

ILLICIT ECONOMIES AND EXTRA-LEGAL ACTORS CONFERENCE

Oct. 13 and 14, 2022
UC San Diego

UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL POLICY AND STRATEGY
Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies

OVERVIEW

Illicit Economies and Extra-Legal Actors Conference

Dear Participants and Attendees,

The goal of this conference is to bring together a diverse set of scholars working on topics related to the politics of illicit economies, organized crime, and extra-legal armed actors. Until recently, political science did not consider illicit markets or the groups that engage in them (e.g. mafias, cartels, gangs, smuggling networks, militias, and vigilantes, among others) to be key political actors. Yet, throughout the world, there is a rich history of such groups fulfilling political functions through the use, and threat, of violence and by cultivating complex and overlapping relationships with each other, the state, and other non-state armed actors. While the organizational structure and specific goals of criminal and extra-legal actors vary incredibly, they all seek to carve out spheres of influence to engage in illicit economies and accumulate political and material resources. To this end, they have built vast and multifaceted organizations, monopolized markets, coerced citizens, coopted public officials, and engaged in extreme levels of violence. And yet, in many communities, they maintain an ambivalent position by resolving disputes, providing some public goods and services, implementing social order, and protecting communities from abuse and predation. These interrelated behaviors have significant political and social consequences that we are only beginning to understand.

This conference brings together an international group of scholars who are seeking to understand the history, dynamics, and policy implications of this increasingly complicated landscape. Over the course of two days, participants will grapple with a series of interrelated questions: How and why do criminal and extra-legal actors use violence and what are the consequences of that violence? How do these same actors also seek to control violence, provide goods and services to local communities, and relate to a variety of other social and political actors? How have states attempted to combat crime and violence and what are the effects of those actions? How have citizens and communities responded to various forms of victimization and how can we conduct research on and with these individuals in an ethical way? How and why have women been victimized but also asserted their agency in these contexts? Finally, how has the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change impacted the behavior of illicit actors and reshaped illicit economies?

Overall, the conference is designed as an opportunity to build a stronger network of political science scholars working in this area by stimulating dialogue, interrogating long-held assumptions, and innovating new strategies and frameworks for the study of illicit economies and extra-legal actors around the world. We look forward to an exciting two days of panels, discussions, and dialogue!

-Nick, Laura, Lucía, Cecilia, and Chelsea

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AGENDA: ABBREVIATED

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

8 – 8:30 a.m.	Coffee
8:30 – 9 a.m.	Welcome
9 – 10:30 a.m.	Panels 1 and 2 (Running Simultaneously)
10:30 – 11 a.m.	Break
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Panels 3 and 4 (Running Simultaneously)
12:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch
2:30 – 4 p.m.	Panel 5
4 – 4:30 p.m.	Break
4:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Informal Methods Discussions
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Happy Hour at UC San Diego
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.	Dinner at UC San Diego

Friday, Oct. 14, 2022

9 – 10:30 a.m.	Roundtable
10:30 – 11 a.m.	Break
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Panels 6 and 7 (Running Simultaneously)
12:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch
2:30 – 4 p.m.	Panel 8
4 – 5 p.m.	Closing Remarks & Future Plans

AGENDA

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

8:30 – 9 a.m.

Welcome

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/malamud22>

9 – 10:30 a.m.

Panel 1: Electoral Violence

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/conf3106>

From assassinations of social leaders in Central America and Colombia to election violence in Nigeria and Kenya, this panel explores political motivations for, political control over, and electoral implications of violence.

Chair: **Chelsea Estancona**

Panelists:

- **Louis-Alexandre Berg**, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University [Virtual], "Criminal Markets, Political Competition, and Postwar Violence: Continuity and Change in Violence after the Colombian Peace Accords"
- **Laura Blume**, Assistant Professor, University of Nevada, Reno, "Cataloguing Murder: Tracking Violence Against Public Figures in Central America"
- **Adrienne LeBas**, Associate Professor, American University, "Criminality and Organizational Evolution: Election-related Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa"
- **Megan Turnbull**, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia, "The Politics of Government-Armed Group Relationships in Africa"
- **Andres Uribe**, Ph.D. Candidate, The University of Chicago, "Coercion and Capture in Democratic Politics"

AGENDA

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

9 – 10:30 a.m.

