There’s a ghost haunting Amagá: experiences of violence, reconciliation and women's mobilization in the Colombian conflict

This presentation will summarize some of the preliminary results of the fieldwork that I carried out in the Colombian cities of Medellín, Cali and Bogotá during the Summer of 2009, and which constitutes a first layer of my larger dissertation research on the topic of women’s citizenship and women’s organizations that work for peace, justice and gender equality in the context of the Colombian socio political conflict.

Through ethnographic vignettes I will show how seven years after the initial peace agreement with the largest right-wing paramilitary organization, AUC, and four after the approval of Law 975 and the establishment of a system of transitional justice—with the concomitant processes of DDR—violence haunts the victims, activists, organizations and communities that experienced it. In connection to this, I will analyze how the women’s movement has approached it – both feminist and non-feminist organizations - and the stakes that some of them have taken in relation to the peace and justice process. I intend to look at the ways in which these organizations’ political positions and strategies differ in terms of their engagement with the state, and of the various understandings of highly contested concepts of truth, justice and reparation. I will highlight the role that women’s groups have played in the national social movement landscape and how a particular deployment of the notion of the “victim” has contributed to define its unique place within it. Finally, I will suggest that the intersection of the work of the civil society and that of the state can either fix or mobilize the meanings woven around violence as well as to preclude deeper transformations of the everyday local contexts in which that very violence has occurred.

Refreshments will be served.