

Héctor M. Varela Rios, PhD

Assistant Professor of Theology, Theology and Religious Studies Department, Villanova University

Saint Augustine Center 235, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, Pennsylvania (USA) 19085
Phone: (610) 519-6917 • E-Mail: hvarelar@villanova.edu • hectorvarelarios.com

Education

- 2021 Doctor of Philosophy in Theology, The Divinity School, The University of Chicago
Dissertation title – *To 'take care and venerate': Morenita, excessive personhood, and devotedness in a Puerto Rican family*
Committee: Dr. Dwight Hopkins (advisor), Dr. Angie Heo, Dr. Mayra Rivera
- 2015 Master of Divinity, The Divinity School, The University of Chicago (UChicago)
- 2004 Master of Arts in Religion, Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, *Magna Cum Laude*
- 1990 Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez

Research Interests

The intersection between material culture (e.g., objects, spaces/places, practices, and images) and local/Latinx theology. That is, the creation and management of theological meaning, knowledge, and understanding in the interaction between humanity and material culture, religious or not, especially as displayed in local religiosities and theologies and/or in Latinx contexts.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- 2023 (UNDER REVIEW) Chapter or Article: “No holiness like decolonial holiness: social holiness, REHACE, and decoloniality, for *Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Series* (Palgrave Macmillan), or *Journal of World Christianity*, or *Ecumenical Trends* (also journal)
- 2023 (UNDER REVIEW) Article: “In defense of Latinx: a theological microintervention”, College Theological Society Annual Volume
- 2022 Article: “Thing”, Critical Theory for Political Theology: Keywords, *Political Theology Network online journal*, available at: <https://politicaltheology.com/symposium/critical-theory-for-political-theology-keywords> (April)
- 2022 Article: “Depicting Heavenly Reality”: Non-Textual Objects as Inscriptions of Belief”, *Journal of Religious & Theological Information*, Taylor and Francis (online). DOI: [10.1080/10477845.2022.2038045](https://doi.org/10.1080/10477845.2022.2038045) (February)
- 2021 Article: “Using Latinx Theology’s *Lo Cotidiano* to Decolonialize Oller’s *El Velorio*”, *Journal for Religion, Film, and Media*, Schüren Verlag, 7:2 (November)
- 2018 Article: “Sancochando theological anthropology: one Puerto Rican heavy soup as a heuristic”, *Perspectivas* (online journal for the Hispanic Theological Initiative), 15, available at: <https://perspectivasonline.com/downloads/sancochando-theological-anthropology-one-puerto-rican-heavy-soup-as-heuristic/> (Summer)

Conference Papers

- 2022 (ACCEPTED) "No hope like decolonial hope: Assessing REHACE's promise to Puerto Rican identity", Ecclesial Practices Unit, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, Denver, CO (November)
- 2022 "In Defense of 'Latinx': Linguistic Mestizaje/Mulatez as a Theological Microintervention", College Theology Society Conference, online (June)
- 2022 "No holiness like decolonial holiness: an ecclesiological conversation of REHACE and its responses to catastrophe and social justice", Ecclesiological Investigations Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico (June)
- 2021 "Depicting Heavenly Reality: Non-textual Objects as Inscriptions of Belief", Paradox and Prophecy: Why the Study of Lived Catholicism Matters, Second Online Lived Catholicism Conference (November)

Book reviews and other publications

- 2022 (UNDER REVIEW) Book Review on *Commodified Communion: Eucharist, Consumer Culture, and the Practice of Everyday Life* by Antonio E. Alonso (Fordham University Press 2021), *Horizons: Journal of the College Theological Society*
- 2017 Book Review on *Poetics of the Flesh* by Mayra Rivera (Duke University Press 2015), *Perspectivas*, available at: <https://perspectivasonline.com/books/poetics-of-the-flesh-by-mayra-rivera-duke-university-press-2015-216-pages-22-95/>

Teaching Interests (all of these in/from the 'West')

- Latinx religions and theology, especially around devotional practice and material culture
- Constructive theologies, especially contextual and non-academic
- Religion and materiality
- Theories of religion

Recent Courses (all at Villanova except as noted)

- July 2023 (TENTATIVE) "Mariología interreligio-cultural," Seminario Evangélico de PR
- June 2023 (UPCOMING) "Using Latinx material culture to enrich theology." Hispanic Summer Program (HSP), Candler School of Theology, Emory University
- Spring 2023 (UPCOMING) Interreligious/Crosscultural Mariologies (doctoral)
- 2022- Faith, Reason, and Culture: Theology Matters! (undergraduate)
- 2021- Latinx Theology (upper undergraduate)
- 2021 Theology and Suffering (graduate)

Service (all at Villanova except as noted)

- 2022-23 Faculty Advisor, Graduate Theology Student Council, TRS Department
- 2022- Leadership Team, Somos Villanova Hispanic/Latinx Employee Resource Group
- 2022- Co-Convener, Systematic Theology Area, College Theological Society
- 2022- Faculty Mentor for Undergraduates, Center for Faith and Learning
- 2022 Search Committee – Campus Minister, Hispanic/Latinx Ministry and Outreach
- 2022 Facilitator, “Fig Tree Spirituality”, Lent Retreat, Campus Ministry
- 2021- Faculty Affiliate, Center for Political Theology
- 2021 Article Reviewer, Journal *Perspectivas*, Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI)

Workshops

- 2022 New Faculty Cohort, Association of Theological Schools
- 2022 Sexual Assault Resource Coordinator Team, Villanova
- 2022 Strategic Initiative Group on Immigration and Refugee Protection, Villanova

Speaking Engagements

- 2022 “First-Year as Faculty” Panel, UChicago Grad (July)
- 2022 “From Dissertation to Job Market” New Faculty Panel, Early Career Orientation Workshop, HTI (June)
- 2022 Conversation about PTN journal article “Thing”, Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture Club, UChicago Divinity School (May)
- 2022 Alumni Panel, Prospective Student Orientation, UChicago Divinity School (April)

Awards/Memberships

- 2022- Member, Ecclesiological Investigations
- 2022- Member, College Theology Society
- 2021- Member, Political Theology Network
- 2014- Member, American Academy of Religion
- 2019-2020 HTI Dissertation Completion Fellowship
- 2019-2020 Martin Marty Center Junior Fellowship, UChicago Divinity School
- 2015-2021 HTI Scholar

Languages

Native in Spanish

Reading Proficiency in French

Research Proficiency in German

Elementary Reading Proficiency in Biblical Greek