

Monday, 15.12.2025; 4:15 - 5:45 pm CET

Marçal de Menezes Paredes, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

## **Palimpsests and Puzzles: Reimagining Angola's History 50 Years After Independence**

### **Abstract:**

This lecture pays tribute to the 50th anniversary of Angola's independence, exploring it as a complex and multilayered process that extends beyond the conventional narrative of nation-state formation or the struggle for freedom. Angola's history, deeply intertwined with global networks of power, commerce, and culture, demands to be constantly revisited and reread from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, precisely because of its external seductive appeal, Angola's history can be underperceived due to Western stereotypes, or underestimated due to orientalist views. On the other hand, the history of the slave trade – while essential – has sometimes privileged North and South American interpretations, narrowing the field to a diasporic view that overlooks the internal complexities of Angolan society. In both strains, for the same reasons, these internal intricacies and their dissimilar rhythms of time remain eclipsed by external concerns. But a countervailing knowledge might also exist. Internally, the politicization of the past fosters an excessive nationalistic cohesiveness in Angolan history. It also creates a standardization of the past, deepening the politics of memory and aligning it with the state elite's view of Angola. As a result, Angola's historical narrative has often overshadowed the diverse meanings of liberty and freedom— notions deeply entangled with the history of the Civil War and with the asymmetrical dependencies that continue to shape Angolan society across economic, gendered, generational, and regional lines. This lecture proposes the concepts of *Palimpsest* and *Puzzle* as metaphors and methodological tools to creatively explore the complexities of Angola in time and space. Across historical examples within different sources, it initiates a dialogue between internal and external perspectives, reflecting on how, half a century after independence, democratizing the past might become both a cultural and historiographical goal.

### **Bio:**

Marçal de Menezes Paredes is an Associate Professor of history at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He is a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq, Brazil), a member of the Board of Directors of the Lusophone Studies Association (York University, Canada), and an associate researcher at the CEIS20 Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (Coimbra University) and the Institute of Contemporary History of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. His main research interests include the contemporary history of Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP), East Timor and Portugal, with a special focus on anti-colonial networks in the Lusophone world within the global Cold War. Recent publications: "The Contemporary History of Angola in Brazil: Pluralist Pasts within a Modern Nation," in *Studies on Slavery in Brazilian and African Literature*, ed. Stephan Conermann, S and Roberto Hofmeister Pich (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025): 75-90; with Augusto Nascimento, eds., *Personalismos políticos nos países de língua portuguesa* (Porto Alegre: Edipucrs, 2024); "The Canadian Broad Left and the Anticolonial Struggle at Home and Abroad: The Case of the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies," in *Globalizing Independence Struggles of Lusophone Africa Anticolonial and Postcolonial Politics*, ed. Rui Lopes and Natalia Telepneva (London: ZED Books, 2024): 139-53; with Bianca Obetine Magnus, "Descolonização do Timor-Leste: desdobramentos da Revolução dos Cravos na colônia mais longínqua," *Lusotopie* 23, no. 1-2 (2024): 1-18.