

**UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN  
ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Florida International University**  
*University Graduate School*

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

**Abstract**

VANGUARDS OF LIBERATION: PROGRESSIVE CATHOLICISM, THE STUDENT  
MOVEMENT AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN LATIN AMERICA, 1960-1973

By

**Sandra Milena Londono-Ardila**

Over the 1960s, a particular form of living the Christian faith bolstered student mobilization in Latin America. The predominantly conservative Catholic episcopate supported the expansion of Catholic student organizations early to strengthen the efforts for the youth's evangelization and halt Marxism in universities and society. In their apostolic role, the student organizations did not follow the bishops' envisioned path; they had their own agendas. The students built upon available social theory; they used and interpreted the theology—springing from Vatican II and produced common assessments of social reality. They embraced a shared apostolic method and experimented with it. Significantly, organizations espoused militantly the claims of their new members that stemmed from a social base already mobilized. Consequently, organizations crafted an alternative path that, following the gospel, sought to change society and a model of the Church deemed complicit with structural injustice.

Vanguards of Liberation is a transnational study about the identity, intellectual and spiritual journey, and regional mobilization of the Latin American Catholic student youth affiliated with two international movements: the International Movement of Catholic Students-MIEC/IMCS and the International Young Catholic Students-JECI/IYCS. It develops with a political and intellectual history-from-below approach that recognizes subaltern subjects' agency in producing meaning and knowledge and involvement in conflicts over hegemony.

This study argues that Latin American MIEC and JECI organizations formed a transnational network and evolved into a social movement during the decade. Organizations converged around a common identity and agenda. Students' embracing of Commitment as a form of spirituality, an apostolic attitude, and a historical project prompted militants to develop a committed apostolate into the *milieu* and go to the poor. In this decision and amid the Cold War's unfolding, militants took many paths in a struggle for the liberation of the oppressed and engaged in varied expressions of the New Left. They significantly impacted the region's political culture while partaking in crafting a new theology.

**Date:** November 10, 2022.

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Department:**

**Major Professors:**

History

Dr. Ana Maria Bidegain

Dr. Victor Uribe-Urán

**Place:** MMC-DM 370—remote attendance: <https://fiu.zoom.us/j/98098177167>