Panel 2: Gender and Crime

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/malamud22>

This panel focuses on the roles that women play both supporting and resisting organized crime, from high-risk activists in Mexico to female gang members in the Northern Triangle. In addition, this panel examines violence towards women and public perceptions of this violence.

Chair: **Nicholas Barnes**

Panelists:

- **Abby Córdova**, Associate Professor, Notre Dame University [Virtual], "Explaining Violence against Women in Multi-Violence Contexts"
- **María Méndez**, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto [Virtual], Violence-keeping: Women's Reproductive and Logistical Labors in the Transnational Gang Household"
- **Brian Phillips**, Reader (Associate Professor), University of Essex [Virtual], "Public Violence Against Women: Survey Results from Mexico"
- **Julia Zulver**, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow, University of Oxford, "Complex Gendered Agency along the Continuum of Violence in Mexico: The Case of the Mujeres Buscadoras in Veracruz"

10:30 – 11 a.m.

Break

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

AGENDA

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Panel 3: Consequences of State Strategies

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/malamud22>

This panel explores a range of interactions between states and illicit actors, from state-narco networks in Bolivia to state-mafia relations in Canada's construction sector. From human rights abuses by Brazilian militias and the Mexican military, to how pro-government militias impact violence in post-conflict periods, this panel draws attention to the impacts of state responses and strategies and their implications for governance and levels of violence.

Chair: **Lucía Tiscornia**

Panelists:

- **Chelsea Estancona**, Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina, "Negative Peace? Pro-Government Militias and Post-Conflict Violence"
- **Gustavo Flores-Macías**, Professor, Cornell University, "The Consequences of Militarized Policing for Human Rights: Evidence from Mexico"
- **Edgar Franco Vivanco**, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan [Virtual], "State-criminal alliances and community predation: Evidence from Rio de Janeiro militias"
- **Allan Gillies**, Lecturer (Assistant Professor), Glasgow University, "Cocaine and the Post-Colonial State: Organised Crime, Political Transition and Hybrid Regimes in Bolivia"
- **Heesun Yoo**, Ph.D. Candidate, Vanderbilt University, "Model of State-Crime Relations: Theory and Evidence"

AGENDA

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Panel 4: Illicit Actors' Governance

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/conf3106>

Considering cases from Colombia, Brazil, Pakistan, and El Salvador, this panel focuses on governance by illicit actors. The authors explore factors that result in various forms of social control, political influence, and the provision of goods and services by illicit actors.

Chair: **Laura Blume**

Panelists:

- **Enrique Desmond Arias**, Professor, Baruch College - CUNY, "Political Economies of Illicit Governance"
- **Nicholas Barnes**, Lecturer (Assistant Professor), University of St Andrews, "A Theory of Gang Governance in Rio de Janeiro"
- **José Miguel Cruz**, Director of Research, Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University, "The politics of territorial control in Central America"
- **Javier Osorio**, Assistant Professor, University of Arizona, "Patterns of Armed Governance in Colombia: Evidence from an Expert Survey"
- **Niloufer Siddiqui**, Assistant Professor, University at Albany - SUNY, "Votes for Water: Hybrid Water Provision, Illegality, and Ethnicity in Karachi, Pakistan"

12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

AGENDA

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

2:30 – 4 p.m.

Panel 5: Criminal Dynamics in Mexico

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/malamud22>

This panel focuses on criminal dynamics in Mexico from several different angles, including: criminal actors use of public messaging, the impact of reelection on violence towards local politicians, the persistence of hybrid or extra-legal police forces, the expansion of criminal organizations, and the connections between the illicit and licit economies in Sinaloa.

Chair: **Rebecca Bell-Martin**

Panelists:

- **Marco Alcocer**, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California San Diego, "Organized Crime Expansion and State Capture in Mexico"
- **Cecilia Farfán-Méndez**, Head of Security Research Programs, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego, "Opium Poppy Cultivation and Interactions between Legal and Illegal Economies in Sinaloa"
- **Philip Johnson**, Lecturer, Princeton University, "Can the Cartel Speak? Securitization and Criminal Communication in Mexico"
- **Logan Puck**, Visiting Assistant Professor, George Washington University, "The Shadow Police: Examining the State of Mexico's Hybrid Police Force"
- **Adee Weller**, Ph.D. Student, Emory University, "Reelection Reform and Removing Rivals in Mexico"

4 – 4:30 p.m.

