The Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages and The Center for Latin American Studies jointly present:
“Closeness and Gay Culture in Modern Mexico”
With Professor Michael Schuessler from Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Cuajimalpa

A careful analysis of Mexico’s historically fraught relationship with male homosexuality throughout its nearly 500 year evolution from a Pre-Hispanic empire, a Spanish colony, an independent nation, and an “institutionalized revolution” to the fledgling democracy it is today, yields surprising details regarding those factors which have helped to create a unique Mexican “homoculture”. This cultural component was forged through a syncretic process similar to that which occurred with other forms of acculturation, all by-products of the Spaniards’ military, political and spiritual conquest of México-Tenochtitlan (1521).

As the most sensitive register of this phenomenon is to be found in language, Michael K. Schuessler will consider the unique nature of some of the terms employed to describe concepts exclusive to Mexico’s gay population through the application of what James Lockhart has referred to as “New Philology”.

In Schuessler’s talk, the local interpretation of events relating to conquest and colonization will be applied to a very specific cultural-linguistic phenomenon: the development of a “gay lexicon” in Mexico.

Schuessler will accomplish this by first discussing the negative attitudes exhibited towards male homosexuality as recorded by Texcoco’s poet-prince Netzahualcoyotl, who ruled during the time of Columbus. Although these attitudes may be compared to those of contemporary Europe, other concepts have evolved which are ostensibly native, and whose terminology was already in use at the time of conquest and whose semantics apparently survived this invasion.

A careful, “new philological” approach to the interpretation of such cultural and political phenomena may provide a detailed record that serves to break the code that has developed over time in order to describe, celebrate and condemn certain aspects of male homosexuality in Mexico. Through this approach, Schuessler hopes to illustrate how the sudden encounter between two previously unknown groups led to the development of a new (mestizo) community that, through cultural (and verbal) interaction would stimulate the genesis of modern Mexico, one that has recently become far more inclusive with regard to its once stigmatized gay population.

Tuesday, November 5, 2013
12:00pm-1:30pm
Open to the Public │ Lunch Provided
Bolivar House—582 Alvarado Row

Michael K. Schuessler is Professor of Humanities at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Cuajimalpa, in Mexico City, where he teaches courses dedicated to Latin American art and literature, pre-Columbian Mexico, colonial Mexico, etc. He received his Ph.D. in Hispanic Languages and Literatures from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he specialized in the literature and arts of colonial Latin America, particularly New Spain (Mexico). He is the author of many articles devoted to the interpretation of Latin American literature and culture as well as several books. He is currently at work on a novel about Inés de Salm-Salm, who came to Mexico with her husband, Prince Felix zu Salm Salm, at the time of the French Intervention.