

**"Governance and Governability:
Indigenous small-scale fisheries and
autonomy in coastal Nicaragua"**

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Date: Friday, November 30, 2018

Location: 701 South Ross Building

Research: 10:00-11:30am

Teaching: 2:00-3:30pm

My research leading to this presentation delved into recent changes in the social and economic conditions of small-scale indigenous fisheries on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. It examines these conditions in relation to governance challenges faced by indigenous peoples, for whom access to fisheries and tenure rights to land and waters are critical components of their livelihoods. The titling of large swaths of land under a collective property regime, combined with uncontrolled immigration by nonindigenous, campesino settlers, and the weakening of traditional forms of authority have generated a scenario where conflicts are frequent, while negotiation often expresses historical injustice and power imbalances between the state and indigenous peoples.

What institutional impediments currently affect the governability of indigenous, small-scale fisheries along the Caribbean Coast, and how can they be addressed? In order to answer this question, the paper examines three factors that influence the structural position of indigenous peoples with regard to fisheries: changes in tenure regimes, tensions between hierarchical versus decentralized governance modes, and the consequences of legally fragmented, 'mosaic' governance patterns. The paper draws theoretical insights from the literature on interactive governance, critical development studies and legal pluralism to propose that in a scenario of contested entitlements, actions for improving self-governance and mobilizing agency offer potential for improving governability and respect for indigenous human rights.