largely overlooked by historians.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Associate Professor, History

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Associate Professor of History, Stanford University, (2022- present)
- Assistant Professor of History, Stanford University, (2012-2021)
- Mellon Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental History, University of California, Los Angeles, (2010-2012)
- Visiting Fellow, Center for US-Mexican Studies, University of California-San Diego, (2009-2010)
- Visiting Fellow, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, (2009-2009)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Elinor K. Melville Book Prize for Latin American Environmental History, Conference on Latin American History (2018)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Organizer, International Water History Conference, Montpellier, France (2013 - 2013)
- Organizer, "The Future of Environmental History: What the Past Teaches us about the Future of the Environment," UCLA History Faculty Symposium (2011 - 2011)
- Organizer, "Mexico's Other National Security Crisis: Food and Water Sustainability," Center for US-Mexican Studies, University of California-San Diego Workshop (2010 - 2010)
- Article reviewer, *Mexican Studies* (2011 - 2013)
- Book reviewer, *Hispanic American Historical Review* (2010 - 2010)
- Book reviewer, *Environment and History* (2013 - 2013)
- Revisions Contributor and Reviewer, *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations* (2012 - 2012)
- Article reviewer, *Journal Mexican Studies* (2012 - 2012)
- Article Reviewer, *Journal Mexican Studies* (2013 - 2013)
- Member, Historical Conversations Committee, History Department, Stanford University (2013 - 2014)
- Member, Undergraduate Studies Curriculum Committee, History Department, Stanford University (2012 - 2013)
- Selection Committee Member, Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame (2009 - 2009)
- Member, American Historical Association
- Member, The Conference on Latin American History
- Member, Latin American Studies Association
- Member, American Society for Environmental History
- Member, Climate History Network

PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for East Asian Studies
- Center for Latin American Studies
- Program in History & Philosophy of Science

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- B.A., Columbia University , East Asian Studies (1995)
- M.A, The University of Chicago , International History (major field East Asia, minor field Middle East) (1999)
- Ph.D., The University of Chicago , Latin American History (2009)

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Doing Environmental History: Local to Global Water Justice: MLA 391 (Win)
- Doing Environmental History: Water Justice: HISTORY 200B (Aut)
- Film and History of Artificial Intelligence in the United States and Latin America: AMSTUD 74N, HISTORY 74N (Spr)
- History and Ethics of the Global Climate Crisis: EARTHSYS 179C, EARTHSYS 79C, HISTORY 179C, HISTORY 79C (Spr)
- The Historical Ecology of Latin America: HISTORY 278B, HISTORY 378 (Win)

2024-25

- Doing Environmental History: Water Justice: HISTORY 200B (Aut)
- Film and History of Latin American Revolutions and Counterrevolutions: FILMEDIA 178, HISTORY 178, HISTORY 78, ILAC 178 (Win)
- The Historical Ecology of Latin America: HISTORY 278B, HISTORY 378 (Spr)

2023-24

- Doing Environmental History: Water Justice: HISTORY 200B (Win)
- Film and History of Latin American Revolutions and Counterrevolutions: FILMEDIA 178, HISTORY 178, HISTORY 78, ILAC 178 (Win)
- Graduate Colloquium: Explorations in Latin American History and Historiography: HISTORY 371, ILAC 371 (Aut)
- The Ethical Challenges of the Global Climate Crisis: COLLEGE 111 (Spr)
- The History of 2023: HISTORY 1 (Aut)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Luca DeCola

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)

Olavo Passos de Souza, Christian Robles-Baez

Orals Evaluator

Olavo Passos de Souza, Christian Robles-Baez

Doctoral (Program)

Gabriel Panuco-Mercado

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **Technology and the environment in history (Book Review)** *JOURNAL OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY*
Book Review Authored by: Wolfe, M.
2023; 30
- **"A Revolution Is a Force More Powerful Than Nature": Extreme Weather and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-64** *ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY*
Wolfe, M.
2020; 25 (3): 469–91
- **The Climate of Conflict: Politico-environmental Press Coverage and the Eruption of the Mexican Revolution, 1907-1911** *HAHR-HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*
Wolfe, M. D.
2019; 99 (3): 467–99
- **Considering the Alternatives: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Agriculture, Water, and Migration in Mexico under State Developmentalism and Neoliberalism** *MEXICAN STUDIES-ESTUDIOS MEXICANOS*
Wolfe, M.
2013; 29 (1): 1-2
- **Review of "A Land Between Waters: Environmental Histories of Modern Mexico"** *Environment and History*
Wolfe, M.
2013
- **The Sociolegal Redesignation of Ejido Land Use, 1856-1912** *Mexico in Transition: New perspectives on Mexican Agrarian History, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centurie*
Wolfe, M.
edited by Butler, M., Escobar-Ohlmstede, A.
Mexico City and Austin, Texas: University of Texas-Austin and Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropologia Social-Guadalajara.2013: 291–318
- **The Historical Dynamics of Mexico's Groundwater Crisis in La Laguna: Knowledge, Resources, and Profit, 1930s-1960s** *MEXICAN STUDIES-ESTUDIOS MEXICANOS*
Wolfe, M.
2013; 29 (1): 3-?
- **Land Reform in Puerto Rico: Modernizing the Colonial State, 1941-1969 (Book Review)** *HAHR-HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*
Book Review Authored by: Wolfe, M.
2011; 91 (3): 554-555
- **Bringing the Revolution to the Dam Site: How Technology, Labor, and Nature Converged in the Microcosm of a Northern Mexican Company Town, 1936-1946** *JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHWEST*
Wolfe, M.
2011; 53 (1): 1-31
- **Review of "Agua, Poder Urbano, y Metabolismo Social"** *Hispanic American Historical Review*
Wolfe, M.
2011; August
- **Mining Water for the Revolution: Marte R. Gomez and the Business of Agrarian Reform in 'La Laguna, Mexico'** *The Kellogg Institute Working Papers*
Wolfe, M.
University of Notre Dame.2010
- **Conflicto por un cambio de regimen de aguas en La Laguna: la 'construccion social' de la primera gran presa en el rio Nazas, 1900-1936** *BuenaVal Journal of the Universidad Iberoamericma-Laguna*
Wolfe, M.
2006: 1-37