

Center for Africana Studies

Speaker Series

January 29, 2025 | 10:30 a.m. | COB2 290

*“The Storm in Kenya”:
The Mau Mau Uprising
and pan-Africanist
Thought in the mid-20th
Century*

BY CHRISTIAN ALVARADO

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Historical work on the event most commonly known as the “Mau Mau Uprising”—which roiled late-colonial Kenya in the 1950s and captivated audiences the world over—has long been preoccupied with examining the political and economic origins of anticolonial resistance in the colony, the operations of British counter-insurgency efforts, and the legacy of each of these for post-independence Kenyan society. His current book project considers how this event impacted the political, economic, and cultural history of other parts of the African continent, as well as Europe and the Americas. This talk presents an account of the role “myths of Mau Mau” played in pan-Africanist thought both within and far beyond the borders of the colony during this period.



Dr. Christian Alvarado received his PhD in History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz and is President’s and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in African American and African Studies at the University of California, Davis. His wide-ranging research situates the event most commonly known as the Mau Mau Uprising in late-colonial Kenya within the broader history of decolonization in 20th century Africa. Alvarado argues that Mau Mau serves as a way of probing contemporary and current debates regarding the ethics of (anti)colonial violence, the relationship between tradition and modernity, and the nature of decolonization. A historian by training, Dr. Alvarado’s interdisciplinary work is also in conversation with the fields of cultural studies, comparative literature, and political theory.