ABSTRACT
What are citizen views of local and global environmental problems in the Peruvian Altiplano, a tropical latitude region affected by rapid urbanization, extractive industries, and climate change? Furthermore, can environmental education and monitoring spearheaded by local groups enhance people’s understanding of environmental problems and give them new tools for political action? This talk will discuss lessons learned through interviews with activists and monitors who built a civil society initiative in the high Andes. The Suma Quta Project (in Aymara language, “Beautiful Lake”) lasted a decade and involved over one hundred citizen monitors measuring water quality and identifying sources of pollution in the Lake Titicaca basin. Leaders of the project also responded to calls for assistance in training monitors in central and northern Peru, and in 2014 formed the first national network of water quality monitoring groups. Williams will discuss the factors that contributed to the project’s early successes and its ultimate collapse and invite a candid conversation with audience members on the prospects for DIY environmental defense.

BIO
Heather Williams is Professor of Politics at Pomona College. She also serves in the Programs in Environmental Analysis and International Relations. She is the author of Social Movements and Economic Transition: Markets and Distributive Policy in Mexico and Planting Trouble: The Barzon Debtors’ Movement in Mexico, various book chapters and articles in journals, including Politics & Society, Social Science History, Latin American Perspectives, Environment and Society, and Sustainability. Currently, she is working on a book project for the University of California Press on water and the built environment in Southern California entitled River Underground: The Secret Life of the Santa Ana.

Monday, February 24, 2020 11:00 – 12:00
Bren Hall 1414
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