

Hugh Hawkins Lecture 2019-20

“MOTHER OF EXILES”

REFUGEES IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND MYTH



**PROFESSOR MAE NGAI,
COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY**

OCTOBER 10, 2019

4:30 P.M.

**PAINO LECTURE HALL,
107 BENESKI**

Sponsored by the Amherst College History Department, in honor of Hugh Hawkins, late professor of history and American studies.

Free and open to all.

Emma Lazarus called America the “mother of exiles” in her poem, “The New Colossus,” which graces the Statue of Liberty. This lecture examines the enduring idea of America as a land of hope and refuge for the persecuted and oppressed. It goes beyond the familiar narratives of the Puritan settlers and the Statue of Liberty to think about how the idea of asylum has historically justified and obscured nation-building and racial agendas. It will compare the politics surrounding Cold War refugees from Europe, Cuba, and Asia, and consider the contemporary recasting of Central American asylum seekers as undocumented migrants.