

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT**

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

University Graduate School

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

Abstract

PUBLIC HEALTH, GENDER AND NATION-BUILDING IN COLOMBIA:
HYGIENE, MOTHERHOOD AND THE REGULATION OF LIFE, 1880–1950

by

Diana Ramirez

This dissertation examines the development of public health in Colombia between 1886 and 1953, tracing how the medical community, hygienist institutions, and elites sought to transform state institutions, legislation, and sanitary infrastructure to make health into a project of nation-building and modernization. Rather than treating public health as a purely medical endeavor, it argues that public health became an instrument through which the Colombian state attempted to produce disciplined, productive, and morally responsible citizens.

Particular attention is given to women and children, whose bodies and everyday practices became central targets of public health interventions. Drawing on archival research conducted in Colombia, this dissertation analyzes government reports, legislation, medical journals, public health manuals, nursing curricula, educational materials, and medical conference documents. These sources reveal how public health initiatives extended beyond hospitals and clinics into homes, schools, workplaces, and rural communities through campaigns promoting hygiene, maternal and child welfare, disease prevention, nutrition, and health education. This dissertation argues that the expansion of public health depended not only on the construction of sanitary infrastructure and the professionalization of care occupations, but also on the mobilization of nurses, health visitors, teachers, mothers, and charitable organizations that translated state policies into everyday practice. It further demonstrates that these interventions were shaped by contemporary ideas of race, gender, eugenics, citizenship, and modernization, producing both opportunities for improved health and new forms of social regulation and exclusion.

By examining the intersections of medicine, gender, and state formation, the study highlights the tensions between public health as a humanitarian project and as a mechanism of governance. By situating Colombia within broader transnational exchanges in public health while emphasizing local adaptations and political realities, this dissertation contributes to the historiography of Latin American public health, the history of medicine, gender history, and state formation. It offers a new interpretation of how health became a central language through which the Colombian state sought to define citizenship, social order, and national progress during the first half of the twentieth century.

Date: October 22, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: SIPA, II 301

Department: History

Major Professor: Dr. Victor Uribe

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://fiu.zoom.us/j/81981193587?pwd=rgl4uacaaFYDlOORwAGDrCkgaWj6v.1>

Meeting ID: 819 8119 3587

Passcode: yA5S6X