

**Journal of Anthropological
Research (JAR) Distinguished
Lecture:**

***Image Capture: War and
Iconography in Colonial New
Mexico***

**Thursday, 10/23/2025 at 5:30 PM
Hibben 105**

**Dr. Severin Fowles
Columbia University**

**Followed by a specialized
seminar:
*Iconohistory***

**JOURNAL OF
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
RESEARCH**

**Friday, 10/24/2025 at 12 PM
Anthropology 248**

The history of colonialism in the American West is not just the story of how European people, animals, and technologies invaded Indigenous worlds but also of how these things were engaged, redeployed, countered, rejected, and, in some cases, embraced by native communities. In this paper, I look beyond the horses, guns, germs, and steel that have dominated materialist analyses of the colonial encounter to consider the circulation of *images*—or more precisely, the circulation of new understandings of what images are and how they function. My focus is on the “Biographic Tradition,” an Indigenous mode of iconographic production that rapidly spread across the Great Plains and parts of New Mexico during the early colonial period. The Biographic Tradition had a strongly archival sensibility, dominated by graphic illustrations of the exploits of specific Plains warriors. In my account of the origins and development of this tradition, two arguments are advanced: first, that the Biographic Tradition was the child of colonialism, directly influenced by European aesthetics and logics of historical depiction, and second, that such images quickly developed into their own theater of war, enacting rather than merely representing violence. The seminar will explore the history of the image in New Mexico and lay out a theoretical framework for the study of rock art as iconography.