

# The Department of Anthropology Presents:

## Power Struggles: Dignity, Value and the Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain

March 26, 2020

4:00- 5:00 pm

204 Maxwell Hall

The polysemy of the English word *power* is felicitous. It helps us see that power over nature and power over people are connected. Yet the connection is not as transparent as one would wish. Indeed, we rarely see that switching on the light is connected to the work of some people, to the fortunes of others, to some forms of rule, to the exploitation of nature. Through this invisibilization energy becomes something detached, a mere magnitude, apparently alien to social relations. This perspective affects our comprehension of energy transitions, which tend to be understood as mere shifts in the sources and technologies of energy supply. From this mechanistic perspective, renewables necessarily involve a rupture with the present, pointing towards a prefigured future, one that will be different and better.

My presentation aims to challenge this ruptural understanding of energy transitions, which is based on an abstract concept of energy that alienates it from the cultural mediations and societal arrangements with which it is entangled. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research in Southern Catalonia, I will discuss the contradictory tensions that the unparalleled development of wind energy has unleashed in Spain. Dominated by large corporations, wind energy development has created a new resource frontier replicating extractive dynamics, allowing for the generation of profits while marginalizing local populations. The valuing of wind has been predicated upon the devaluation of local livelihoods, treating the land where the turbines were to be sited and the people inhabiting it as *waste*, and thus triggering widespread resistance among Southern Catalans, who have framed their opposition to wind energy development as a demand of *dignity*.



**Dr. Jaume Franquesa- Bartolome**  
**University at Buffalo**  
**Department of Anthropology**

**Maxwell**  
**Syracuse University**

If you have any questions or require accommodations, please contact JoAnn L Rhoades at [jlrhoade@syr.edu](mailto:jlrhoade@syr.edu) by 12 March 2020.