Spiritual Capital: Foreign Patronage of the 
Santería Religion in Post-Soviet Cuba

Santeria is a Cuban religion based upon West African beliefs. This lecture examines the ways in which the Santería religion allows some Cubans (particularly those unconnected with either the tourism industry or the Florida-dominated remittance market) to access the coveted Cuban foreign currency/peso convertible economy by entering into relationships with foreigners seeking religious knowledge, products, or status. This lecture examines how Cuban Santeros interact with foreigners through the religion itself by providing them with knowledge, divination, consecrated drums, rituals, and initiations into Cuban houses of worship. Imbued with an aura of authenticity and a deep connection to an African past and efficacious present, Santería is increasingly commodified for foreign cultural, religious, and academic consumers. This lecture focuses on this Cuban conversion of spiritual and subcultural capital into financial capital, as well as the impact of this financial exchange upon the practice of Santería itself.

Kevin Miguel Delgado

Delgado received his Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from UCLA, where his dissertation focused on Afro-Cuban Iyesá music and culture. Delgado’s primary research focuses on issues of Santería music, performance, and cultural representation. A bassist and percussionist, Delgado currently serves as Assistant Professor and Coordinator of World Music and Ethnomusicology at San Diego State University.

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Time: 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Location: Deutz Room, Institute of the Americas Complex

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