**Enrique E. Cortez, Portland State University**

**Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo: The Colonial Matrix and the Latin American Literatures**

Abstract:

This presentation examines the project of literary history of Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, which describes the literatures of Latin America as an extension of the literary production of Spain. Menéndez Pelayo proposed, in the *Antología de poetas hispano-americanos*, a narrative that was primarily aimed to recover the literary production of the colonial times. This recovery was not only limited to archival research, but also included the symbolic redistribution of the Spanish cultural capital, assigning texts to the new Latin American literatures that had previously been exclusive parts of the Spanish literature, including works such as *La araucana* or *La grandeza mexicana*. In this way the *Antología* proposed the colonial literary production as an umbilical cord that connected the Spanish empire and its former colonies. My study examines two potential paradoxes of the relationship between Spain and Hispanic America present in Menéndez Pelayo’s project. The first involves Spanish literature itself: how the redefinition of the Spanish literature as an imperial and self-sufficient corpus of texts, proposed by Menendez Pelayo, demonstrates the need –or “imperial insufficiency”– of literary texts from the former colonies as evidence of such imperial status. The second analyzes the histories of Latin American literatures and tries to understand what made it possible for an effort like that of Menendez Pelayo, ideologically conservative and neocolonial, to still be current content for many of these literatures.

Bio

**Enrique E. Cortez.** Received his Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature and Cultural Studies from Georgetown University, with a dissertation that provides an intellectual history for the Inca Garcilaso during the long nineteenth-century (1780-1930). His publications include (with Gwen Kirkpatrick) *Estar en el presente: Literatura y nación desde el Bicentenario* (Lima: Latinoamerica Editores, 2012) as well as articles appeared in academic journals such as *Revista Iberoamericana*, *INTI*, *Latin American & Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, *Taller de Letras*, *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* (RCLL), *Modern Languages Notes*, among others. Currently, he is Assistant Professor of Latin American Literature at Portland State University.