Break

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

PANELS

Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Informal Methods Discussions

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

This will be a time for discussing methods and ethics associated with researching illicit economies and extra-legal actors. We hope to foster discussions across research areas and between both established and emerging scholars. Breakout groups can discuss challenges associated with:

- fieldwork
- ethnography
- interviews
- surveys
- large-n data (public security stats, violence databases, scraping software, etc.)
- mixed method designs
- historical/archival research

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Happy Hour

Location: Great Hall Terrace, UC San Diego

6:30 – 8 p.m.

Dinner

Location: Great Hall, UC San Diego

AGENDA

Friday, Oct. 14, 2022

9 – 10:30 a.m.

Roundtable

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/conf3106>

Negotiation has become an increasingly common state response to address high levels of violence in several Latin American states. This roundtable will consider the dynamics of such negotiations, debate the successes and failures of this approach, and ponder the possibility for negotiations to address problems related to different types of armed actors across the globe.

10:30 – 11 a.m.

Break

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

AGENDA

Friday, Oct. 14, 2022

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Panel 6: Responses to Victimization

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/conf3106>

This panel tackles responses to victimization and issues of researching the topic. It includes papers on how crime victimization shapes political attitudes and influences participation. The other papers on the panel explore methodological challenges, such as the risks of violence faced by shadow workers and ethics of asking participants about violence.

Chair: **Lucía Tiscornia**

Panelists:

- **Hannah Baron**, Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego, and **Elayne Stecher**, Ph.D. Candidate, UC Los Angeles [Virtual], "Asking about Violence: Improving Ethics in Violence Research"
- **Rebecca Bell-Martin**, Assistant Professor, El Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, "Empathy and Anti-Violence Civic Engagement"
- **Omar García Ponce**, Assistant Professor, George Washington University, "The Legacy of Mexico's Drug War on Youth Political Attitudes" [Virtual]
- **Nicholas Rush Smith**, Associate Professor, City College - CUNY, "What We Do in the Shadows...And What the Shadows Do to Us"

AGENDA

Friday, Oct. 14, 2022

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Panel 7: Violent Strategies and Civilian Consequences

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/malamud22>

This panel examines the consequences of gang rule on youth in Medellín, factors influencing self-defense group mobilization in Mexico, and impacts of oil exploration on violence in Colombia. It also explores how access to firearms impacts Chicago gangs' use of violence and the consequences of anti-corruption operations on violent criminal dynamics in Brazil.

Chair: **Layla Hashemi**

- **Juan Albarracín**, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois Chicago, "From the Periphery to the Core: The Expansion of Criminalized Electoral Politics in Brazil"
- **David Cerero**, Ph.D. Student, Yale University, "Oil and Violence: A Natural Experiment on the Extensive Margin"
- **Sarah Daly**, Associate Professor, Columbia University, "Turf War or Truce: Shocks to Gun Control and Bargaining Among Criminal Gangs"
- **Juan Masullo**, Assistant Professor, Leiden University, and **Moshe Ben Hamo Yeger**, Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UCSD, "Popular Mobilization in Criminal Wars: Explaining Collective Action and Tactical Choice in Mexico's Criminal Conflict"
- **Arantxa Rodriguez-Uribe**, Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University, "Growing inside the invisible frontier: evidence from a drug-lord war in Medellín, Colombia"

12:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Lunch Break

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

AGENDA

Friday, Oct. 14, 2022

2:30. – 4 p.m.

Panel 8: COVID, Climate Change, and Crime

Location: School of Global Policy and Strategy, Conference Room 3106

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/conf3106>

This panel explores the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change on illicit actors. The papers explore topics such as how rebel groups engage in climate governance, how Mexican OCGs responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, and trends in the counterfeit and illicit trade related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chair: **Philip Johnson**

Panelists:

- **Layla Hashemi**, Researcher, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at George Mason University, "Disrupting drug and counterfeit supply chains"
- **Danielle Jung**, Associate Professor, Emory University, "Climate Change and Alternative Governance"
- **Anup Phayal**, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina Wilmington [Virtual], and **Brandon Prins**, Professor, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, [Virtual], "Understanding the Causal Link Between Illegal Fishing And Maritime Piracy"
- **Lauren Pinson**, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Dallas, "International Politics of Controlling Small Arms Trafficking"
- **Lucía Tiscornia**, Lecturer (Assistant Professor), University College Dublin, "Criminal Governance amid the COVID19 pandemic in Mexico"

4 – 5 p.m.

