

Alumni Profile

Cristina T. Bejarano – Anthropology PhD Program

Career

Please provide a brief overview of your career path since graduating from UCI.

After earning my PhD in December 2014, I received a University of California Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship, which I held for two years at the University of California, Riverside. In Winter 2018, I had the pleasure of teaching Race, Gender, and Science at UCI. In July, I was awarded a Mellon Chau Postdoctoral Fellowship at Pomona College. This academic year, I will be teaching courses in my main areas of expertise: Medical Anthropology and Science and Technology Studies.

How do you hope to make a difference?

I hope to make a difference by inspiring my students to think more critically and to analyze pressing social problems from different scales and perspectives. I hope my efforts as a professor, mentor, and researcher will contribute to making the next generation better thinkers, problem solvers, and leaders.

Your Time at UCI

When did you attend UCI?

I attended UCI from Fall 2007 to Fall 2014.

What program were you in?

Anthropology

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

While researching PhD programs, I read several publications authored by UCI Anthropology faculty members, and I was captivated by the theoretical sophistication of their work. Above all, I was very excited about the kinds of questions they were asking in their research. My decision to attend UCI was made clear after I met with some of the faculty members in person. They were not only approachable and supportive, but genuinely kind as well. My graduate school years at UCI were some of the most rewarding of my life because I had the time to pursue my intellectual passions with the support and guidance of cutting-edge scholars and dedicated mentors.

Reflections

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

I decided to pursue a graduate degree because I felt, what I can only describe as, an uneasiness with prevailing paradigms regarding social inequality and health disparities. I had many questions and I felt unsatisfied with the kinds of answers I had encountered up to that point. Graduate school gave me the time and resources necessary to examine those questions through study and research while also providing the theoretical tools to consider alternative ways of thinking about social problems.

Alumni Life

How did your education at UCI benefit you in your current life?

There are countless ways my current life has benefitted from my education at UCI. My time at UCI helped satisfy my lifelong desire to read, to learn, and to think beyond the limitations of what I had been taught. I am also particularly grateful to have gained a sense of optimism for the future, however uncertain it may be.

What advice do you have for a new graduate student?

I would tell a new graduate student that there is no single, linear path to success. You will “fail” along the way. You will face unexpected challenges. It is best not to see those moments as setbacks, but rather as opportunities to see something important about yourself or your work that you were probably unable to see before. Those moments may actually be necessary steps on your individual path to success.