

Claire Gilbert, Saint Louis University

UCLA Title for “Intermediaries, Middle Grounds, Middle Sea”: The Fiduciary Mediterranean: Navigating Dynamics of Trust and Power across Language Communities

UCLA Abstract:

What did it mean to be a translator in and across medieval and early modern Iberia? To be a *trujamán*, a *romanceador*, an *intérprete*, or a *lengua*, a broker between language communities which often mapped on to dynamics of power and religious identity? The very terms used to describe the profile and activities of translators presuppose a specific context of longstanding multilingualism and cross-confessional contact which developed across the Mediterranean in the later middle ages. Between the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa, individuals navigated the multilingual realities of daily life, and some leveraged their skills and experiences into aspects of their professional identities. Those who were successful relied as much on linguistic aptitude and intellectual formation as they did on social relations and political pragmatism. This presentation will describe some of the settings within which translation work was performed and recognized, often alongside other scribal or political duties, and survey several case studies which illustrate the fraught position of those caught “in-between” languages. It also explores the ways in which translators contributed to the development of boundaries separating those languages and their communities.