Closing Remarks & Future Plans with refreshments

Location: Institute of the Americas, Malamud Conference Room

ORGANIZERS



CECILIA FARFÁN MÉNDEZ

Head of Security Research Programs, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego

Cecilia Farfán leads the security research portfolio of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies. Farfán is an expert on organized crime and female participation in criminal groups, and co-founded the Mexico Violence Resource Project, an online platform providing analysis and resources for journalists and policymakers on violence and organized crime in Mexico. In addition to her formal academic initiatives, Farfán has consulted for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is a columnist for Mexico Today, member of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, the Urban Violence Research Network and is a member of the strategy committee for the Journal of Illicit Economies and Development.



CHELSEA ESTANCONA

Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina

Dr. Estancona is an Assistant Professor in Political Science at the University of South Carolina. Her research focuses on the political economy of conflict and criminality. She assesses how volatility in the international market impacts rebels' and criminals' behavior toward civilians and the corresponding state response to changes in violent groups' economic capacity. In addition to her primary research agenda, she is engaged in projects about offshore financial networks and criminality, human rights and dissent, and paramilitary organizations.



LAURA BLUME

Assistant Professor, University of Nevada, Reno

Laura Blume is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Reno. Her work focuses on issues of human security, with a regional focus in Latin America. Her teaching and research interests include the war on drugs, violence, illicit economies, immigration and democratization throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Her work has been published in Comparative Political Studies, Journal of Politics in Latin America, NACLA Report on the Americas, and World Development. She won a 2022 Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation Distinguished Scholar Award for her project, "Cataloguing Murder: Tracking Violence Against Public Figures in Central America."



LUCÍA TISCORNIA

Lecturer (Assistant Professor), University College Dublin

Lucía Tiscornia is Assistant Professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at University College Dublin, and Research Affiliate with the Violence and Transitional Justice Lab at the University of Notre Dame. Her research focuses on transitional justice, police and criminal violence, and multi-method research design and has been published in the Journal of Peace Research, Sociological Methods & Research, Studies in Comparative International Development, and Qualitative & Mixed Methods Research. She holds a PhD in political science from the University of Notre Dame.



NICHOLAS BARNES

Lecturer (Assistant Professor), University of St Andrews

Dr. Nicholas Barnes is a Lecturer in the School of International Relations at the University of St. Andrews and affiliated faculty at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. He received his PhD at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (USA) and was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs. He has conducted 3 years of fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro's favelas and is currently working on a book project about how and why gangs govern these communities. His academic work has been published in Comparative Political Studies, Perspectives on Politics, Current Sociology, Latin American Research Review, and the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

PARTICIPANTS

Panelists

Abby Córdova, Associate Professor, Notre Dame University [Virtual]

Adee Weller, Ph.D. Student, Emory University

Adrienne LeBas, Associate Professor, American University

Allan Gillies, Lecturer (Assistant Professor), Glasgow University

Andres Uribe, Ph.D. Candidate, The University of Chicago

Anup Phayal, Associate Professor, University of North Carolina Wilmington [Virtual]

Arantxa Rodriguez-Uribe, Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University

Brandon Prins, Professor, University of Tennessee-Knoxville [Virtual]

Brian Phillips, Reader (Associate Professor), University of Essex [Virtual]

Danielle Jung, Associate Professor, Emory University

David Cerero, Ph.D. Student, Yale University

EdgarFranco Vivanco, Assistant Professor, University of Michigan [Virtual]

Elayne Stecher, Ph.D. Candidate, UC Los Angeles [Virtual]

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José Miguel Cruz, Director of Research, Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University

Juan Albarracín, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois Chicago

Juan Masullo, Assistant Professor, Leiden University

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Panelists

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Lauren Pinson, Assistant Professor, University of Texas at Dallas

Layla Hashemi, Researcher, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at George Mason University

Logan Puck, Visiting Assistant Professor, The George Washington University

Louis-Alexandre Berg, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University [Virtual]

Marco Alcocer, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California San Diego

María Méndez, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto [Virtual]

