

University of Maryland  
Latin American Studies Center



Adventures in the Amazon  
Searching for a Cure for Diseases of the Rubber Tree

Priscila Chaverri

Department of Plant Sciences  
and Landscape Architecture

October 19, 3:30-5:00

Merril Room 2120 Francis Scott Key Hall

This talk presents Professor Chaverri's groundbreaking efforts to find a natural cure or biocontrol agent for the South American Leaf Blight (SALB), a disease that has decimated rubber tree plantations in the Amazon Basin. SALB is caused by the fungus *Microcyclus ulei* which has devastated the South American rubber tree economy to the extent that most natural rubber today is being produced in Africa and Asia. Chaverri argues that an attack on rubber trees could have catastrophic repercussions on the world economy and, ultimately, affect all levels of human societies that depend upon this crop for their livelihood, from car owners to agricultural laborers. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research has labeled SALB as a potential "biological weapon of mass destruction." In this talk, Chaverri will describe how her research is helping save rubber trees, an important resource that could revitalize Latin American economies.

**Priscila Chaverri** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Plant Sciences and Landscape Architecture at the University of Maryland, College Park. A native of Costa Rica, she earned her PhD in Plant Pathology from Penn State University. She has received nearly two million in funding in the past few years for her most recent work including a \$650,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.