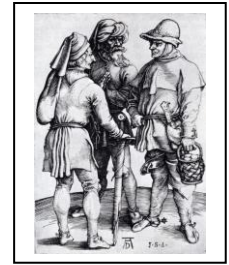


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in cooperation with
Trinity College
presents

Prof. Andrea Rizzi
(The University of Melbourne)

COERCED TRUST AND THE RHETORIC OF PREMODERN COLONISATION

Monday, 28 September 2026, 4:30–6:00 pm (EST; Toronto time)

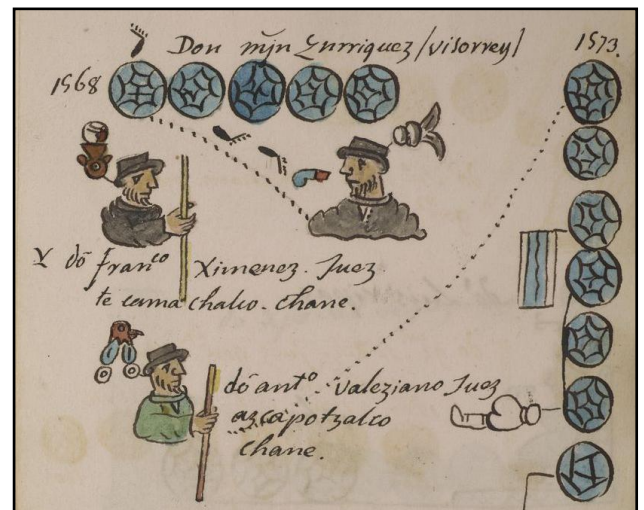
Location: Larkin Building (15 Devonshire Place), Rm 200 and online at

<https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/82014495646?pwd=6cvwAZmrZW1wLEYoj3LPiaUwcyHdzbl.1>

Meeting ID: 820 1449 5646 Passcode: 597661

When European empires expanded across the Atlantic in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they carried with them a powerful idea inherited from Cicero and revived by Petrarch and the humanists: that eloquence itself was a civilising, colonising force. Spanish missionaries used this idea to justify subjugating Indigenous peoples through Latin grammar and Christian doctrine. But colonisation is spoken not only by the powerful. It is also spoken through those who have no choice. This talk discusses the concept of *coerced trust*: the impossible position of enslaved and captive people (Indigenous or captive Europeans) forced to translate, interpret, and mediate for their captors while at the same time having to earn credibility with them. Their words carried an authority they were not presumed to own.

A misstep could mean punishment; fluency could mean survival, or even the chance to smuggle Indigenous meanings into the coloniser's script. Drawing on mixed sixteenth-century sources, this talk will explore how coerced trust exposes the darker mechanics of premodern colonisation and how, even within that grip, colonised voices found ways to answer back, contest, and decolonise the very languages imposed upon them.



ANDREA RIZZI is Cassamarca Professor of Italian Studies at the University of Melbourne and Chair of the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies. A literary and translation historian, he has published widely on the Italian Renaissance. His latest book is *Looking Trustworthy: Portraits and Textual Poses of Humanist Translators in the Renaissance* (CUP, Elements in the Renaissance series, 2026).

Image: Antonio Valeriano (1521–1605) in Codex Aubin, British Museum, fol. 76v.