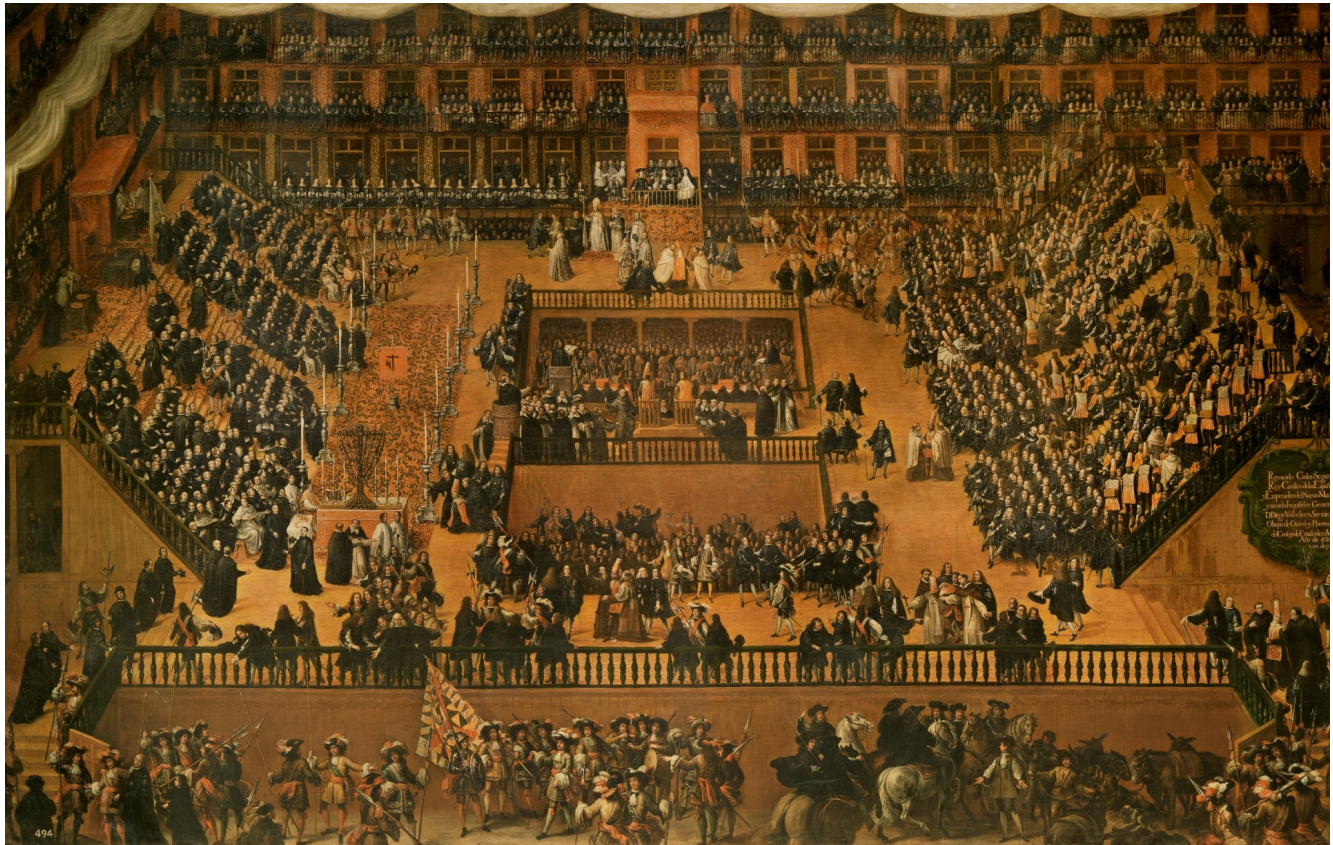


Seminar Series 2025-2026

Emotional Grammars
of Globalization



Francisco Rizi, "Auto de Fe en la Plaza Mayor de Madrid", 1683, Madrid © Museo Nacional del Prado.

BEATRIZ SALAMANCA

Universidad Javeriana Cali

Scripted Compassion: Women, Defiance, and Criminal Law in the Early Modern Hispanic World

20 February 2026
15.00-17.00

University of Florence
Online Seminar

meet.google.com/ogw-pvxn-xoi

contact
giovanni.tarantino@unifi.it
mediterraneanemotions.carrrd.co



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SOCIETY FOR THE
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores early modern women who enacted compassion in ways that disrupted normative boundaries—whether by openly voicing their care initiatives, acting without male sanction, or asserting independent moral judgment. Francisca de Ávila, for instance, was arrested in 1575 by the Spanish Inquisition for her attempts to establish a community of women grounded in principles of care and mutual support. Although she was subjected to a public *auto de fe*, sentenced to one hundred lashes, and exiled from Toledo, she had already spent two decades living a life of service to the community and sharing her spiritual insights as a recognised public figure. Drawing on William Reddy's (2004) and Barbara Rossenwein's (2006) insights into the normative dimension of historical emotions, I argue that some women exercised emotional agency in ways that destabilised prevailing power structures. By transforming what was typically cast as a docile virtue into a mode of dissent, they redefined compassion as a tool of resistance. Though often subject to scrutiny and punishment, these women claimed agency through acts of care, challenged authority through their own 'navigation of feeling', and redefined compassion as a form of transgression. A closer look at the history of compassion challenges the tendency to read human history solely through the lens of war and exploitation. It shifts attention toward scenarios of solidarity and cooperation, and highlights the ways in which different groups have organised to provide services and build networks of support and assistance. This research brings to the fore crucial transformations of the early modern Hispanic world, in which questions of how best to care about others became central to both public policies and individual practice. These reflections suggest that the increasingly normative connotations of compassion coincided with the embryonic transition between medieval narratives of salvation and the emergence of more centralised poor-relief initiatives.

THE SPEAKER

Beatriz Salamanca (PhD, UCL) is a lecturer at Universidad Javeriana Cali, where she teaches courses in Human Rights, the History of Philosophy and Law, and the History of Political Thought. Her current research examines hospitality and compassion in the early-modern Hispanic world, tracing their intersections with institutional change and evolving ideas about charity, poor relief, and power. She has held fellowships at the Institute of Humane Studies at George Mason University (2019) and the Madrid Institute for Advanced Study (2021). See <https://javerianacali.academia.edu/BeatrizSalamanca>.