Megan Turnbull, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia

Moshe Ben Hamo Yeger, Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego

Nicholas Rush Smith, Associate Professor, City College - CUNY

Niloufer Siddiqui, Assistant Professor, University at Albany - SUNY

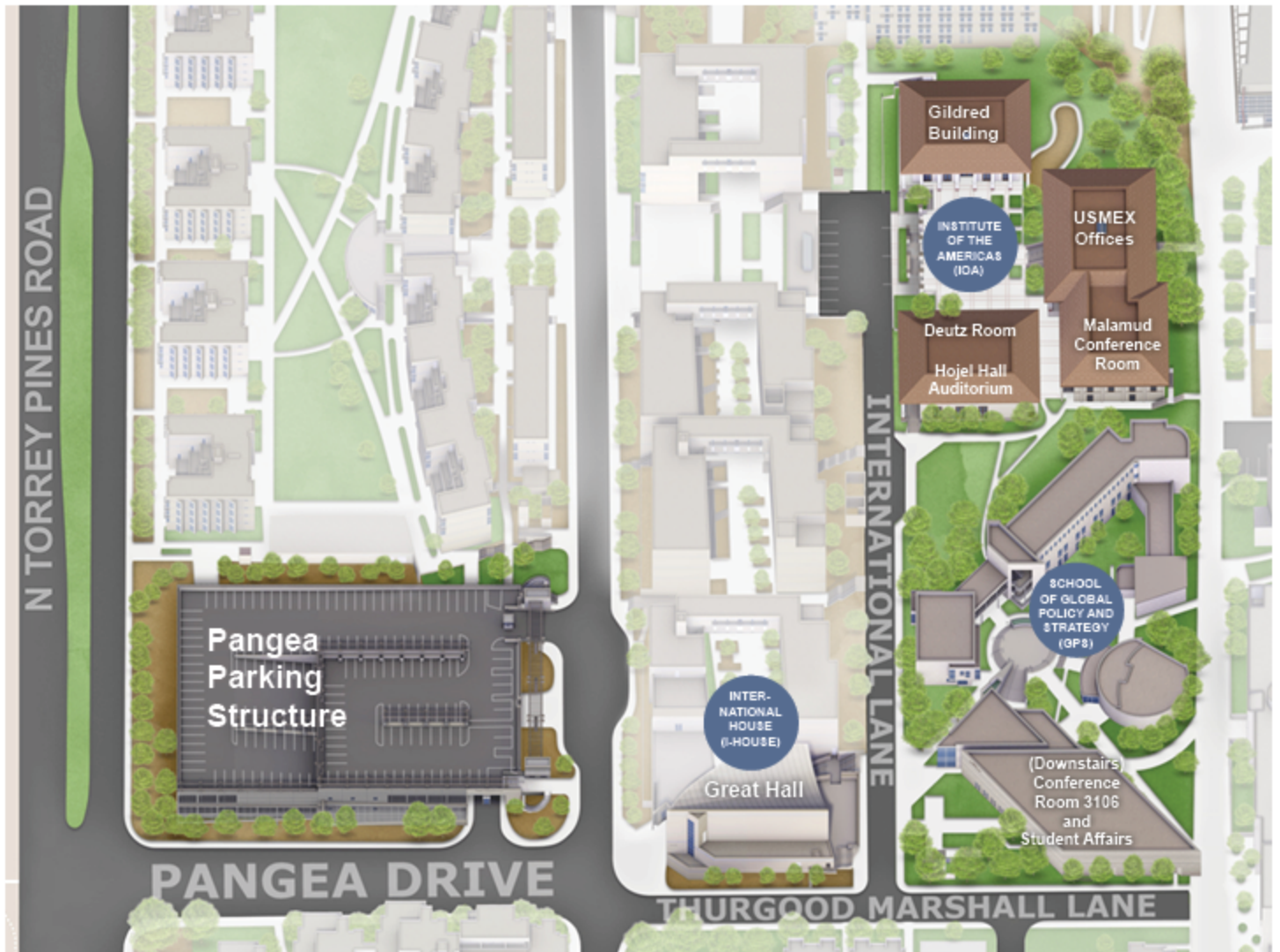
Omar García Ponce, Assistant Professor, George Washington University [Virtual]

Philip Johnson, Lecturer, Princeton University

Rebecca Bell-Martin, Assistant Professor, El Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey

Sarah Daly, Associate Professor, Columbia University

MAP AND MEETING LOCATIONS



UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL POLICY AND STRATEGY
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